

LAST MANTRA

The Rig Veda is not the whole shruti, but it enunciates the most central part of it and lays the foundations for all the rest. It is befitting, then, to conclude this anthology with the final mantra of the Rig Veda, just as we opened it with the invocation of the first. Having traversed the long road of praise, exaltation, meditation, and sacrifice, having traveled through the upper realms of the Gods and the underworld of the demons, having reached the loftiest peaks of mystical speculation and touched the lowest depths of the human soul, having gazed, as far as we could, upon the cosmos and upon the divine, we arrive at this last stanza, which is dedicated to the human world and is a prayer for harmony and peace among Men by means of the protection of Agni and all the Gods, but ultimately through the acceptance by Men of their human calling. The last mantra knows only Man's ordinary language and Man's own cherished ideas; it comes back to the simplicity of the fact of being human: a union of hearts and a oneness of spirit, the overcoming of isolating individualisms by harmonious living together, because Man as person is always society and yet not plural. He is a unity with so many strings that they incur the risk of wars and strife, but also offer the possibility of a marvelous harmony and concord.

Last Mantra

RV X, 191, 4

samani va akutih
samanda hrdayani vah
samanam astu vo mano
yatha vah susahasati

United your resolve, united your hearts,
may your spirits be at one,
that you may long together dwell
in unity and concord!

AUM TAT SAT AUM

PART I A. DAWN AND BIRTH

Agni

Part I deals with the invisible and underlying foundations of reality; metaontogenesis could be its academic title. It speaks neither of that which "is" nor of that which "shall be." It uses a past tense, but it does not refer properly to a temporal "was." The origin of time cannot be temporal. The source of being cannot itself be just "being." If this were so, there would be no end: we would then search for the source of the source of being and so on indefinitely. The elements of the world or the elements of life are not just parts of the whole. The primordial Word is not yet spoken, nor is the Lord manifested as sovereign; he is not yet Lord. The topics and heroes of Part I of our anthology are not constituents or, as it were, "bricks" of the universe, as if they were molecules out of which reality is composed. They are rather pre-realities, pre-stages, factors shaping the real, not merely components or parts of it, just as in nuclear physics the elemental "particles" cannot any longer be said to be elements or particles out of which the whole is made. In any event our attention is here directed toward discovering the role of nothingness, or becoming aware of the place of a void which cannot be said to exist but which makes it possible that things can exist by the very act of filling up the void. The five sections of Part I, though not systematically connected, are deeply related inasmuch as they all try to give expression to God-above-God, the Beginning-before-the-Beginning, the Lord previous-to-any-Lordship, Life-before-Life, and the Unity underlying all Plurality. We repeat: all that goes on, or rather, in, behind the curtain is not within the range of our experience and thus that Source is neither God, nor Beginning, nor Lord, Life, Light, Unity, Basis, nor even Being or Nonbeing. It is not that I discover what makes Being possible, because it is merely a demand of the mind to find the conditions of possibility for everything. The mind here is by no means outside this very problem. The Prelude is really before the whole play, before all lila, human and divine. It is actually not played. Perhaps the phenomenological mark of "sacred Scriptures," modern or ancient, secular or religious, is

that these Scriptures deal with that which cannot be dealt with and speak of the unspeakable, thus positioning themselves beyond the vigilance of the principle of noncontradiction, without, of course, intending or pretending to deny it (for which they would need the help of the same principle). At a later date cosmogonic images were, if not replaced, complemented and in a way overshadowed by meta-physical reflections and, in the course of time, by more religious language and more elaborated cultic performances. Examples of all this are given in Part I. Here our sights are on the invisible, on the origins, on the foundations, on Nonbeing, on the transcendent, but with no intention of stopping there; on the contrary, the whole thrust is on what follows, on what is coming and is being unfolded before our eyes. Liberation lies ahead; there is a long way to go, but the credentials of reality already show that anything is possible with the really real. The Dawn is not the day, nor is Birth really human life, but without them there would be neither day nor our life. The true "be-coming" is an authentic coming to be; but do not ask where it comes from lest you stop the very becoming. Faith very properly belongs to this section. Without faith nothing takes shape or comes into being. Faith is the beginning of salvation, because it is the very dawn of our true being, the existential openness of our human existence--the very condition of any real, that is, sacred act, the Vedas will say.

A. PRELUDE

Adi

In the beginning, to be sure, nothing existed,
neither the heaven nor the earth nor space in between.
So Nonbeing, having decided to be, became spirit and
said: "Let me be!"¹ He warmed himself further and
from this heating was born fire. He warmed himself
still further and from this heating was born light.
TB II, 2, 9, 1-2

Numerous texts are to be found in the Vedic scriptures, of extraordinary diversity and incomparable richness, which seek unweariedly to penetrate the mystery of the beginnings and to explain the immensity and the amazing harmony of the universe. We find a proliferation of speculations, doubts, and descriptions, an atmosphere charged with solemnity, a sense of life lived to the full--all of which spontaneously bring to mind the landscape of the Himalayas. These texts seem to burst forth impetuously like streams issuing from glaciers. Within this rushing torrent may be discerned a certain life view, deep and basic, an evolving life view that can yet be traced unbroken from the Rig Veda, through the Atharva Veda and the Brahmanas, to the Upanisads.

What is fascinating about the experience of the Vedic seers is not only that they have dared to explore the outer space of being and existence, piercing the outskirts of reality, exploring the boundaries of the universe, describing being and its universal laws, but that they have also undertaken the risky and intriguing adventure of going beyond and piercing the being barrier so as to float in utter nothingness, so to speak, and discover that Nonbeing is only the outer atmosphere of Being, its protective veil. They plunge thus into a darkness enwrapped by darkness, into the Beyond from which there is no return, into that Prelude of Existence in which there is neither Being nor Nonbeing, neither God nor Gods, nor creature of any type; the traveler himself is volatilized, has disappeared. Creation is the act by which God, or whatever name we may choose to express the Ultimate, affirms himself not only vis-à-vis the world, thus created, but also vis-à-vis himself, for he certainly was neither creator before creation nor God for himself. The Vedic seers make the staggering claim of entering into that enclosure where God is not yet God, where God is thus unknown to himself, and, not being creator, is "nothing." Without this perspective we may fail to grasp the Vedic message regarding the absolute Prelude to everything: that One, tad ekam (which is the less imperfect expression), or this, idam (which is the other way of saying it). Idam, this, that is to say, anything that I can refer to, though it is never exhausted by the reference; idam, that which I think, mean, touch, imagine, will, reject, love, hate--anything to which I may be able to point with any means at my disposal, my senses, mind, intuition, emotions, or whatever; idam, that which takes as many forms as I am capable of imagining and constantly transcends all of them; this, that is, whatever can fall into the range of my experience, idam, at the absolute Prelude, was neither Being nor Nonbeing, neither Consciousness nor Ignorance.² This, in whatever form, is tad, that: outside, beyond, transcendent, hidden in its own immanence, absolutely ungraspable and ineffable.³ Furthermore, this that is ekam, One, absolute oneness, because all specific generic and ontic differences are included in the ekam and it is precisely this that makes differentiation intrinsically possible. Things can differ only against a background of oneness.

Hiranyagarbha, the Golden Germ, appears here as a powerful symbol and Prajapati is one of the most important mythical names for the carrying out of this process, though he emerges at the very end of it.⁴ For a fuller understanding of the myth we may consider it in three stages or moments which are, of course, neither chronological nor perhaps ontological, but which are certainly anthropological (or rather metahistorical) and helpful for our understanding: Solitude, Sacrifice, Integration.

1. SOLITUDE

In the beginning, things undoubtedly began. But what about the beginning itself "before" the actual "beginning"? We cannot say "before" the beginning without falling into contradiction. The beginning is precisely the beginning, because it has no "before," because it is itself beginningless. Thus, if we want to speak about the beginning in itself, we shall have to use a language of opposites and make ample use of paradoxes: in the beginning there was neither Being nor Nonbeing, there was neither space nor the sky beyond, neither death nor nondeath, no distinction between day and night. In the absolute void the One breathed by its own propulsion without breath; shadows were concealed by shadows. The symbol here is utter solitude. The One enwrapped in the void took birth. Nonbeing made himself atman, and cried: I will be! Let me be! This was the Self in the form of a Person. But the Primal Being is not yet fully born, he is not yet fully "out," for when he is looking around he sees nothing. So he is forced to look upon himself and take cognizance of himself. Only then is he born; only then does he discover properly not only himself but also his total solitude, his helplessness, one could say. When self-awareness comes to birth it discovers that it is alone and is afraid, "for the one who is alone is afraid," because aloneness is an unnatural state and thus even Being needs to be surrounded and "protected" by Nonbeing. The ontologic anxiety of Being facing Nonbeing is born simultaneously with self-awareness. It looks for an object, for "some-thing" which can be grappled with: anxiety tends to be converted into fear. Now, fear is overcome by a second act of reflection: the discovery that nothing exists to be frightened of. But the cost of this rationalized defense is boredom; there is no joy at all in brooding over oneself. Then arises the desire for another. It is the beginning of the expansion, the breaking of the Self--and thus starts the process of the primordial Sacrifice.

2. SACRIFICE

Prajapati desires a second but he has no primary matter out of which to create the universe. This dilemma is important. A second identical to him will not satisfy his craving, for it will merge with him; a second inferior to him will obviously not do either, for it will be his puppet, the projection of his own will. It will offer him no resistance, nor will it be a real partner. The Vedic Revelation unveils the mystery by means of the myth of the sacrifice of Prajapati, who dismembers himself in order to let the world be, and be what it is. Creation is the sacrifice, the gift of Prajapati in an act of self-immolation. There is no other to whom to offer the sacrifice, no other to accept it. Prajapati is at the same time the sacrificer, the sacrifice (the victim), the one to whom the sacrifice is offered, and even the result of the sacrifice. Even more, as we shall see later on, sacrifice becomes the first Absolute.⁵

Prajapati, being alone and self-sufficient, can have no external motivation impelling him to create the worlds. The texts, however, mention two factors that are not motives for action but indwelling principles of reality itself: kama and tapas, love and ardor. Whether reference is being made to the personalist tradition of Prajapati or to the nonpersonalist tradition of the One emerging from Nonbeing, it is invariably by means of these two powers that the creative process commences. Tapas is the primordial fervor, the original fire, the supreme concentration, the ultimate energy, the creative force that initiates the whole cosmic movement. Order and truth (rita and satya) were born from tapas. Furthermore, "desire [kama] was the original development [of the One] which was the first sowing [retas] of consciousness [manas]."⁶ Thus kama enters upon the scene.⁷ This love or desire cannot be a yearning toward any object; it is a concentration upon the Self and is related to tapas. Tapas incited by kama penetrates into the Self to the point of bursting asunder, of dismemberment.

Tapas and kama go together. Love is the fervor that imparts power to create and tapas is the energy of love which produces the world. "He desired: Can I multiply myself? Can I engender? He practiced tapas, he created the whole world, all that exists."⁸ But this world, once in existence, has its own destiny. This is the third act of the drama.

3. INTEGRATION

Whereas the first act of the drama has no actor, properly speaking, and the whole action is played behind the curtain, and whereas the second act has God as the actor, this third part presents Man as the hero. Prajapati, having created the world out of the self-sacrifice of himself, is exhausted, feeble, drained away, and on the point of death. He is no longer powerful and mighty; the universe has the possibility of escaping the power of God; it stands on its own. "Once engendered, the creatures turned their backs upon him and went away."⁹ They try to free themselves from the creator, but fall into chaos and disorder. If the universe has to subsist, God has to come again and penetrate the creatures afresh, entering into them for a second time. This second redeeming act, however, needs the collaboration of the creature. Here is the locus for Man's collaboration with the unique act of Prajapati which gives consistency and existence to the world. This is Man's place and function in the sacrifice.

This sacrifice is not just a kind of offering to God so that he may release to us what we have earned. On the contrary, it is the action by which we create and procreate along with God and reconstruct his Body. This action gathers the first material for

the total yajna (sacrifice), not from animals, flowers, or whatever, but from the inmost depth of Man himself. It is the outcome of Man's urge to be in tune with that cosmic dynamism which enables the universe constantly to win over the power of Nonbeing. "That I may become everything!" is the cry that the Shatapatha Brahmana put not only into the mouth of Prajapati, but also into the heart of every being.¹⁰ This is the cry that every man will feel in face of the limitations of his own person and the small field of action in which he can operate. When confronted with himself, when beginning to enter into the poised state of contemplation, when at peace with himself and at the threshold of realization, Man has this tremendous desire to be this and that, to become this and that, to be involved in every process and to be present everywhere. It is not so much the hankering for power which drives Man, as some moralists would have us believe, much less a simply hedonistic urge; on the contrary, it is this existential desire to be and thus to be everything and, in the last instance, to Be, not just to share a part or to be present in a corner of the banquet of life and existence, but to be active at the very core of reality, in the divine center itself whence all emerges and is directed. "Let me have a self!" is another refrain. The wise Man, described time and again in the shruti, is not the escapist and unfriendly solitary, but the full Man who, having realized his own limitations, knows how to enter into the infinite ocean of sat, cit, and ananda, of being, consciousness, and joy.

The Hymn of the Origins Nasadiya Sukta

1 The vision of this hymn comes out of a profound insight into the mystery of reality. It is the product of a mystical experience that far transcends the limits of logical thinking; it is a religious chant--for only in music or poetry can such a message be conveyed--invoking in splendid verses the Primal Mystery that transcends all categories, both human and divine. This hymn, while trying to plumb the depths of the mystery, formulates no doctrinal system but expresses itself by means of a rich variety of different symbols related to the one single insight. The hymn, in fact, presents an extraordinary consistency, which is patent only to the contemplative mind; in the absence of this latter, however, it is bound to appear either as syncretistic or as agnostic, as has in fact been sometimes asserted.

We are dealing here, in the first place, not with a temporal cosmogonic hymn describing the beginning of creation, or even with an ontological theogony, or with a historical description concerning the formation of the Gods or even of God. It is not the description of a succession of stages through which the world has passed. The starting point of the hymn is not a piece of causal thinking seeking the cause of this world or of God or the Gods, but rather an intuitive vision of the whole. This hymn does not attempt to communicate information but to share a mystical awareness that transcends the sharpest lines of demarcation of which the human mind is capable: the divine and the created, Being and Nonbeing. It seeks to give expression to the insight of the oneness of reality which is experienced as being so totally one that it does not need the horizon of nonreality or the background of a thinking process to appear in its entire actuality. This oneness is so radically one that every distinction is overcome; it is that unutterable and unthinkable process that "sees" all that is and is-not, in its utmost simplicity, which is, of course, not a jnana, a gnosis, but an ignorance, an interrogation. The One is not seen against any horizon or background. All is included. All is pure horizon. There are no limits to the universal or, for that matter, to the concrete.

The first verse brings us straightaway to the heart of the mystery and is composed of a series of questions. Neither an affirmation nor a negation is capable of carrying the weight of the ultimate mystery. Only the openness of an interrogation can embrace what our mere thinking cannot encompass. The Ultimate is neither real nor unreal, neither being nor nonbeing, and thus neither is nor is-not; the apophatism is total and covers everything, even itself: "darkness was wrapped in darkness."

Being as well as Nonbeing, the Absolute (or Ultimate) as well as the Beginning, are contradictory concepts when applied to the primordial mystery. "Absolute" means unrelatedness, and when we speak or think about it we are negating that character. "Ultimate" points toward the end of a process that has no "after," and "Beginning" toward a point that has no "before." But what is to prevent our thinking a "previous" to the Beginning and a "beyond" to the Ultimate, unless our mind artificially imposes a limit on its thinking or bursts in the effort? If we think "Being" we cannot be prevented from thinking "Nonbeing" also, and so the very concept of an all-including "Being" which does not include "Nonbeing" defeats its own purpose. Indeed, a metaphysician might say that "Nonbeing" is a nonentity and an unthinkable concept; yet the fact remains that at least on the level of our thinking the concept of "Being" cannot include its contradiction. This verse tells us that the primordial mystery cannot be pinpointed to any idea, thing, thought, or being. It is primarily neither the answer to a set of riddles nor the object of current metaphysical speculations concerning the how or the why of creation. It is beyond thinking and Being. The symbol of water is the most pertinent one: the primordial water covers all, supports all, has no form of its own, is visible and invisible, has no limits, pervades everything, it is the first condition of life, the place of the original seed, the fertilizing milieu.

The seer then continues by a series of negatives: there was neither death nor nondeath, nor any distinction between day and night. All the opposites, including the contradictories, are on this side of the curtain. At this point we have not yet reached Being and thus we have not yet the possibility of limiting Being by Nonbeing.¹¹

This One is not even a concept. It is not a concept limit like truth, goodness, beauty, and similar concepts when applied to the Absolute; it is rather the limit of a concept, unthinkable in itself and yet present on the other side of the curtain as the necessary condition for the very existence and intelligibility of everything. Whereas the concepts of being, goodness, truth, and the like admit degrees of approximation to the fullness of that to which they refer, the One does not. There are degrees of being, of goodness, of truth. There are no degrees of oneness. The One represents the peak of mystical awareness, which India developed later in her Advaitic philosophy, and the West in Trinitarian theology.

Darkness and emptiness are also symbols of the first moment. This darkness is not, however, the moral or even the ontological darkness of the world, but the primordial darkness of the Origin. The negative as well as the positive aspect of existence belongs to the Ultimate. Evil and good, the positive and the negative, both are embraced in the One that encompasses everything. Now, to cancel darkness by darkness, is it not to let the light shine forth? Furthermore, it is said that desire, love, fervor, were the dynamic forces that brought reality to a temporal process of originating something out of something. Out of nothing nothing can come. Nothingness is not previous to, but coextensive with Being. The source of Being is not another Being or anything that can be considered as being an origin out of which things come to be. The process, according to the intuition of the Vedic rishi, is one of concentration, of condensation, of an emergence by the power of love. This love cannot be a desire toward "something" that does not exist, or even a desire coming out of a nonexisting Being. It is this very concentration that originates the Self which is going to be and have that love. Primordial love is neither a transitive nor an intransitive act; it is neither an act directed toward the other (which in this case does not exist) nor an act directed toward oneself (which in this case is also nonexistent), but it is the constitutive act by which existence comes into being. Without love there is no being, but love does not happen without ardor or tapas. It is fervor, tapas, that makes the being be; they are not separable. The relation between kama, desire and love, on the one hand, and tapas, ardor and heat, on the other, is one of the universal cosmic laws linking Being and the whole realm of beings (vv.3-4).

The poets, those sages who seek to penetrate the mystery of reality, discover in Nonbeing the gravitational center of Being; only when this is realized can the cord that differentiates them be extended. The rope connecting Being and Nonbeing is the ultimate rope of salvation (v. 5).

The two last stanzas voice several agonized queries and give expression to a deep-rooted unextirpable uncertainty for which no reply is vouchsafed, because reality is still on the move and any definite answer would preclude its constant newness. This insight brings us again to that ultimate level where the One is situated. From that depth the sage expresses the most fundamental question about the essential and existential enigma of the universe: What, he asks, is the origin of this universe, of all this, idam? Who, or what, is its purpose, its end, its direction? It cannot be the Gods, for they themselves belong on this side of the curtain. Nobody can know what is the very foundation of knowing, nor can anyone say that it is not known. This latter assumption would amount to being biased in favor of a certain negative theology or philosophy. To say that we do not know can be as assertive as to say that we do know. The last question is not the expression of a renunciation of knowledge or a declaration of agnosticism, which would here amount to a dogmatic affirmation, but the declaration that the problem--and not only the answer--is beyond the subject and object of knowledge itself. Only he who is beyond and above everything many know--or he may not, for how may there be any assurance concerning it? It is not only that we know that we do not know, which would then be mere pretending, but that we really do not know even if it is at all knowable by any possible knowledge. The hymn concludes with this query, this constitutive uncertainty which is of infinite magnitude, because we are all involved in it. To answer the query would amount to killing the very unfolding of reality. It is the openness of this interrogation which allows the universe to emerge and to exist.

<Font=5Nasadiya Sukta

RV X, 129

1. At first was neither Being nor Nonbeing.
There was not air nor yet sky beyond.
What was its wrapping? Where? In whose protection?
Was Water there, unfathomable and deep?
2. There was no death then, nor yet deathlessness;
of night or day there was not any sign.
The One breathed without breath, by its own impulse.
Other than that was nothing else at all.
3. Darkness was there, all wrapped around by darkness,
and all was Water indiscriminate. Then
that which was hidden by the Void, that One, emerging,
stirring, through power of Ardor, came to be.
4. In the beginning Love arose,

which was the primal germ cell of the mind.
 The Seers, searching in their hearts with wisdom,
 discovered the connection of Being in Nonbeing.
 5. A crosswise line cut Being from Nonbeing.
 What was described above it, what below?
 Bearers of seed there were and mighty forces,
 thrust from below and forward move above.
 6. Who really knows? Who can presume to tell it?
 Whence was it born? Whence issued this creation?
 Even the Gods came after its emergence.
 Then who can tell from whence it came to be?
 7. That out of which creation has arisen,
 whether it held it firm or it did not,
 He who surveys it in the highest heaven,
 He surely knows or maybe He does not!

1. SB X, 5, 3, 1-2 (§ I 13) considers that manas, the mind, or rather the spirit, is the one and only thing that fulfills the condition of being neither existent nor nonexistent. The spirit is existent only in things, and things without the spirit are nonexistent.

Cf. § I 14.

Indian tradition has interpreted these first two mantras as voicing all the different perspectives under which the ultimate metaphysical problem can be envisaged. Cf. SU IV, 18 (§ I 7); BG XIII, 12.

2. Own impulse: svadha, the active principle, has been translated as 'by its own energy' (Zaehner), "power" (Mascaró, Macdonell, Edgerton), "impulse" (Bose), "of itself" (Misch), "strength" (Raghavan), "will power" (Telang-Chaubey), "élan," "initiative" (Renou), "Eigengesetz" (Geldner), just to give an idea of different readings. Cf. the later idea of shakti or the divine power of the Godhead, always represented as the Goddess, spouse of the corresponding God.

The One: tad ekam . Cf. § VI 1 and also RV I, 164, 10; X, 82, 2; 6 (§ VII 12); AV VIII, 9, 25-26; IX, 9, 7; IsU 4 (§ VII 11). Cf. other texts in § I 7.

3. For the primordial Waters, cf. § I 15 for further references.

Indiscriminate: apraketa, without a recognizable sign, undifferentiated, indistinguishable, unrecognizable, referring to the amorphous chaos, the unformed primordial Waters.

Water: salila, flood, surge, waves, the ocean, waters. The Greek word pelagos would perhaps render the idea of salila, the open sea without shores or boundaries, amorphous water, a kind of chaotic magma.

The Void: abhu, or abhu, the primordial potency, capable of becoming everything.

Ardor: tapas, cf. § I 2.

4. Cf. AV XIX, 52, 1 (§ II 13), where it is translated somewhat differently.

5. "Bearers of seed" are considered to be the male forces and "mighty forces" the female principle. Cf. dakṣa and aditi as the masculine and feminine principles, respectively, in RV X, 72, 4 (§ VII 2).

6. Cf. KenU I, 1 (§ VI 3).

Creative Fervor

Tapas

2 Tapas or cosmic ardor, ascetic fire, arduous penance, concentration, which here amounts to an ontic condensation, is said in this last but one hymn of the Rig Veda to be the energy giving birth to cosmic order and to truth. The three major concepts of Indian wisdom and of Man's awareness are tapas, rita, and satya, ardor, order, and truth.

In the preceding hymn the universe is said to emerge out of or through ardor.¹² In this hymn (v. 1) the first result of the protocosmic energy is said to be the double principle underlying the whole of reality: on the one hand, order (the structure, the formal principle, the contexture of reality) and on the other, truth (the contents, the substance, the material principle, the concrete and crystallized reality itself). Owing to rita, this world is not a chaos, but a cosmos, not an anarchic mass, but an ordered and harmonious whole. Owing to satya, the world is not a haphazard place, an irresponsible game, or an inconsistent and purely fluid appearance. Satya is not primarily an epistemic truth but an ontic truthfulness, an ontological fullness, with content, weight, and reality, namely, being.

The eka, the One of the Hymn of the Origins, is still void and devoid of reality. No reality can emerge without these two principles of order and truthfulness, or, in other words, harmony and self-consistency. Cosmic ardor gives birth also to that undifferentiated reality which has no better symbol than cosmic night, the night that does not have the day as counterpart, but envelops everything, though in the darkness of the not-yet-manifested.

From this yoni, "magma" or "matrix," space and time came to be, that is, the ocean and the year. After space and time, life can appear and thrive; all that "blinks the eye" begins its career through existence. Once life is there, the world can be ordered

according to its regular and harmonic forms of existence: sun, moon, heaven, earth, the sidereal spaces and the light, the last-named being the culmination and perfection of the work of fashioning the world--and all by the power of fervor! No wonder that the performance of tapas is considered as the reenactment of this primordial and cosmic act by which the universe came to be. The contemplative and meditative saint performing tapas is not the Man who sits idle, gazing passively at things or at nothing. He is the most active collaborator in the maintenance of this world and experiences in himself the ardor, fire, energy, and power of concentration which are capable of destroying the world, as later myths will tell us.

<Font=5Tapas

RV X, 190

1. From blazing Ardor Cosmic Order came and Truth;
from thence was born the obscure night;
from thence the Ocean with its billowing waves.

2. From Ocean with its waves was born the year
which marshals the succession of nights and days,
controlling everything that blinks the eye.

3. Then, as before, did the creator fashion
the Sun and Moon, the Heaven and the Earth,
the atmosphere and the domain of light.

1. Blazing Ardor: tapas has been translated by "spiritual fire" (Bose), "heat" or "ascetic fervour" (Edgerton), "power of heat" (Macdonell, Zaehner), "fervour" or "warmth" (Griffith), "austerity" (Telang-Chaubey), "chaleur ascétique," "puissance de l'ardeur," "ardeur créatrice" (Renou), "heisser Drang" "heisses Verlangen," "Askese" (Geldner), etc.

Cf. AV X, 7, 1 (§ I 3); BU I, 2, 6 (§ I 14); V, 11; KenU IV, 8; SU I, 15 (§ VI 5); MundU III, 1, 5; MaitU IV, 4. Also cf AV XI, 8, 2; 6 where it is said that tapas is born from karman.

Cosmic Order: rita. Cf. RV IV, 23, 8-10 and § III B Introduction.

Truth: satya Cf RV X, 85, 1 (§ II 16 Introduction); etc. Cf. also § IV Introduction.

2. Everything that blinks the eye: everything that lives. Cf. MaitS I, 5, 12 for the creation of night by the Gods (§ V 1 Introduction).

3. As before: yatha-purvam, as previously, suggests a cyclic interpretation, but could equally be considered an expression of a dynamic process: now the world is being created and sustained as before.

The creator: dhatr, or ordainer.

The Cosmic Pillar

Skambha

3 From time immemorial in many cultures, both archaic and fully developed, axis mundi, the center of the world, stands not only for a geographical orientation but also for a historical point of reference and for an ontological foundation. Furthermore, the idea also has a theocosmological meaning: the Godhead is the actual support of the universe. True to type, the skambha, the "support," the "pillar," is seen in the Atharva Veda as the frame of creation and, even more, as that invisible and ever transcendent ground on which everything stands and toward which every being tends. The vision is circular and anthropological. Man and the cosmos are not two different creations, each governed by different laws. There is one point, without dimensions, as we would be tempted to word it today, that is, without forming part of the things of which it is the point of reference, which is the support, the ground, of everything. Knowledge of this skambha constitutes the full realization of the mystery of existence, the discovery of Brahman and the deciphering of the hidden treasures of the world.

The Cosmic Pillar, the axis mundi, is not a sacred place; it is not a particular mountain or shrine, or even a particular event, as many a religious tradition affirms, but a "manifest though hidden" Ground, as another hymn on skambha is going to say.¹³ It is an ever dynamic pole which stands there not only to offer a static, a sure, foundation of reality, but also to explain the never-ending processes of nature the wind never tired of blowing, the mind never ceasing to think, the waters--both earthly and celestial--never ceasing to flow (v. 37). Skambha holds even opposites together (v. 15); it is a tree whose branches are Being and Nonbeing (v. 21). The whole universe resides in skambha and all values that Men acknowledge as authentic are rooted in it; faith (vv. 1, 11), worship (v. 20), sacrifice (v. 16), and all that transcends the empirical level are grounded in it.

The recurrent question of this hymn is: What is skambha? Who is it? Meditating upon the hymn one discovers the following progression. First, the skambha appears as both the epistemic hypothesis and the ontological hypostasis which are needed to make intelligible and to sustain the manifold aspect of reality. There is no intelligibility without a certain reduction to unity. But, second, unity cannot be on the same level as plurality, for that would involve the most blatant contradiction. It must somehow lie deeper. This means, third, that the epistemic plurality does not contradict the ontological unity. But, fourth--and here is the purport of this hymn--the ontological order has to be abandoned no less than the epistemic one. The insight of the Vedas would then seem to be that the skambha is the whole of reality deprived not only of its phenomonic character but also

of its ontological reality; the skambha "is" not, because it stands as the condition and possibility of Being itself. In other words, the skambha symbolizes that naked "thatness," tat-tva, which renders reality intelligible in its manifold character and also gives a basis to all that is. All lines of thought converge on one single hypothetical point, just as by following the rays of light we would converge on the invisible center of the sun. Now by concentrating on that unthinkable point one reaches a state in which thought is transcended, and that point emerges refulgent and radiant in its unique character, like the sun in the metaphor. It would be a mistake to give any kind of "thinkable" reality to such a point. To be "thought" is to be "born" into reality or into this world, but skambha is the unthinkable par excellence; otherwise it would not be skambha, the Unborn that is just ready to spring up into the world (v. 31).

The intuition regarding this Cosmic Pillar or Support does not consist in seeing it, but in discovering the vestiges of its feet when they have disappeared in order to jump into the real; it is like seeing the vibrations of the springboard a moment after the dive. To know skambha is to know the Lord of creatures without his creatures and without his Lordship. The hymn is traditionally said to be addressed to Skambha or to the atman, the Self of the universe. Underlying the whole symbolism is the idea of the cosmic Man or purusa.

<Font=5Skambha

AV X, 7

1. In which of his limbs does Fervor dwell?
In which of his limbs is Order set?
In what part of him abides Constancy, Faith?
In which of his limbs is Truth established?
2. From which of his limbs does Fire shine forth?
From which of his limbs issues the Wind?
Which limb does the moon take for measuring rod
when it measures the form of the great Support?
3. In which of his limbs does the earth abide?
In which of his limbs the atmosphere?
In which of his limbs is the sky affixed?
In which of his limbs the great Beyond?
4. Toward whom does the rising Flame aspire?
Toward whom does the Wind eagerly blow?
On whom do all the compass points converge?
Tell me of that Support--who may he be?
5. Where do the half months and months together
proceed in consultation with the year?
Where do the seasons go, in groups or singly?
Tell me of that Support--who may he be?
6. Toward whom run the sisters, day and night,
who look so different yet one summons answer?
Toward whom do the waters with longing flow?
Tell me of that Support--who may he be?
7. The One on whom the Lord of Life
leant for support when he propped up the world--
Tell me of that Support--who may he be?
8. That which of all forms the Lord of Life
created--above, below, and in between--
with how much of himself penetrated the Support?
How long was the portion that did not enter?
9. With how much of himself penetrated the Support
into the past? With how much into the future?
In that single limb whose thousand parts he fashioned
with how much of himself did he enter, that Support?
10. Through whom men know the worlds and what enwraps them,
the waters and Holy Word, the all-powerful
in whom are found both Being and Nonbeing--
Tell me of that Support--who may he be?
11. By whom Creative Fervor waxing powerful
upholds the highest Vow, in whom unite

Cosmic Order and Faith, the waters and the Word--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

12. On whom is firmly founded earth and sky
 and the air in between; so too the fire,
 moon, sun, and wind, each knowing his own place--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

13. In whose one limb all the Gods,
 three and thirty in number, are affixed--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

14. In whom are set firm the firstborn Seers,
 the hymns, the songs, and the sacrificial formulas,
 in whom is established the Single Seer--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

15. In whom, as Man, deathlessness and death combine,
 to whom belong the surging ocean
 and all the arteries that course within him;
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

16. Of whom the four cardinal directions
 comprise the veins, visibly swollen,
 in whom the sacrifice has advanced victorious--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

17. Those who know the divine in
 Man know the highest Lord; who knows the highest Lord
 or the Lord of Life knows the supreme Brahman.
 They therefore know the Support also.

18. He whose head is Universal Fire,
 who has for his eyes the Angiras
 and for his limbs the practitioners of sorcery--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

19. He whose mouth, so they say, is Brahman,
 whose tongue is a whip steeped in honey,
 of whom Viraj is considered the udder--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

20. Out of his body were carved the verses,
 the formulas being formed from the shavings.
 His hairs are the songs, his mouth the hymns
 of the Seers Atharvan and Angiras--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

21. The branch of Nonbeing which is far-extending
 men take to be the highest one of all.
 They reckon as inferior those who worship
 your other branch, the branch of Being.

22. In whom the Adityas, Rudras and Vasus,
 are held together, in whom are set firm
 worlds--that which was and that which shall be--
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

23. Whose treasure hoard the three and thirty Gods
 forever guard--today who knows its contents?
 Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

24. In whom the Gods, knowers of Brahman,
 acknowledge Brahman as the Supreme--
 he who knows the Gods face to face
 is truly a Knower, a Vehicle of Brahman.

25. Great are the Gods who were born from Nonbeing,
 yet men aver this Nonbeing to be
 the single limb of the Support, the great Beyond.

26. The limb in which the Support, when generating,
 evolved the Ancient One--who knows this limb
 knows too by that same knowledge the Ancient One.

27. It was from his limb that the thirty-three Gods
 distributed portions among themselves.

Thus in truth only knowers of Brahman
are also knowers of the thirty-three Gods.

28. Men recognize the Golden Embryo
as the unutterable, the Supreme.

Yet it was the Support who in the beginning
poured forth upon the world that stream of gold.

29. In the Support the worlds consist; in him
Creative Fervor and Order have their ground.

You I have known, O Support, face to face,
in Indra wholly concentrated.

30. In Indra the worlds consist; in Indra
Creative Fervor and Order have their ground.

You I have known, O Indra, face to face,
in the Support wholly established.

31. Before dawn and sunrise man invokes
name after name. This Unborn sprang to birth
already with full sovereignty empowered.
Than he nothing higher ever existed.

32. Homage to him of whom the earth is the model,
the atmosphere his belly, who created the sky
from his head. Homage to this supreme Brahman!

33. Homage to him whose eye is the sun
and the moon which is ever renewed, whose mouth
is the Fire. Homage to this supreme Brahman!

34. Homage to him whose in-breath and out-breath
is the Wind, whose eyes are the Angirases,
whose wisdom consists in the cardinal points.

Homage once again to this supreme Brahman!

35. By the Support are held both heaven and earth,
by the Support the broad domain of space,
by the Support the six divergent directions,
by the Support is this whole world pervaded.

36. Homage to him who, born of labor
and Creative Fervor, has entered all the worlds,
who has taken Soma for his own exclusive possession.

Homage to this Supreme Brahman!

37. How does the wind not cease to blow?

How does the mind take no repose?

Why do the waters, seeking to reach truth,
never at any time cease flowing?

38. A mighty wonder in the midst of creation moves,
thanks to Fervor, on the waters' surface.

To him whatever Gods there are adhere
like branches of a tree around the trunk.

39. To whom the Gods always with hands and feet,
with speech, ear, and eye bring tribute unmeasured
in a well-measured place of sacrifice.

Tell me of that Support--who may he be?

40-41. In him exists no darkness, no evil.

In him are all the lights, including the three
that are in the Lord of Life. The one who knows
the Reed of gold standing up in the water
is truly the mysterious Lord of Life.

1. Fervor: tapas.

Order: rita eternal Order, Sacred Law.

Faith: shaddha, cf. § I 36.

Truth: satya.

2. Support: skambha, throughout.

Fire: Agni.

Wind: Matarishvan, also a form of Agni.

Moon: the yardstick for measuring time.

4. "Whom" could equally well be rendered by "what" here and in all the succeeding verses.
7. Lord of Life: Prajapati, throughout.
Propped up: the root stambh-, to fix, to support, etc., is evidently connected with skambha (stambha is also a pillar, post, support, cf. RV IV, 13, 5). Skambha is more basic and interior to the universe than its creator, Prajapati.
8. The penetration of space. The portion that did not enter: i.e., his transcendent part, cf. RV X, 90, 1; 3 (§ I 5).
9. The penetration of time.
10. Holy Word: brahman, which here could also be translated by "World principle" Cf RV X 129 1 (§ I 1).
11. Creative Fervor: tapas.
Cosmic Order: rita.
13. Affixed: samahita, collected, united. The Skambha is the principle that unites all the Vedic Gods.
For the number of the Gods, cf. also BU III, 9, 1-9 (§ VI 2).
14. Hymns: the Rig Veda.
Songs: the Sama Veda.
Sacrificial formulas: the Yajur Veda.
- Single Seer: ekarishi, often refers to the sun. Cf. the mystical use of this term in the U (IsU 16; § VII 31, MundU III, 2, 10; § I 37), although it also appears as the name of a rishi (cf. BU IV, 6, 3).
15. Man: purusa. The coincidentia oppositorum: all meet in Man. Cf. RV X, 121, 2 (§ I 4). Cf CU III, 19, 2, for the metaphor of the ocean and the arteries.
16. Veins: nadi. This verse begins the anthropocosmic description which is continued in vv. 18 sq.
17. The divine in Man: brahman in purusa.
Highest Lord: paramesthin. There are, so to speak, four aspects of the Absolute; in order of interiority they are: Prajapati-Paramesthin-Purusa-Brahman.
18. Universal Fire: vaisvanara, the sun.
Practitioners of sorcery: yatahav or demons. Evil is part of cosmic reality.
19. Whip steeped in honey: cf V IX, 1 where the whip symbolizes a cosmological principle.
Viraj: the cosmic Cow, Speech.
20. The four Vedas originate from Skambha.
21. Cf. TU II, 6 (§ I 7). Priority is here given to the ontic apophatism which is developed later in the Indian tradition.
23. For the treasure, cf. AV X, 2, 31-32 (§ III A a Introduction).
24. Face to face: pratyaksam, directly, or else it refers to Brahman, in which case it would mean: "He is a knower of the visible [manifest] Brahman." TU I, 1 (§ VI 10) confirms the latter meaning.
25. The Gods also come out of Nothing.
This "single limb," ekam tad angam, of Skambha has sometimes been interpreted as the linga, the male organ, which is a symbol of the creative principle.
26. The Ancient One: purana, the original, primeval principle, in BU IV, 4, 18 (§§ VI 11), related to Brahman.
27. Portions: referring to the sacrifice of the purusa whose parts are distributed (cf. RV X, 90, 7; 11; § I 5).
28. Golden Embryo: hiranyagarbha, as a manifestation of the nonmanifested. Supreme. Skambha is prior even to him. Cf. RV X, 121, 1 (§ I 4); AV IV, 2, 7.
29. Indra is here identified with the supreme God.
Face to face: pratyaksam; here too the other meaning, "visible, manifest," is also possible. It could be understood that Indra is the manifest form of the invisible Skambha.
31. For the birth of the Unborn, cf. RV X, 82, 6 (§ VII 12); BU IV, 4, 20-26 (§§ VI 11; VI 6).
32. Model: prama, it can also mean basis, foundation (i.e., the feet of the cosmic purusa).
34. Whose wisdom. . . : prajna; one could also translate: who made of the directions his consciousness.
35. Six. . . directions: the four cardinal points together with the above and the below.
37. The waters: a clear reference to the intimate connection between the cosmic and the spiritual elements (apah and satyam).
38. An allusion to the cosmic Tree. Cf. RV III, 8 (§ III 19 and Introduction).
- 40-41. The three lights are probably fire, moon, and sun. Cf. RV VII, 101, 2 (§ VII Bc Antiphon).
Mysterious: guhya, secret, hidden.
Reed of gold: a similar idea to that of the Golden Germ, but not referring here to the seed of the soma-plant as in RV IV, 58, 5. Three additional stanzas (vv. 42-44) have been omitted here because they are a digression from the theme of the hymn.
- The Birth of God
Hiranyagarbha

4 "To the Unknown God," Deo ignoto, is the title that, since the days of Max Muller, has usually been given to this solemn hymn of praise and glorification of the Supreme, whose name is kept in suspense until the final and perhaps later interpolated verse. 14 The poem chants the majesty of the cosmos and the glory of its Master whom it is incumbent upon Man to adore. One feels, however, that the rishi is tormented as well as enchanted by the splendor of a world so near and tangible, yet so inexplicable and elusive.

Three leading themes concerning the mystery of existence emerge like melodies in a concerto, now sounding together in harmony and counterpoint, now repeated singly or with clashing effect. These three closely connected melodies are all expressed in the first stanza: (a) the origin of reality ("In the beginning arose the Golden Germ"); (b) the Lordship of God ("He was, as soon as born, the Lord of Being"); (c) the human adventure of returning to the primeval state ("What God shall we adore with our oblation?").

a) Verses 1, 7, and 8 explain the divine origin in terms of the cosmic egg, well known to both the Indian and other cosmogonies. Something happened in the womb of the Supreme; it stirred, evolved, it came to be, it manifested itself. Theological thinking will later say that the movement, if any, is seen only from our human point of view, but the Rig Veda is not concerned with systematic development and the language is both poetical and mystical, using symbols that disclose themselves only to a meditative gaze, as is suggested here by the symbol of the risen sun, the most powerful symbol for the hiranyagarbha, the Golden Germ. We cannot call this first step a creation: God is not created. Nor can we call it evolution in the usual sense of the word, nor a becoming, as if God first were not and later came to be. Vedic thought here struggles with the primordial problem of the piercing into the very nature of the Godhead and the luminous discovery of its dynamism and life. God as God is only coextensive with beings; God is a relative term, related to the creatures; God is not God to himself; Being appears when the beings are also there. And yet, "previous" to all this there seems to be an internal "divine" life, a disclosure, an explosion, a birth inside the ultimate mystery itself. The idea behind hiranyagarbha is that there is a production, a process within the "womb" of the Ultimate. Because there is life, there is a birth in and of God. The classical term is sacrifice, as used in verse 8: creation as a sacrifice. But for this the Golden Germ has had to disclose itself and be born. God is born (even to himself). This is the mystery of this hymn. The Birth of God is our title.

b) Once born, the Golden Germ becomes the Lord, the Lord of Being itself, in the general and also in the partitive sense: Lord of Being and of beings. He is the only king, and the poet raises his voice in praise and celebration of the lordship, both cosmic and human, of this unknown and nameless God, who, being a Father of all creation, transcends it. It is his lordship that gives unity and harmony to the whole world.

c) Who, what, shall be the object of our worship? To whom shall we direct it? This question encompasses the whole of human destiny: Man's struggle to overcome all existential hazards in order to reach his final goal, which, in a way, is a recovery of his primordial divine state. Two fundamental ideas are contained in this famous line, repeated like a refrain at the end of each verse. The first idea concerns the very name of God; the second, our relation with him.

It is often said that this refrain tells us, certainly, that there is a God, but that he is unknown. Yet this conclusion is not quite in accordance either with the letter of the text or with its spirit. Nor is it in accordance with the main tenor of the Vedas, which are not exotic texts or agnostic treatises but plain and majestic religious chants to the divine as an integral part, indeed the kernel, of human life. God and the Gods are living realities in the whole Vedic Revelation. Furthermore, the text does not literally say that the name of God is unknown, for in fact it discloses the name of God; it says only that it is neither a proper name, nor a substantive, nor a substance, nor a "thing," but simply the interrogative pronoun itself. Never has a pronoun been more properly used instead of an unutterable and nonexistent name. His name is simply ka (who?) or, to be even more exact, kasmai (to whom?).¹⁵ That this is the name of Prajapati, the Father of all beings, is explicitly affirmed in the following myth, which is reported with slight variations in several texts:

Indra, the last born of Prajapati, was appointed by his Father Lord of the Gods, but they would not accept him. Indra then asked his Father to give him the splendor that is in the sun, so as to be able to be Lord over the Gods. Prajapati answered: "If I give it to you, then who shall I be?" "You shall be what you say: who? [ka], and from then on this was his name."¹⁶ God is an interrogation in the dative, a to whom? toward whom all our actions, thoughts, desires, are directed; God is the problematic and interrogative end of all our dynamism. If the proper form of the Greek name for God is the vocative, the Vedic name is a dative: it is not only the term of invocation, it is also the receiver of sacrifice. The contemplative slant will prevail, however, and the name will be the pure nominative: ka and ultimately aham.¹⁷

This brings us to our second remark. The to whom is not simply a theoretical question; it is the object of our adoration, the term of our worship, the aim of the sacrifice. God cannot be "known" if by knowledge we understand a merely mental consciousness; he can be reached only by sacrifice, by holy action, by orthopraxis, the ultimate concern of all religion. Sacrifice, moreover, needs to know only the interrogative of God. The living God with whom the sacrifice is concerned is not a concept, not a defined and graspable reality, but rather the term of the actual sacrifice which, though constantly running the risk of missing the target, finds in the dynamic to whom its justification and its reward. Sacrifice is not a manipulation of the divine, but the existential leap by which Man plunges, as it were, into the not-yet-existent with the cosmic confidence that the very plunge effects the emergence of that reality into which he plunges. The only oblation that the Lord of the Gods, of Men and of the universe, can fittingly accept is the oblation that enables him to go on creating the world by the reenactment of the sacrifice of himself, that sacrifice by which the world is called upon to be.¹⁸ By this act Man shares in the cosmic process by which God creates the world. The last verse exemplifies a highly characteristic and important feature of the Vedas which we term "cosmotheandric," with reference to a particular union that takes place between the human and the divine, or, as here,

between the spiritual and the material, or, in yet another context, between the natural and the supernatural. This life-affirming attitude is far from being a shallow naturalism or a bucolic approach to life; it is a deeply religious and consciously theological attitude. We may substantiate this by simply commenting on the word rayi, appearing in the last verse.

The word is commonly translated as "riches."¹⁹ It derives from the root ra-, to give, to impart, to bestow.²⁰ Rayi is then a gift, a present, in this instance bestowed on Man by the divine as a reward and as the fruit of a sacrifice offered in integrity of heart. It means both material prosperity and internal happiness, spiritual wealth. Here it is a gift of grace conferred over and above Man's normal lot. When there remains nothing to be desired, joy is full, and fullness of spiritual wealth is rayi, a treasure of riches, the symbols of which in Vedic parlance are cows, horses, chariots, food, sons, gold.²¹ It would be "katachronic" to understand this symbolism as evidencing a materialistic outlook, but it would be no less inappropriate to interpret it in a disemphatic and spiritualized way, as if it were referring solely to intangible "graces." As we shall see later, the word rayi is used in the Upanisads to express one of the two factors or elements of the primordial couple which are variously termed Matter and Spirit, Grace and Life, Wealth and Breath.²²

iranyagarbha

RV X, 121

1. In the beginning arose the Golden Germ:
he was, as soon as born, the Lord of Being,
sustainer of the Earth and of this Heaven.
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
2. He who bestows life-force and hardy vigor,
whose ordinances even the Gods obey,
whose shadow is immortal life--and death--
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
3. Who by his grandeur has emerged sole sovereign
of every living thing that breathes and slumbers,
he who is Lord of man and four-legged creatures
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
4. To him of right belong, by his own power,
the snow-clad mountains, the world-stream, and the sea.
His arms are the four quarters of the sky.
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
5. Who held secure the mighty Heavens and Earth,
who established light and sky's vast vault above,
who measured out the ether in mid-spheres--
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
6. Toward him, trembling, the embattled forces,
riveted by his glory, direct their gaze.
Through him the risen sun sheds forth its light.
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
7. When came the mighty Waters, bringing with them
the universal Germ, whence sprang the Fire,
thence leapt the God's One Spirit into being.
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
8. This One who in his might surveyed the Waters
pregnant with vital forces, producing sacrifice,
he is the God of Gods and none beside him.
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
9. O Father of the Earth, by fixed laws ruling,
O Father of the Heavens, pray protect us,
O Father of the great and shining Waters!
What God shall we adore with our oblation?
10. O Lord of Creatures, Father of all beings,
you alone pervade all that has come to birth.
Grant us our heart's desire for which we pray.
May we become the lords of many treasures!

1. The Golden Germ: hiranyagarbha, the source of golden light, the Sun-God, the seed of all creation. Cf. RV X, 82, 5-6 (§ VII 12), which tells us of the cosmic egg conceived as a germ by the primeval waters. Cf. AV X, 7, 28 (§ I 3); SB VI, 1, 1,

10-11; XI, 1, 6, 1-2 (§ I 6); CU III, 19; SU III, 4 (§ I 28); IV. 12; also KathU IV, 6 (§ VII 40).

The Lord: lit. the one Lord, patir eka.

Sustainer: dadhara from the root dhr- to hold (whence dharma), to support, to sustain (the earth and this heaven). For ka cf. SB IV, 5, 6, 4.

2. Obey: upasate from upa (near) and the root as- (to sit), to worship, to respect, to honor.

3. Slumbers: nimsatah from ni and the root mis- which may mean either "winking" or "sleeping." Cf. AV IX, 2, 23 (§ II 12; MundU II 2, 1 (§ VI 3).

Lord: isha, from the root ish- to be master.

4. The world-stream (surrounding the earth): rasa

5. Cf. RV II, 12, 2 (§ II 4); also X, 66, 9, to Vishvedevah, where it is said that

The Holy Ones engendered, according to Laws,
the heavens, the earth, the waters, plants, and trees.

As a help to men they filled the world with Light.

6. The embattled forces: krandasi, figuratively means Heaven and Earth, though it also suggests two armies helping the Gods in their fight against the demons.

10. Lord of creatures: Prajapati.

Treasures: rayi. Cf. §§ II, 6; II 34; VII Introductions. A literal translation of the last two verses is:

What we, desiring, offer to you [in sacrifice],

let that be ours. May we be owners of gifts.

The Primordial Man

Purusa Sukta

5 "This Is the Man!" Ecce homo, could also serve as title for this hymn, one of the most frequently quoted and most important hymns of the Rig Veda. It reveals to us the character of the creation sacrifice: its all-embracing function in which the entire universe is involved. It is neither a merely divine affair, nor a purely human endeavor, nor a blind cosmic process; it is human, divine, and cosmic all in one. That is, it is cosmotheandric. God, Man, and the universe are correlates. God without Man is nothing, literally "no-thing." Man without God is exclusively a "thing," not a person, not a really human being, while the world, the cosmos, without Man and God is "any-thing," without consistency and being; it is sheer unexisting chaos. The three are constitutively connected. It is this cosmotheandric communion, described with such inspiration in this unique hymn, which has frightened some commentators and caused them either to minimize its importance or to brand it as simply pantheistic. Nothing separates Man from God. There is neither intermediary nor barrier between them. To discover that nothing separates us from Him is realization, which can often take the form of the discovery of this "nothingness."

The primordial Man is not simply another name for a heteronomous God, nor a mere euphemism for an autonomic individual Man, but the living expression of the ontonomic Man, that total reality of which we are a reflection, a reflection that contains the whole, indeed, but in a rather limited and all too often narrow way. God is not totally other than Man, nor is the world an entity utterly foreign to Man. Man is more than a single individual and more than the sum of all individuals. Without this internal and constitutive link with the whole of reality, any life of contemplation would become sheer egoism or a kind of spiritual narcissism. It would become the ivory tower of a would-be reality, rather than the building of a temple containing all that is. Authentic spiritual life or dharmic existence amounts to assimilating in one's self the maximum possible of the purusa condition of reality. The consecrated expression for this is realization, which means not only to become aware of reality but to become it; that is why many schools will say that to become aware and to be (that which one becomes aware of) are one and the same thing.

Purusa is not only the cosmic Man; it is also the personal aspect of the whole of reality. The very concept of person excludes isolation, alienation, and solipsistic solitariness and expresses interconnection and unity. The concept of person involves essentially an internal relationship. Everything that is, is a member of the one and unique purusa. To have an insight into the working of the cosmic as well as of the historic and divine laws governing this integral biology is to share in the performance of the sacrifice by means of which the body of the purusa is constantly dismembered and reconstructed. Real time is this process; the rest is only fallacy.

This hymn, of rather late Vedic times, though undoubtedly preu, describes the formation of the world from the body of the primordial Man who is so vast that he covers and even overlaps the earth, not only in space but also in time, for he covers the three ages of the past, the present, and the future. Only one quarter of the cosmic Person is visible and emerges into the sphere of the manifested. Temporal life is only a quarter of the whole Man. We find here the image of the four quarters of reality, which has had a long history in the cosmological conceptions of Man up to the present day. Four is the terrestrial number par excellence and at the same time expresses the mystery of reality, three quarters of which are immortal, concealed, and unspoiled by the shadow of their own external manifestations. On the other hand, nobody can stand for a long time on one single foot, that is, on the external, empirical realm alone. To be conscious of a tree's roots does not imply their

conversion into branches.

From the purusa, viraj, the first divine emanation, proceeded. This uncreated being, whose ontological function is mediatorial in character, ascends and descends into every being and every activity; it is feminine, not only in gender but also in role. Thus the feminine principle is born and from woman henceforth Men are born. With the birth of Men history begins. But history is not all, for the Man overlaps the earth and is related also to the Gods. These Gods stretch out the purusa's body, just as threads are stretched on the loom, and offer him as an oblation. He is offered in his entirety according to the prescribed rites and with the use of the proper elements, which are represented by the seasons, ritual butter being springtime, wood for the fire being summertime, and the offering being autumn.

In verses 8 to 14 the purusa sacrifices himself by dismembering himself and scattering around the necessary number of portions for the completion of the work of creation. He performs an act of self-immolation so that the universe may come into being. From this sacrifice offered completely, that is, from the limbs of the cosmic Man, come all things both animate and inanimate: animals of every type (8, 10); liturgical formulas (9); the four castes of men (12); the cosmic powers (13-14). From his spirit comes the moon, from his eyes the sun, from his mouth Indra and Agni (fire), from his breath the wind, from his navel the air, from his head the sky, from his feet the earth, from the ears the points of the compass--nothing, nobody, is omitted. Verse 15 sums up the idea of the sacrifice and the last stanza repeats the underlying thought of the whole hymn, that the cosmic Man is the total sacrifice. By sacrifice creation reverts to the Man. The sacrifice of the cosmic Man signifies divine transcendence investing humanity. This universal sacrifice possesses a twofold dynamism, for it includes a sacramental downward movement of the All toward the earth and a sacrificial upward movement of the world toward the All; these two aspects are inseparable one from the other precisely because of the unity of the integral sacrifice.

<Font=5Purusa Sukta

RV X, 90

1. A thousand-headed is the Man
with a thousand eyes, a thousand feet;
encompassing the Earth all sides,
he exceeded it by ten fingers' breadth.
2. The Man, indeed, is this All,
what has been and what is to be
the Lord of the immortal spheres
which he surpasses by consuming food.
3. Such is the measure of his might,
and greater still than this is Man.
All beings are a fourth of him,
three fourths are the immortal in heaven.
4. Three fourths of Man ascended high,
one fourth took birth again down here.
From this he spread in all directions
into animate and inanimate things.
5. From him the Shining one was born;
from this Shining one Man again took birth.
As soon as born, he extended himself all
over the Earth both behind and before.
6. Using the Man as their oblation,
the Gods performed the sacrifice.
Spring served them for the clarified butter,
Summer for the fuel, and Autumn for the offering.
7. This evolved Man, then first born,
they besprinkled on the sacred grass.
With him the Gods performed the sacrifice,
as did also the heavenly beings and seers.
8. From this sacrifice, fully accomplished,
was gathered curd mixed with butter.
Thence came the creatures of the air,
beasts of the forest and those of the village.
9. From this sacrifice, fully accomplished,
were born the hymns and the melodies;

from this were born the various meters;
from this were born the sacrificial formulas.

10. From this were horses born, all creatures
such as have teeth in either jaw;

from this were born the breeds of cattle;
from this were born sheep and goats.

11. When they divided up the Man,
into how many parts did they divide him?
What did his mouth become? What his arms?
What are his legs called? What his feet?

12. His mouth became the brahmin; his arms
became the warrior-prince, his legs
the common man who plies his trade.
The lowly serf was born from his feet.

13. The Moon was born from his mind;
the Sun came into being from his eye;
from his mouth came Indra and Agni,
while from his breath the Wind was born.

14. From his navel issued the Air;
from his head unfurled the Sky,
the Earth from his feet, from his ear the four directions.
Thus have the worlds been organized.

15. Seven were the sticks of the enclosure,
thrice seven the fuel sticks were made,
when the Gods, performing the sacrifice,
bound the Man as the victim.

16. With the sacrifice the Gods sacrificed to the sacrifice.
Those were the first established rites.
These powers ascended up to heaven
where dwell the ancient Gods and other beings.

1. Cf. AV XIX, 6, where a similar description is given. The word "thousand" stands for innumerable, or even for an infinite number. Cf. also YV XXXI.

For the idea of the primeval sacrifice, cf. RV X, 81, 3 (§ VII 7); X, 130 (§ III 14); TS, VII, 1, 1, 4; TB II, 1, 2, 1; AB II, 18 (VII, 8); VII, 19 (XXXIV, 1); and §§ III 27; 28.

For the purusa in general, cf. AV X, 2; XI, 8, 4-34; etc., and for the Upanisadic idea of the purusa, cf. § VI 7.

2. The equation without any further qualification of the idam sarvam, "all this" (the universe), with the purusa has caused this hymn to be labeled pantheistic.

The "Immortal spheres" is generally understood as the Gods, who are nourished with amṛta, the drink of immortality.

At least six different versions have been given of the second part of this rc-- an interesting text for the theology of food.

3. Cf. RV I, 164, 45 (§ I 11); AV II, 1, 2.

5. From him: tasmat, the one quarter of the purusa.

The Shining one: viraj, "the cosmic waters" (Edgerton), "the cosmic egg" (Raghavan), "Mother principle," "mahat," "yoni" (V. S. Agrawala). It can be understood as a feminine principle, a kind of "primitive shakti" (Renou), a cosmic source, a womb fecundated by the purusa. The union of viraj and purusa gives birth to viraja (son of Viraj). Cf. RV X, 72, 4-5 (§ VII 2); AV VIII, 10 (the whole hymn is to viraj); IX 2, 5; XI, 8, 30; BU IV, 2, 3.

The theology of viraj might offer a fruitful point of encounter between the different notions of the first uncreated emanations of the Supreme which are to be found in more than one religious tradition: shakti, logos, wisdom, spirit, preexistent Christ, etc. The end of this rc can be interpreted thus "He stretched himself further as Gods, men, etc., then he created the earth and the astral bodies."

6. Cf. RV X, 81, 1 (§ VII 7). The trinitarian character of the sacrifice has been stressed time and again by scholars of different ages: the three seasons, the three elements, the three offerings, and, more particularly, the trilogy of sacrifice, sacrificed, and sacrificer.

7. A. K. Coomaraswamy renders this freely: "They made the first-born Person their sacrificial victim

"Heavenly beings: sadhyas, "a class of semi-divine beings" (Dandekar), "a class of ancient Gods or demi-gods" (Edgerton), "a class of celestial beings, probably ancient divine sacrificers" (Griffith), "an old class of divine beings" (Macdonell), "those who are not spiritually realized" (Renou). Cf. CU III, 10

Seers: rishis, prophets.

To sprinkle is here a cultic, sacrificial act. Man, once born on earth, is being sacrificed again by all the powers of the world.

8. From this sacrifice, fully accomplished: sarvahut, the integral sacrifice (consummatum est !), the sacrifice of everything without residue, the holocaust. "The sacrifice in which the omniformed purusa was sacrificed" (Sayana), "sacrifice completely offered" (Zaehner, Macdonell), "fully offered" (Bose), "offered as whole-offering" (Edgerton), "great general

sacrifice" (Griffith), "sacrifice offert en forme totale" (Renou), "vollständig geopferter Opfer" (Geldner), "from this sacrifice of the Cosmic Being" (Raghavan), etc.

9. Hymns: rcah.

Melodies: samani.

Sacrificial formulas: yajus.

12. The first clear mention of the four great social divisions. Common man. . . : vaishya. Lowly serf: shudra

15. Man as the victim: purusam pashum, the purusa as animal for the sacrifice. Important passage for the theory underlying human sacrifice. The shruti suggests that it is a degeneration (occurring only when man is likened to an animal). Cf. the legend of Shunahshepa (§ III 23).

16. First established rites: dharmani prathamani, "the first ordinance" (Macdonell), "statutes, ordinances" (Griffith), "the first religious rites" (Zaehner), "die ersten Normen (des Opfers)" (Geldner), etc. Cf. RV I, 164, 50; X, 130, 3 (§ III 14); AV VII, 5, 1 (§ III 15); SB X, 2, 2, 1 (§ III 21).

The Sacrifice of God

Devayajna

6 In the Brahmanas we find on the whole the same basic ideas as in the Vedas regarding the origins, but here the prelude of Being is developed and emphasized along the lines of the cosmic sacrifice and its liturgical meaning. Prajapati procreates by summoning his creative energy, by performing that burning concentration known as tapas. Not having anything out of which to create the world, he has to resort to himself, dismembering himself, offering himself as a sacrifice, falling into pieces so that life is drained from him. The creatures he has begotten are not only the whole of him, so that, when the creatures are there, there is no longer place for him, but also they abandon him--because he is no longer! It is the function and privilege of Agni, whom we could call the divine Redeemer, to recompose him. The waters, hearing of Prajapati's situation, run to his aid and offer the agnihotra sacrifice and thus Prajapati recovers his life. Here is a perpetual process of death and resurrection, described in detail by one of the texts that treat this theme: "He reflected upon himself, 'How can I bring these beings into my body again? How can I get them back into my body? How can I become again the body of all these things?'"²³ A vivid description follows as to how Prajapati made himself a number of bodies in order to win back his creation.

Creation is pictured here as the self-immolation of the Creator. It is only because Prajapati sacrifices himself fully that he can give to creation his whole Self. It is only by the same sacrifice in the opposite direction, by the same sacrifice in which he has himself been offered as oblation, that Prajapati is snatched back from death. He has been sacrificed and he lives; he has been dismembered but stays the same because the sacrifice has recomposed him. This almost dialectical situation may explain why in some texts Prajapati is considered to be half mortal and half immortal. These utterances may be considered as descriptions of that primordial act which, being primordial, transcends time and thus cannot be relegated only to the beginning. It is not possible to express simultaneously in adequate terms the two poles of the event, if we may call an event that act without which no other "happening" has any possibility of happening!

It is unfortunate that certain interpretations of these and similar texts have given the impression that the Brahmanas deal only with empty ritualisms or magic procedures, or even that they do not relate to the present-day form of human consciousness, but mirror a form of mind that might perhaps be called primitive if it were less sophisticated. That there are obsolete parts and metaphors that to a certain type of mind sound odd should not discourage our attempt to understand more deeply the still valid message of the Brahmanas.

<Font=5Devayajna

SB II, 2, 4, 1

i) In the beginning, to be sure, the Lord of creatures was One only. He reflected, "How may I be propagated?" He kindled his own ardor, performing this very act with fervor. He generated the Firstborn from his mouth; and because he generated him from his mouth, therefore the Firstborn is a consumer of food.

SB XI, 1, 6, 1

ii) In the beginning, to be sure, this world was water, nothing but a sea of water. The waters desired, "How can we be propagated?" They kindled their own ardor, performing this very act with fervor. While summoning their creative energy they warmed up and a golden egg was produced. At that time, to be sure, the year was not yet existing. This golden egg floated about for as long as a year.

SB XI, 1, 6, 17

iii) The highest Lord said to his father, the Lord of all creatures, "I have found the sacrifice that fulfills wishes: let me do it for you!" "Be it so!" he answered. He accordingly performed it for him. Having sacrificed, he [the Father of creatures]

desired: "Would I were everything here!" He became the Breath, for Breath is everything here.
SB XIII, 7, 1, 1

iv) Brahma, the self-existent, was performing fervid concentration. "In fervid concentration," he reflected, "there is no infinity. Come, let me sacrifice myself in living things and all living things in myself." Then, having sacrificed himself in all living things and all living things in himself, he acquired greatness, self-radiance, and sovereignty.
SB III, 9, 1, 1

v) Now the Lord of creatures, having brought forth living beings, felt himself as it were emptied. The creatures turned away from him; nor did they abide with him for his joy and for his sustenance.
SBX, 4, 2, 2

vi) Having brought forth all things that exist, he felt like one emptied out and was afraid of death.
SB VI, 1, 2, 12-13

vii) When he had procreated all the beings and run through the whole gamut of creation he fell into pieces. . . . When he was fallen into pieces, his breath departed from the midst of him, and when his breath had departed, the Gods abandoned him. He said to Agni, "put me, I pray you, together again."
TB 11, 3, 6, 1

viii) When he had produced the creatures, Prajapati fell into pieces. Being reduced to a (mere) heart he was lying exhausted. He uttered a cry: "Alas, my life!" The waters heard him. They came to his aid and by means of sacrifice of the Firstborn they restored to him his sovereignty.

i) In the beginning: idam agr'eka evasa.
The Lord of creatures: Prajapati.

May I be propagated: prajayeya (passive of pra-jan-; optative to express possibility or probability in the near future), to be born, to be begotten and born again, to be propagated.

He kindled his own ardor, performing this very act with fervor: tapo 'tapyata, warmed up his own heat.

The Firstborn: Agni. Cf. SB II, 2, 4, 2: "He thus generated him the first [in the beginning: agre] of the Gods; therefore Agni [is he called], for agni, it is said, is the same as agre." and in the same text Agni is called again purva, the First. Cf. also SB II, 5, 1, 1.

ii) In the beginning . . . this world was water: lit., water was in the beginning, apo ha va' idam agre. They desired, "How can we be propagated?": ta akamayanta kathamnu prajayemahi. In SB XI, 1, 1, 1, Prajapati is identified with yajna and this latter with the year (Agni, death, and time). In SB XI, 1, 6, 13 Prajapati considers the year as a counterpart of himself. The waters are also the result of a sacrifice.

iii) The highest Lord: Paramesthin.
The Lord of all creatures: Prajapati.

Paramesthin has already performed this sacrifice (becoming the waters, SB XI, 1, 6, 16); Prajapati performs it repeatedly and the whole world of Gods and beings appears (vv.sq.). The procedure is that each time one performs it for another:

Paramesthin for Prajapati, the latter for Indra, his son and Indra for his brothers Agni and Soma; these five deities went on performing this wish-fulfilling sacrifice.

Breath: prana.

iv) Brahma, the self-existent, was performing fervid concentration: brahma vai svayambhu tapo' tapyata.

No infinity: na . . . ananyam, no "un-ending," no limitlessness.

v) The exhaustion of Prajapati is literally an emptying of himself.

vi) Afraid of death: sa mrtyor bibhayam cakara. How can Prajapati be reintegrated? Is self-oblation going to be the only means? The root srj- used here means, as in the preceding text, to create, to produce, to bring forth, and also to emanate.

vii) He fell into pieces: vyasransata from the root srans- to fall asunder (as a result of "running through the whole creation"). His breath departed: visrastat pranah, i.e., death ensued.

Put me, I pray you, together again: tvam ma samdhehi. Restoration is achieved by self-oblation, through Agni.

viii) Being reduced to a (mere) heart: sa hridayam bhuto 'shayat, says the text, and the commentary adds: hridayamavashesah san vyavahartum ashaktah lit. "being reduced to the heart, he was unable to manifest [express]." In other words, only the heart of Prajapati remains, all his other parts having become creation. God is the heart of the world!

Life: atman.

In the Beginning

Agre

7 In the beginning, that is to say, at every beginning. The Upanisadic speculation interiorizes the whole of the Vedic message, but not along temporal lines. The interiorization is within Man certainly, but it is not temporal, for primordial Man is not considered as a historical being. The "beginning" of the cosmological hymns corresponds with the beginning of Man, but it is

not only or mainly a historical beginning or a temporal origin, but rather an ontological principle. The process by which Being springs to "Be" concerns not only the past or the archaeological foundations of the universe or our own temporal origins, but also our profound inmost structure. To know this process means to be involved ontologically in it. One does not reach the "beginning" by riding back on a temporal line but by piercing deep into a Being whose core is not made of time. The Upanisads relate the dawn of human consciousness. Man becomes aware of himself and by this same act becomes aware of his solitude and of the way to break through it. This is not just the desire of another, even of another like him or a part of him; it is a dynamism toward the fullness of the Self, the integration of the Self with the entire universe. To become aware of the Self does not mean to be conscious of one's own self; on the contrary, it means to have lost any hankering after the small self (ahamkara) and, being lost to one's self, to discover, recover, be, the Self (atman).

The first experience is the human experience of solitude, of darkness, of anxiety. This experience, endured to its very end, leads to the overcoming of its negative aspect and the overwhelming discovery of the joy of the imperishable. There is certainly a return, though it is not by any means a return with empty hands. But we are still in the prelude of the whole cosmic adventure of all that is. The selection of texts gives an idea of how the Upanisads echo what the Vedas have chanted, and how they orchestrate the tunes of future Indian speculation.²⁴

<Font=5Agre

BU, I, 2, 1

i) 1. In the beginning there was nothing here whatsoever. All this was swathed in Death--in Hunger, for hunger indeed is death. Then he resolved to himself: "Would that I had a self!" So he moved around in worship. While he was worshipping, water was born.

BU I, 4, 1-5; 17

ii) 1. In the beginning this was the Self alone, in the form of a Man. Looking around he saw nothing whatever except himself. He said in the beginning: "I am" and thence arose the name "I." So, even today, when a Man is addressed, he says in the beginning, "It is I," and then adds any other name he may have. Furthermore, since before the world came to be he had burned up all evils; he is Man. He who knows this also burns up whoever wants to be before him.

2. He was afraid; so, even today, one who is all alone is afraid. He thought to himself: "Since nothing exists except me, of what am I afraid?" Thereupon his fear vanished, for of what should he have been afraid? It is of a second that fear arises.

3. He found no joy; so, even today, one who is all alone finds no joy. He yearned for a second. He became as large as a man and a woman locked in close embrace. This self he split into two; hence arose husband and wife. Therefore, as Yajnavalkya used to observe: "Oneself is like half of a split pea." That is why this void is filled by woman. He was united with her and thence were born human beings.

4. She thought: "How can he unite with me, as he has brought me forth out of himself? Well, I will hide myself." She became a cow, but he became a bull and united with her. Hence cattle arose. She became a mare, he a stallion; she became a she-ass, he a male ass. He united with her and hence singlehoofed animals arose. She became a she-goat, he a he-goat; she became a sheep, he a ram. He united with her and hence goats and sheep arose. In this way he created everything that exists in pairs, down to the ants.

5. He realized: "I indeed am creation, for I produced all this"--for he had become the creation. And he who has this knowledge becomes [a creator] in that same creation.

17. In the beginning there was only the atman, One only. He desired: "May I have a wife in order to have offspring; may I have wealth in order to perform a work!" For desire reaches this far. Even if one wishes, one cannot obtain more than this. Therefore, even nowadays, if a man is alone, he desires: "May I have a wife in order to have offspring; may I have wealth in order to perform a work!" As long as he does not obtain each of these [desires], he thinks himself to be incomplete. His completeness, however, is this: the mind is his Self [atman]; speech is his wife; breath is his offspring; the eye is his human wealth, for he finds it with the eye; the ear is his divine wealth, for he hears it with the ear; the body [atman] is his work, for he works with the body. Fivefold, indeed, is the sacrifice, fivefold is the victim, fivefold is the man. Whatever there is, the whole universe, is fivefold. He attains all this, who knows thus.

AU I, 1, 1-4

iii) 1. In the beginning this was only one, the Self--no other thing that blinks whatever. He thought to himself: "Let me now create the worlds!"

2. He created the worlds of water, rays of light, death, and the waters:

Heaven and beyond is the world of water;

the sky above is the world of light;

this earth of us mortals is the world of death;

what lies below is the world of waters.

3. He thought [again] to himself: "Let me now create the protectors of the worlds." He raised a man from the waters and

conferred a form upon him.

4. He brooded over him. Once this was done a mouth broke open, similar to an egg. From the mouth the Word came out and from the Word fire.

TU II, 6-7

iv) 6. Nonexistent himself does he become
who thinks that Brahman is Nonbeing.

The one who knows that Brahman is,
he himself is recognized to be.

Next there come the supplementary questions:

Does anyone who does not know Brahman
proceed at death to the other world?

Or is it only the one who knows
who attains, at death, to the other world?

Brahman desired: "Would that I could become many! Let me procreate!" He practiced fervid concentration, he created the whole world, all that exists. Having created it, he penetrated within it. Having penetrated within it, he became both the actual and the beyond, both the manifest and the unmanifest, both the founded and the unfounded, both the conscious and the unconscious, both the real and the nonreal. The real became everything that exists here. That is what men call the real.

7. On this there is the following verse:

In the beginning all this was Nonbeing only.

Therefrom, indeed, was Being born.

That Being made itself by it self.

Hence this is designated the well-made.

That which is the well made, that is the essence. And [only] he who attains the essence becomes full of bliss. For who could otherwise live and breathe, if this space were not bliss? It is this [essence] which gives bliss. When man finds absence of fear and a firm ground in that which is invisible, selfless, inexpressible, nonstable, then he attains the state of fearlessness. But when he makes even a fine difference [between the atman and himself], then he has fear, and this is the fear of the one who thinks himself to be wise.

SU IV, 18

v) There where there is no darkness,
nor night, nor day,

nor Being, nor Nonbeing,

there is the Auspicious one alone,
absolute and eternal;

there is the glorious splendor
of that Light from whom in the beginning
sprang ancient wisdom.

MUND U I, 1, 6-7

vi) 6. That which cannot be seen or grasped,
is without family and caste, without eyes and ears,
without hands and feet, eternal, omnipresent,
all-pervading, most subtle--that is the Immutable,
regarded by the sages as the source of being.

7. As a spider spins and withdraws its thread,
as plants grow on earth and hair on the head
and body of a living man, so also
out of the Imperishable springs forth this all.

i) Death is here cosmic and spiritual, it is hiranyagarbha ; hunger is personal and material. These are two facets of the same entity i.e., Death. Prajapati is the eater of food, of all this universe; he eats whatever he has created. Death itself desires an atman. Death is the universal background which envelops everything.

Praise, worship (arka) has here a cosmic significance; also a pun is used in order to explain the birth of the waters and of the fire later on (the root arc-, to shine, to praise, and arka, water or fire).

4-6. Cf. § I 14.

ii) 1. Cf. § VI 8 and also MaitU II, 6.

A Man: purusa, person, the primordial Man, the theandric principle as in RV X, 90 (§ I5). We have here one of the most powerful accounts of the rise of human self-consciousness: the birth of reflection. The "I" is both the aham, unique and One-without-a-second, and also the still-to-be-liberated I which in spite of everything has no name other than "I."

I am: aham asmi. This is one of the highest revelations of reality, which should not be hypostatized upon a "He." That is to

say, "I am I" is not interchangeable with "He is I" or with "I am He," the first being only a mental projection and the second sheer blasphemy. Cf. KausU I, 6 (§ V 4) for the right place of the He: "What you are that am I" (yas twam asi so 'ham asmi.). The Sanskrit pun is untranslatable: purva, before; and us-, to burn, give pur-us-a, the Man.

2. Real anxiety is only fear of fear and thus a dread of utter nothingness. Our own image is frightening when it reflects its hollowness (cf. CU VIII, 7, 1 sq. § VI 6). A process of "conscientization" can rid us of dread, for confidence in the power of the mind tells us that, if there is nothing to frighten us, we have no reason to be fearful.

3. Again a play upon words: the Self split (pat-) unto husband (pati) and wife (patni). The ardhhanarishvara character of man is here symbolized. Man is androgynous as an anthropological reality. The desire for a second is only cathartic when it is a holistic movement toward integration, i.e., when it is not concupiscence but love.

5. To "become a creator" does not necessarily mean to be so substantially but to create along with him, i.e., to be, in the functional sense, creator, i.e., creating, because such a man really creates. No mystic would deny this experience, whatever wording one may use in order to describe it.

8-10. Cf. § VI 9.

16. Cf. § III 27.

17. Perform a work: mainly sacrifice, but secular work may also be understood.

Incomplete: akrtasna. Cf. SB X, 5, 3, 8.

His completeness. . . : i.e., man contains everything within himself, his mind (manas), speech (vac), breath (prana), eye (caksus), and ear (shrotra) being the five constituents of the human being. Cf. TU I, 7.

Fivefold . . . sacrifice: the pancamahayajna. Cf. § III 23.

iii) 1. The same verb is used throughout: srj- to create. The operative words are here again: idam, eka, agre, atman, loka.

2. A free translation is given in order to avoid explanations and awkward sentences where the meaning seems to offer no difficulty.

3. The central position of man (purusa) in creation is hereby stressed. Cf. CU III, 13, 6.

The atman gives a form to man; here the root murch-, to assume a shape or substance, is used. Murta is a form already solidified.

4. Cf. CU III, 19, 1.

iv) 3-5. Cf. § VI 7.

6. To know is to become the known. Knowledge implies assimilation and to know the nonexistent therefore, is self-annihilation. Every discourse on anything, even on the Ultimate, belongs to the objective order of the discourse itself. In a way it is not only the subject, but also the object, which sets the level of communication.

7. CU VI, 2, 1-2 (§ VI 2) contradicts the affirmation of Nonbeing as the origin of Being.

Well made: sukrta; just as in AU I, 2, 3, it is said of the purusa that he is a thing "well done," "well produced," "well created."

Essence: rasa. Cf. brahmarasa in KausU I, 5 (§ V 4).

Bliss: ananda.

Atmosphere: akasha, the all-pervading space.

Absence of fear: abhaya, fearlessness, peace. Cf. AV VI, 40 (§ II 35) and AV XIX, 15 (§ II 36).

Firm ground: pratistha-, support, foundation.

Nonstable: anilaya, lit., homeless, without nilaya, resting-place, abode, dwelling.

Thinks himself to be wise: viduso manvanasya; there is a variant reading: vuduso manvanasya, i.e., wise without thinking.

8-9. Cf. § VI 7.

v) Auspicious one: Siva.

Light: Savitri.

Cf. the tat savitur varenyam of the Gayatri mantra.

vi) 6. Immutable: avyaya, unchangeable.

Source of being: bhutayoni, the womb of existence.

7. For the image of the spider and its thread, cf. BU II, 1, 20 (§ VI 4), SU VI, 10 (§ VI 2), and, with another meaning, MaitU VI, 22 (§ VI 12).

Out of the Imperishable: aksarat. Cf. MundU II, 1, 1 (§ VI 7).

8-9. Cf. § II 11.

The Transcending Immanence

Antaryami

8 The Vedas have described the One as neither Being nor Non being, and the Gita now closes this section by repeating the same idea, affirming that the One is neither immanent nor transcendent but both at the same time in a unique manner. The Ultimate is the source and origin of all and yet is itself not contained or limited by anything. He transcends all immanence and is immanent in all transcendence. He manifests himself in and through the cosmos; each creature reflects a portion of his glory.

The divine mystery, which is to be seen and contemplated,²⁵ opens up that unique and thus incomparable knowledge of the divine which is not obtained by abandoning creation but by piercing through it. Transcendence does not mean flight from the

world, nor does immanence for the Gita mean being entangled in the world, in the net of samsara. Neither seeing God in creatures nor seeing creatures in God is enough if we are to reach that undivided insight and integrated existence which surpasses all understanding. He is not only the beginning and the end; he is also the in-between, the middle, the very process from one "end" to the other. A new human eye is insufficient. The own divine eye is needed.²⁶ The vision of this eye can no longer be described: the seeing and the seen are one, because the knowing and the known have become the "Light of lights, beyond the darkness," which is nevertheless "abiding in the hearts of all."²⁷

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BG IX, 4-5

i) 4. By me, by my unmanifested form
all this world is pervaded.
All beings subsist in me, but I
do not reside in them.
5. Yet beings subsist not in me.
Consider my sacred mystery.
My Self is the source and support of all beings,
yet subsists not in them.
BG X, 2-3; 20; 39-41

ii) 2. The hosts of Gods do not know my origin,
nor the mighty seers,
for I am in every respect the beginning
of both Gods and seers.
3. He who knows me as unborn, beginningless,
the great Lord of the world,
he among mortals is undeluded
and freed from sins.
20. I am the Self seated in the heart
of every being.
I of all beings am also the beginning,
the middle, and the end.
39. Whatever, O man, is the seed of all things,
that too am I.
Without me no being, moving or inert,
is able to exist.
40. There exist no bounds to the diffusion of my glories.
What here I have disclosed
illustrates, O strong One, but slightly the extent
of my infinite glory.
41. Whatever is endowed with glory and grace
and is full of vigor,
that, you may know, is only a fragment
of my own splendor.
BG XIII, 15

iii) 15. Outside and within all beings is he;
he moves and he moves not;
because of his subtlety, incomprehensible;
far, but yet near.

i) 3. Cf. § I 38.

4. Cf. BG VII, 12.

Unmanifested form: avyakta-murti, hidden (unmanifest, immanent) form (shape, icon, image).

Subsist in me: matsthani, and dwell: avasthita, both contain the root stha- to stand.

5. Sacred mystery: yogam aishvaram; yoga, union, power, means of union, connection.

The word bhuta, thing, being, appears four times in this shloka: once as subject and the three other times forming part of a compound. The divine is bhutabhrt, the support of beings, bhutabhavana, the origin, source, bringer-forth of beings, but is not (na) bhutastha, subsisting in them. Cf. "The universal Lord hidden in all beings" (SU IV, 15).

ii) 2. Origin: prabhava.

Beginning adi, source.

3. Unborn: aja.

Beginningless: anadi, with no origin. Cf. BG XIII, 12.

20. The name Gudakesha, "the thick-haired," referring to Arjuna, has been omitted here.

The beginning, the middle, and the end: adi, madhya, anta, not only temporally as birth, life, and death, but also ontologically as origin, sustainer, and goal of everything.

39. O man: Arjuna.

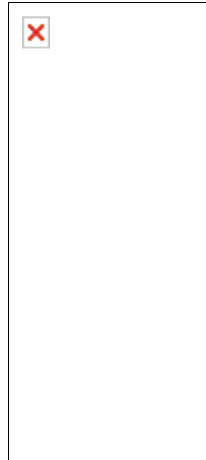
Seed: bija. Cf. its importance in the universal symbolism of any agricultural civilization and its use in traditional Indian philosophy.

40. Glory: vibhuti, the divine manifestation.

41. A fragment of my own splendor: tejo' mshasambhava, a product or a part of splendor, a fragment of glory, a portion of refulgence.

iii) 15. Incomprehensible: avijneya, unknowable.

Some interpret "far" as "far from the ignorant" and "near" as "near for the wise," but the sentence may also have an ontological meaning.



C. THE ELEMENTS

Mahabhotani

May the gleaming Waters
who took Fire as their germ
be for us blessing and joy!
AV I, 33, 1B

The Word has been spoken and has broken the original silence. The cosmic principles are there as fragments of this broken silence. All this is only the beginning. Before the human gaze is directed inward and toward the splendor of the Lord, Man meets the elements of this universe, encounters them, and is gripped at the same time by awe and by admiration. The world is the first manifestation, the primordial revelation to Man. It is not individual things that stir his imagination but the primordial elements of the world. All these elements are at one and the same time both material and spiritual. Indeed, a division between matter and spirit seems to be drawn only at a later date in an artificial way, and only for practical purposes. Nothing solely spiritual or solely material exists in the range of our common experience.

There is one Upanisad reflecting the evolution of human consciousness, while it continues at the same time the most authentic Vedic line:

He who is abiding in the earth, yet different
from the earth, . . .
He who is abiding in the water, yet different
from the water, . . .
He who is abiding in the wind, yet different

from the wind, . . .56

The very word *antara* used here means both "different from" and "interior to." This total vision of the elements is not concerned with the physical or the scientific alone, or, for that matter, with the merely allegorical or spiritual, but with the integral experience of an undivided though differentiated whole, which has its own role to play and its own constitution to maintain.

He who sees "the waters" only as a colorless material liquid with certain physical properties will surely fail to know what that word has really meant to mankind, nor will he know what water really is. He who, on the other hand, neglects or even despises the internal physical structure of water and does not bother to study its properties will equally miss the point.

Is it possible for the men and women of our times to enjoy so innocent and holistic a view of the elements of the world? The qualified answer, impossible for us to develop here, would be yes, provided we do not look at ourselves at the same time. That is to say, we can still have an ecstatic and integral view of the universe if we cease to claim a privileged and exceptional position for Man, as if he were the goal and the final product of creation. How this second condition can be fulfilled is another problem altogether. It is neither desirable nor possible to go back to a precritical stage, but perhaps there is another step open to our generation, a step that goes beyond the merely outward self-forgetting look and abandons as equally unsatisfactory the claim of Man to be a neutral spectator of this world and king of the whole earth. However that may be, this anthology may help the reader to follow the course of the human pilgrimage by reenacting the past with a present awareness. Doing so does not make us people of the past; on the contrary, it prevents us from being excommunicated from the common human-- and cosmic--adventure. Nothing is more barren than to be obsessed with modernity and pretend to forget the past. Roots do not produce flowers, but neither can there be flowers without roots.

Yet another word may be required regarding the place and the function of the elements. Any vision or concept of Man needs a horizon against which the vision emerges and the concept is meaningful. This horizon is Man's underlying and more or less conscious picture of the world. Ultimately the intelligible pattern of all human understanding is based on an accepted cosmology. Man cannot get rid of matter, and his material conception of the world is reflected in any of his supposedly spiritual intuitions.

The Vedic cosmology is not our special concern in this anthology, but we need to be acquainted with some of its features in order to understand how the Vedic Revelation viewed the world. Many centuries ago, before the scientific world view, culminating in the splitting of the atom, led to the predominance of the quantitative, man had a more qualitative conception of the irreducible factors that underlie all manifest realities. For modern Man Matter and Energy (in spite of their different forms and interchangeability) can be said to form the fundamental elements of the universe. Against this dualistic outlook, Vedic Man was more pluralistic and believed, as was also true of many other ancient cultures, in the existence of certain basic elements of a qualitatively different nature which underlay the constitution of the universe. These elements should not be understood against the background of a rigid atomic theory; they were to a great extent interrelated and were sometimes even interchangeable, so that the Vedic intuition refers, for example, to fire being born out of the waters. The elements are not individual and separated constituents of a whole but, rather, vectors or forces pervading the entire reality. The elements are the real symbols standing for the ultimate constituents of reality; they are the primordial "stuff" of the world, but their being the cornerstones of reality is a symbolical and not scientific or merely physical being. They stand for the underlying unity behind the manifold appearances of all that they symbolize.

Out of the five classical elements and others that could perhaps have been chosen, we give here texts concerning only three, which we may epitomize thus: water as the reality before creation, earth as the creation par excellence, and wind as the dynamic of the cosmos after creation.⁵⁷

a) Waters

Apah

In almost all traditions of mankind the waters occupy a special place, being either uncreated or produced in a very peculiar way. In the *Shatapatha Brahmana* it is said that they were produced out of *vac*, the word:⁵⁸ the first element out of the first "principle." The waters are the primeval element; everything else rests on them. They belong to the three worlds. The ritual of the *Shatapatha Brahmana* states several times that vessels and other utensils must be thrown into the waters after being used in the sacrifice, precisely because these waters are the basis and foundation of the universe. It is still a common practice in everyday life to immerse idols (*murtis*), utensils, used things, in the sacred rivers. Moreover, deceased children and holy men are not cremated but are returned either to the earth or to the waters.⁵⁹ All this symbolizes the same thing: the return to the origins.

The waters possess an integral reality, and thus they have healing power.⁶⁰ Purification is their first anthropocosmic

function. The waters possess also a certain intermediate character. They are neither air nor earth; they are on earth but come from heaven; they bring life but they can also be lethal; they purify but they can also be muddy; they flow on the surface but there are also internal rivers of water in the earth, as well as in the individual; they take all forms and have unlimited freedom, but yet they are not supreme.⁶¹ Waters convey divine energy, just as in more modern parlance blood is the conveyor of human life, but they are not the divine principle. What is more powerful, more self-confident, larger, and deeper than the fathomless ocean? What is more mysterious, more needed, more capricious, and more overwhelming than the rains, the vehicles of fertility?⁶² What is more vital than the rivers, which, like arteries, vivify the earth and all living beings?⁶³ What is more ambivalent than the waters, which on the one hand you cannot live without, while on the other they may unexpectedly flood the land and drown you? No wonder that the Spirit of the waters, the apam napat of the Rig Veda,⁶⁴ not only has a direct counterpart in certain other traditions (such as the Avestan being of the same name living in the depth of the waters and surrounded by divine spirits) but represents what amounts to an invariant in all ancient cultures of mankind.

He, the Son of the Waters, of color unfading,
performs his work within the body of another.⁶⁵

Agni is the "Son of the Waters"; he dwells in the water.⁶⁶ Fire and water belong together. At the sight of these waters we find prayer welling within us and in prayer become aware of the marvelous harmony of this universe. "In the Waters, O Lord, is your seat!"⁶⁷

The intermediate character of the waters could be described also from a cosmological point of view: the waters are neither solid like the earth, nor intangible and gaseous like the air or the wind; they possess many of the features of solid matter and many also of the more spiritual elements. It is difficult to conceive of the spirit being unleashed from the earth, while air and ether possess no "earthly" properties at all; the waters, however, occupy an intermediate position and contain both the movement and life of the airy elements and the gravity and consistency of the solid: they are alive.⁶⁸ Finally, it is interesting to note the fact that many cosmologies award primordial status to the waters rather than to any of the other elements.

The following is a stotra made up of short sentences belonging to longer passages.

The Primordial Waters
Agre apah

15

SB III, 6, 1, 7

i) The essence of plant life is Water.
SB IV, 4, 3, 15

ii) Water is the elixir of immortality.
SB VI, 8, 2, 3

iii) For from the Waters is this universe produced.
SB VI, 8, 2, 4

iv) In the Waters, O Lord, is your seat, that is, in the Waters, O Lord, is your womb.
SB VII, 4, 1, 6

v) Of this universe, it is in truth the Waters that were made first. Hence when the Waters flow, then everything here, whatsoever exists, is produced.
SB XII, 5, 2, 14

vi) The Waters are the foundation of all this universe.
SB XIV, 3, 2, 13

vii) "Glory to the Waters!" The Waters, to be sure, are a resting place for all the Gods.
TS I, 2, 1

viii) May the Waters, the mothers, purify us.
TS I, 2, 2

ix) Hail to you, divine, unfathomable, all-purifying Waters!

i) Essence: rasa, sap, i.e., the vital juice of plants. Cf. sapientia, i.e., the sapid science, knowledge through taste, personal experience.

ii) Elixir of immortality: amrta. Cf. also MaitS IV, 1, 9 (apo vamrtam).

iv) Lord: Agni.

vi) Cf. the same text in SB VI, 8, 2, 2.

Foundation: pratistha, underlying principle, basis, repository, support, standing place, receptacle.

The Divine Waters

Apo devih

16

RV VII, 49

1. Ceaselessly they flow from the depths, pure, never sleeping, the Ocean their sponsor, following the channels ordained by the Thunderer.

Now may these great divine Waters quicken me!

2. Waters may pour from heaven or run along channels dug out by men;

or flow clear and pure having the Ocean as their goal.

Now may these great divine Waters quicken me!

3. In the midst of the Waters is moving the Lord, surveying men's truth and men's lies.

How sweet are the Waters, crystal clear and cleansing!

Now may these great divine Waters quicken me!

4. From whom King Varuna, Soma, and all the Deities drink exhilarating strength,

into whom the Universal Lord has entered,

now may these great divine Waters quicken me!

1. The Ocean their sponsor: cf. SB XI 1, 6, 1 (§ I 6).

The Thunderer: Indra.

Divine Waters: apo divyah, celestial waters.

Quicken: the verb of the refrain is av-, to drive forward, to animate, to lead (flowing), hence to protect, promote, favor. Av- has also the meaning of refreshing, cooling (with water). May these. . . Waters quicken me: avantu.

2. All the waters, the celestial as well as those flowing on earth, have the ocean as their goal: samudrarthah.

3. The Lord: Varuna, who is termed "King Varuna."

Sweet: madhushcutah, lit. distilling honey. In the next verse the waters are said to be Soma, the elixir of the Gods. Cf. RV II, 35, and RV X, 9, 6 (§ I 17).

4. Universal Lord: Agni vaishvanara, cf. § III 5.

The Waters of Life

urje dadhatana

17

RV X, 9

1. O Waters, source of happiness,

pray give us vigor so that we
may contemplate the great delight.

2. You like loving mothers are
who long to give to children dear.

Give us of your propitious sap.

3. On your behalf we desire, O Waters,

to assist the one to whose house you send us--
you, of our life and being the source.

4. These Waters be to us for drink;
divine are they for aid and joy.

May they impart to us health and strength!

5. You Waters who rule over precious things
and have supreme control of men,
we beg you, give us healing balm.

6. Within the Waters, Soma has told me,
remedies exist of every sort
and Agni who brings blessing to all.

7. O Waters, stored with healing balm
through which my body safe will be,
come, that I long may see the sun.

8. Whatever sin is found in me,
whatever wrong I may have done,
if I have lied or falsely sworn,
Waters, remove it far from me.

9. Now I have come to seek the Waters.
Now we merge, mingling with the sap.
Come to me, Agni, rich in milk!
Come and endow me with your splendor!

1. Vigor: urj, invigorating and animating sap, nourishment, nourishing juice, hence Inspiring, giving spirit, life. Later commentators say that the great delight is Brahman.

2. Agni is elsewhere called urjas putra, while here the waters give propitious sap, invigorating nourishment. They are a source of happiness, like mothers giving their milk.

5. For similiar texts on the waters cf. AV VI, 23; XIX, 2.

8. Cf. RV I, 23, 22 (§ IV 8).

b) Earth
Prthivi

The Vedic attitude toward the earth springs from mankind's primordial experience of being on the one hand a guest, and on the other an offspring, of Earth. The earth is undoubtedly mother, is close to Man, but at the same time she is also alien, other and aloof. The earth is the foundation, the basis out of which emerges all that exists and on which everything rests. The earth is the basis of life and, when considered as a divine being, she always occupies a special place among the Gods.

Man is of the earth and earthly, but the earth is not simply nature, is not merely geographical or material; it is part of Man himself, so that Man can no more live without the earth than he can live without a body. At the same time, though he stands on the earth, he also stands above her. Man is more than earth. The earth is the mother of Man, but Man is also lord over the earth. Man could be said to be like the eldest son of a widowed mother, in the traditional Indian setting.

The tension between Man and earth is conspicuously present, but there is no separation. Vedic Man would find any attempt at dominating or subjugating the earth incomprehensible. The earth is an object of worship and not of exploitation, an object of awe and not of curiosity (or research, as would be said in academic circles). Investigation of the earth is of the same nature as personal introspection. To harm the earth is a masochistic vice. Man is from the earth and part of the earth, yet he surmises more and more that he is not only of the earth, not just an earthly thing.

Worship addressed to the earth is not adoration of a creature as an absolute; that is, it is not idolatory. It is rather the veneration of the highest value in the hierarchy of existence, for "undoubtedly this earth is the firstborn of being."⁶⁹ The earth as such is rich and the owner of treasures.⁷⁰ Man's work is not to make a shift in ownership, despoiling, as it were, the earth of her possessions and transferring them to the toiler. Man's work is to enjoy the blessings of the earth, because the earth is his home, his own family, his body.

There is only one hymn in the Rig Veda addressed to prthivi the earth (literally, the broad one), though she is praised in several hymns conjointly with the sky, dyu.⁷¹ These two are called father and mother, not only of terrestrial creatures but of

the Gods also. In a funeral hymn the earth is described as a gentle mother receiving her dead son into her bosom, preserving him from dissolution. 72 Another hymn sings:

Who gives us back to Aditi, the great Boundless?
I wish to see my father and my mother! 73

The second hymn of this section is the famous Prayer to the Earth, one of the most beautiful hymns of the Veda. The earth is here called not prthivi but bhumi. This hymn depicts the universal mother, dispenser of every sort of good. It presents a striking cosmogonic and theanthropological sequence.

The origins of the earth come first. When she was as yet hidden in a fluid state in the bosom of the primeval waters, the seers were already seeking to discern her by means of sacrifice.

A geographical description, or, as we could equally aptly call it, a highly poetical vision of nature, follows. The earth is composed of hills and plains, of snow-clad peaks, of deserts, oceans, and rivers, of lakes and streams, trees and plants, rocks and stones. The seasons appear with unflinching regularity and bring to her their own gradations of climate. Even included is an account of her fragrance which is described distinctively according to whether it emanates from plants or from water, from the lotus, from animals, from human beings, or even from the Gods. We are also told of her underground treasures of jewels and gold.

Third, earth is the dwelling place of people. It is upon her that in the beginning the first humans were scattered abroad. It is upon her that they sing and dance and find their happiness. It is she who diversifies Men's speech into different languages. It is upon her many paths that men and women pass to and fro and it is her highways that men use for their wagons and chariots.

Further, the earth is protected by the Gods; she is the conveyer of Agni, Universal Fire, and the place where men offer ritual sacrifice. It is upon her breast that men build their altars and construct their tabernacles and shelters and ritual posts. It is she in whose praise priests chant their hymns. The earth points beyond herself by means of the cultic acts of Gods and Men.

She is, furthermore, the dwelling place of all living creatures, mention of whom is not omitted. She is the home of cattle and horses, of the beasts of the forest, of deer and birds, reptiles and two-legged creatures.

She is, finally, a cosmic giant, a cosmic power, the receiver of prayers and the bestower of blessings, the protector and the inscrutable judge. Ecology was a sacred science for Vedic Man.

The Mighty Earth
Prthivi mahini

18

RV V, 84

1. The mighty burden of the mountains bulk
rests, Earth, upon your shoulders; rich in torrents,
you germinate the seed with quickening power.
2. Our hymns of praise resounding now invoke you,
O far-flung Earth, the bright one.
Like a neighing steed you drive abroad your storm clouds.
3. You in your sturdy strength hold fast the forests,
clamping the trees all firmly to the ground,
when rains and lightning issue from your clouds.

1. Earth: prthivi.

2. Bright one or lit. "silver-white."
Hymn to the Earth
Bhumi Sukta

19

AV XII, 1

1. High Truth, unyielding Order, Consecration,
Ardor and Prayer and Holy Ritual
uphold the Earth; may she, the ruling Mistress
of what has been and what will come to be,
for us spread wide a limitless domain.
2. Untrammelled in the midst of men, the Earth,
adorned with heights and gentle slopes and plains,
bears plants and herbs of various healing powers.
May she spread wide for us, afford us joy!
3. On whom are ocean, river, and all waters,
on whom have sprung up food and ploughman's crops,
on whom moves all that breathes and stirs abroad--
Earth, may she grant to us the long first draught!
4. To Earth belong the four directions of space.
On her grows food; on her the ploughman toils.
She carries likewise all that breathes and stirs.
Earth, may she grant us cattle and food in plenty!
5. On whom the men of olden days roamed far,
on whom the conquering Gods smote the demons,
the home of cattle, horses, and of birds,
may Earth vouchsafe to us good fortune and glory!
6. Bearer of all things, hoard of treasures rare,
sustaining mother, Earth the golden-breasted
who bears the Sacred Universal Fire,
whose spouse is Indra--may she grant us wealth!
7. Limitless Earth, whom the Gods, never sleeping,
protect forever with unflagging care,
may she exude for us the well-loved honey,
shed upon us her splendor copiously!
8. Earth, who of yore was Water in the oceans,
discerned by the Sages' secret powers,
whose immortal heart, enwrapped in Truth,
abides aloft in the highest firmament,
may she procure for us splendor and power,
according to her highest royal state!
9. On whom the flowing Waters, ever the same,
course without cease or failure night and day,
may she yield milk, this Earth of many streams,
and shed on us her splendor copiously!
10. May Earth, whose measurements the Ashvins marked,
over whose breadth the foot of Visnu strode,
whom Indra, Lord of power, freed from foes,
stream milk for me, as a mother for her son!
11. Your hills, O Earth, your snow-clad mountain peaks,
your forests, may they show us kindness!
Brown, black, red, multifarious in hue
and solid is this vast Earth, guarded by Indra.
Invincible, unconquered, and unharmed,
I have on her established my abode.
12. Impart to us those vitalizing forces that come,
O Earth, from deep within your body,
your central point, your navel; purify us wholly.
The Earth is mother; I am son of Earth.
The Rain-giver is my father; may he shower on us blessings!
13. The Earth on which they circumscribe the altar,
on which a band of workmen prepare the oblation,
on which the tall bright sacrificial posts
are fixed before the start of the oblation--
may Earth, herself increasing, grant us increase!

14. That man, O Earth, who wills us harm, who fights us,
who by his thoughts or deadly arms opposes,
deliver him to us, forestalling action.
15. All creatures, born from you, move round upon you.
You carry all that has two legs, three, or four.
To you, O Earth, belong the five human races,
those mortals upon whom the rising sun
sheds the immortal splendor of his rays.
16. May the creatures of earth, united together,
let flow for me the honey of speech!
Grant to me this boon, O Earth.
17. Mother of plants and begetter of all things,
firm far-flung Earth, sushined by Heavenly Law,
kindly and pleasant is she. May we ever
dwell on her bosom, passing to and fro!
18. As a vast abode, Earth, you have become great.
Great is your movement, great your trembling, your quaking.
The Lord all-powerful ceaselessly protects you.
O Earth, grant us to shine like burnished gold,
and let no enemy ever wish us ill!
19. Agni resides on earth, within the plants.
The Waters contain Agni; in the stones is he.
Agni abides deep in the hearts of Men.
In cattle and in horses there are Agnis.
20. Agni blazes and flashes from the height of heaven.
To the God Agni belong all airy spaces,
Agni it is whom mortal men enkindle,
conveyer of offerings, lover of the clarified butter.
21. May she who is clothed with Fire, whose knees
are blackened, grant me sharpness of wit
and furnish me with splendor!
22. May Earth on which men offer to the Gods
the sacrifice and decorous oblations,
where dwells the human race on nourishment
proper to the requirements of its nature--
may this great Earth assure us life and breath,
permitting us to come to ripe old age.
23. Instill in me abundantly that fragrance,
O Mother Earth, which emanates from you
and from your plants and waters, that sweet perfume
that all celestial beings are wont to emit,
and let no enemy ever wish us ill!
24. Your fragrance which has entered into the lotus,
wherewith the immortal Gods at the Sun-daughter's wedding
were redolent, O Earth, in times primeval--
instill in me abundantly that fragrance,
and let no enemy ever wish us ill!
25. Your fragrance which adheres to human beings,
the good cheer and the charm of women and men,
that which is found in horses and in warriors,
that which is in wild beasts and in the elephant,
the radiance that shines about a maiden--
O Earth, steep us, too, deeply in that fragrance,
and let no enemy ever wish us ill!
26. Earth is composed of rock, of stone, of dust;
Earth is compactly held, consolidated.
I venerate this mighty Earth, the golden-breasted!
27. Her upon whom the trees, lords of the forest,
stand firm, unshakable, in every place,
this long-enduring Earth we now invoke,
the giver of all manner of delights.

28. Whether we stand upright or sit,
 whether we stay quite still or walk,
 whether we walk with right foot or left,
 never may we stumble upon Earth!

29. O purifying Earth, I you invoke!
 O patient Earth, by Sacred Word enhanced,
 bearer of nourishment and strength, of food and ghee--
 O Earth, we would approach you with due praise!

30. Pure may the Waters flow over our bodies!
 That which defiles--I fling it upon our foes!
 I cleanse myself, O Earth, as with a filter.

31. Your regions, Earth, to eastward and to northward,
 southward and westward, may they receive me kindly,
 whenever on their paths I travel. Never,
 when standing on your surface, may I totter!

32. Do not thrust us aside from in front or behind,
 from above or below! Be gracious, O Earth.
 Let us not encounter robbers on our path.
 Restrain the deadly weapon!

33. As wide a vista of you as my eye
 may scan, O Earth, with the kindly help of Sun,
 so widely may my sight be never dimmed
 in all the long parade of years to come!

34. Whether, when I repose on you, O Earth,
 I turn upon my right side or my left,
 or whether, extended flat upon my back,
 I meet your pressure from head to foot,
 be gentle, Earth! You are the couch of all!

35. Whatever I dig up of you, O Earth,
 may you of that have quick replenishment!
 O purifying One, may my thrust never
 reach right unto your vital points, your heart!

36. Your circling seasons, nights succeeding days,
 your summer, O Earth, your splashing rains, our autumn,
 your winter and frosty season yielding to spring--
 may each and all produce for us their milk!

37. This cleansing Earth, who trembles before the Serpent,
 who guards the fires that dwell within the waters,
 who castigates the god-insulting demons,
 has chosen for her mate Indra, not Vrtra,
 surrendering herself to the powerful one, the potent.

38. On her are erected the platform and the sheds of oblation;
 on her is reared the sacrificial post.
 On her the brahmins, knowers of the rites,
 recite their hymns, intone their melodies.
 On her the priests set forth the sacrifice,
 that Indra may drink Soma.

39. On her those sages of old, the Seven Seers
 who fashioned these worlds, performing the sacrifice
 by dint of holy rite and creative Fervor,
 sang hymns and lo! the cows came to birth!

40. May Earth afford us all that copious wealth
 for which we long! May Bhaga play his part
 and Indra go before to show the way!

41. May Earth, the stage where mortals sing and play
 with varied shouts and noises, which resounds
 with cries of war or beatings of the drum,
 drive far my foemen and rid me of all rivals!

42. Earth is the source of food, of rice and barley;
 from her derive the five tribes of men.
 To rain-steeped Earth, the Rain-giver's wife, be homage!

43. Her castles are built by the Gods, her plains
the arena in which men wage war. The matrix
of all things is Earth. May the Lord of life
dispose for our enjoyment all her regions!

44. May the Goddess Earth, bearer of many a treasure
and of wealth stored up in diverse hidden places,
the generous sharer of riches, impart to us,
in addition to gold and gems, a special portion of her favor!

45. May Earth who bears mankind, each different grouping
maintaining its own customs and its speech,
yield up for me a thousand streams of treasure,
like a placid cow that never resists the hand.

46. The snake and the scorpion which viciously bite,
which, chilled by winter, lie slothfully hidden,
the wriggling worm, all that stirs in the rains--
may it, creeping, not creep on us! Instead,
may you grant us the blessing of all that is wholesome!

47. From your numberless tracks by which mankind may travel,
your roads on which move both chariots and wagons
your paths which are used by the good and the bad,
may we choose a way free from foes and robbers!
May you grant us the blessing of all that is wholesome!

48. She carries in her lap the foolish and also the wise.
She bears the death of the wicked as well as the good.
She lives in friendly collaboration with the boar,
offering herself as sanctuary to the wild pig.

49. The creatures of your forests, dwellers in woods,
lions, tigers, man-eaters that prowl about,
hyena and wolf, misfortune stalking around,
demons both male and female, chase them far!

50. All evil spirits, male and female alike,
drive far from us, O Earth, the ones that grab
and the ones that devour, all vampires and all demons!
Drive each and every one to distant realms!

51. Over the earth the winged bipeds fly,
swans and falcons, eagles, birds of all kinds.
On her the wind comes rushing, Matarishvan,
raising the dust, causing the trees to tremble
and dragging in his victory train the Fire.

52. May she in whom the bright and also the dark,
the day and the night, associate, though separate,
the far-flung Earth, oftentimes by rain made fertile,
graciously settle each one in his well-loved abode!

53. Heaven and Earth and the space in between
have set me in a wide expanse!
Fire, the Sun, the Waters, the Gods,
have joined to give me inspiration.

54. Behold me now, victorious!
My name is the highest in all the earth.
Ruling in all regions, I subdue all! I conquer!

55. When at the Gods' command, O Goddess,
you unfurled yourself, revealing your grandeur,
then you were imbued with beauty and charm.
You shaped and fashioned the world's four regions.

56. In village or forest, in all the places
where man meets man, in market or forum,
may we always say that which is pleasing to you!

57. Just as a horse scatters dust, so Earth,
when she came into being, scattered the peoples--
Earth, gracious leader and protectress of the world,
who holds in firm grasp both trees and plants.

58. The words that I speak are sweet as honey!
 My glances meet with fair glances in return.
 Vehement am I, swift and impetuous!
 Those who gnash their teeth I utterly vanquish!

59. Peaceful and fragrant, gracious to the touch,
 may Earth, swollen with milk, her breasts overflowing,
 grant me her blessing together with her milk!

60. The Maker of the world sought her with oblations
 when she was shrouded in the depth of the ocean.
 A vessel of gladness, long cherished in secret,
 the earth was revealed to mankind for their joy.

61. Primeval Mother, disperser of Men,
 you, far-flung Earth, fulfill all our desires.
 Whatever you lack, may the Lord of creatures,
 the First-born of Right, supply to you fully!

62. May your dwellings, O Earth, free from sickness and wasting,
 flourish for us! Through a long life, watchful,
 may we always offer to you our tribute!

63. O Earth, O Mother, dispose my lot
 in gracious fashion that I be at ease.
 In harmony with all the powers of Heaven
 set me, O Poet, in grace and good fortune!

1. Prayer: brahman as the sacred liturgical word.

Holy Ritual: yajna, sacrifice, the sacramental rite. So we have satya, rita, diksa, tapas, brahman, and yajna as the pillars of the earth as they are of any sacred, i.e., any real activity.

Earth: bhumi throughout.

3. River sindhu, though some have read Indus, the particular river of India. The "stream" here is probably not any specific river but the mythical rasa which flows at the ends of the earth. Cf. RV X, 121, 4 (§ I 4).

Ploughman's crops: lit. ploughing furrows.

The long first draught: purvapeya. The first privilege of Indra, after drinking Soma, was to perform the mighty work of organizing the earth.

5. Gods and demons: devas and asuras.

Good fortune: bhaga, happy lot, luck, what falls to a person by lot, i.e., a person's destiny.

Glory: varcas, brilliance, luster, i.e., success owing to good fortune, power of transmitting one's own enlightenment, of fulfilling one's own destiny.

6. Sustaining (mother): pratistha support, foundation, basis.

Universal Fire: Agni as vaishvanara (§ III 5). Vaishvanara abides in each purusa, both on the cosmic plane and in the individual being (SB X, 6, 1). On the human plane Agni vaishvanara is the metabolic fire that eats food and stands for life itself.

Whose spouse is Indra: lit. who mates with the bull Indra or whose bull is Indra. Cf. RV VI, 44, 21.

7. Honey symbolizes both material and spiritual wealth and is often described as "sweet milk" (with which it is often mixed).

It stands for urj, rasa, i.e., soma.

Cf. the "vitalizing forces," urjah, from deep within the body (of the earth) of v. 12; cf. RV, X, 9, 1-2 (§ I 17 and notes).

8. Cf. §§ I 15; 16 on the primordial waters. The "heart" of the earth is transcendent to the earth itself; this is a transcendent immanence.

10. The foot of Visnu: cf. § I 27.

Indra: cf. §§ I 24; II 4.

11. Forests: aranya, woods, and also wildemess.

12. The Rain-giver: Parjanya, the Rain-God. Cf. § II 24.

13. The earth is not only an ecological dwelling place but has also an eschatological and liturgical dimension. Workmen: vishvkarmanah, a guild of workmen attending the sacrifice, probably the so-called adhvaryu.
15. The five human races: may refer to the five tribes. Cf. BU IV, 4, 17 (§ VI 11) Cf. Nirukta III, 8 about pancajanah
17. Heavenly Law: dharma.
18. Lord: Indra.
19. The different forms of fire are mentioned, from the sun (v. 20) down to fire in wood and the "fire" of digestion in living beings.
21. Knees: referring to dark-colored rocks.
22. Human race: manusya.
23. Celestial beings: Gandharvas and Apsarases. Cf. AV X, 9, 9; etc. Fragrance is their special attribute. They received it as bhaga, a special gift, together with invulnerability. Cf. vv. 24-25. Fragrance (gandha) is also, in later philosophical systems, the characteristic of the element earth.
24. Reference to the wedding of Surya the Sun-maiden with the God Soma. Cf. RV X, 85 (§ II 15).
29. By Sacred Word enhanced: brahmana vavrhdhanam. Brahman, fullness, swelling, enthusiasm of soul in prayer, pious utterance. Cf. the root brh-, increase, strengthen, and the root vrhdh-, increase, grow strong, extend, gladden.
Nourishment: urj.
Approach you with due praise: ni sidema, may we sit down before you with reverence for instruction, approach in homage.
34. Be gentle: lit. do not harm us.
36. On the seasons cf. § VII Introduction.
37. Trembles before the Serpent: obscure expression. Serpent, however, refers to the demon Vrtra; i.e., in the fight between good and evil the Earth, who is afraid of the dragon, stands at Indra's side.
38. Earth as the stage and support of sacrifice.
39. The Seven Seers: the mythical rishis, first sacrificers, mentioned in the RV and to whom names are given in the B. Cf. also BU II, 2, 4.
Holy rite: yajna.
Sacrifice: satra, the Soma "session."
Creative Fervor: tapas.
Sang hymn. . . : ga udanrcuh, lit. sang forth the cows. Cows are also a symbol of words or songs.
42. Rain-giver: Parjanya, cf. RV V, 83 (§ II 24).
43. Lord of life: Prajapati.
44. Wealth stored up: i.e., the mines, which hold the hidden treasures of Earth.
45. Placid: lit. permanent, steady.
48. The wise: guru, or the heavy.
Death: nidhana, or dwelling (?).
Boar: early reference to the myth of the Boar as an avatara of Visnu.
50. Evil spirits, male and female: Gandharvas and Apsarases; here their negative, demonic aspect is intended, as they are

mentioned together with other demons.

53. Gods: lit. All-Gods: vishvedevah; cf. RV X, 72 (§ VII 2).

54. The king is speaking.

60. The Maker of the world: vishvakarman, cf. RV X, 81; 82 (§§ VII 7; 12).
Mankind: lit. all beings with a mother.

61. Primeval Mother: Aditi, Infinity, begetter and origin of the Gods, a mythical figure of light. Cf. RV I, 136, 3; X, 72, 4-5 (§ VII 2).

Wish-fulfiller kamadugha reminds us of kamadhenu, the mythical and miraculous "wish-cow," later colorfully described in the Ramayana. In point of fact, in RV I, 153, 3, Aditi is referred to as a cow. In RV I, 72, 9, she is compared to the Earth. She represents the maternal aspect of Earth.

The Lord of creatures: Prajapati.

Right: rita.

63. Dispose my lot, etc.: set me down graciously (that I may be) well established.

Poet: kavi from the root ku-, to see, hence sage or seer.

c) Wind

Vayu

In the Rig Veda the wind is named vata or vayu, the former being used chiefly for the element and the latter chiefly for the God. There is no need to elaborate any particular theory regarding the meaning of the Vedic divinities, for the hymns speak for themselves. They make clear reference to the benefits bestowed by the wind and they pray that such blessings be continued. Particularly striking are the religious tone of the hymns and their invitation to plunge into the cosmogonic origins and to discover the transcendent meaning of natural phenomena. An ambivalent meaning is suggested by some of the sentences in these two hymns. What is said of the Wind could equally be said of the Spirit. The Wind collects, enraptures, and takes away in his chariot toward the celestial heights those who are caught in his blowing, bringing them together with the same devotion and enthusiasm as that of women congregating for a holy feast or gathering for a marriage. This same Wind is connected with the primordial waters, is called the first-born, and yet is said to be of unknown origin; for nobody knows where it goes and where it comes from: it wanders free, is heard but not seen, is invisible, can only be felt, experienced, sensed, without being comprehended or understood. The second hymn, voices a deep prayer to the Spirit that he may breathe or impart life. There is another, similar text which affirms:

Breathe, O Wind, your healing breezes.

Blow away evil. You are the medicine

of this whole world, the Messenger of the Gods!⁷⁴

The Wind holds the gift of eternal life; it is the bestower of the life-principle, the seed of life.⁷⁵

The Blowing of the Spirit

Vata

20

RV X, 168

1. Oh, the Wind's chariot, its power and its glory!

It passes by crashing.

Out streak the lightnings, dust rises on earth.

The Wind passes.

2. The hosts of the Wind speed onward after him,
like women assembling.

This king of the world lifts them up in his chariot
through lofty regions.

3. He speeds on air's pathways, he rests not nor slumbers for even a day.

First-born, the Waters' friend, the righteous, whence came he?

How was he born?

4. Breath of the Gods and life germ of the universe,
freely he wanders.
We bring him our homage, whose voice may be heard
but whose form is not seen.

1. Wind: vata, breath of the Gods. Cf. AV XI, 4 to prana (§ II 5). Its roar is thunder; it reaches the blue sky producing red flashes.

2. The hosts: winds of various kinds or the rains following the wind.
King of the world: lit. the God, king of the whole universe.

3. The righteous: rtavan, the holy, the upright, the just, one who goes the right way.

4. Hearing pierces deeper than seeing into the realm of being, though seeing may be clearer than hearing.
The Gifts of the Spirit
Mayas

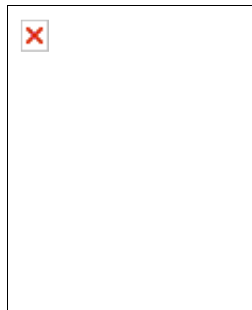
21

RV X, 186

1. May the Wind breathe healing upon us,
prolong our life-span,
and fill our hearts with comfort!
2. You are our father, O Wind,
our friend and our brother,
Give us life that we may live.
3. From that immortal treasure,
O Lord, which is hidden in your abode,
impart to us that we may live.

1. May the wind breathe: vata a vatu, both from the same root va, to blow (cf. Latin ventus), with the special meaning here, to inspire, infuse.
Comfort: mayas which could be equated with bliss, ananda.

3. Immortal treasure: amrtasya nidhih.
Lord: Vata.



D. THE LORD

Isha

The Primal Man is, simply, All:
what is and what shall be.
He is the Lord of Immortality.
AV XIX, 6, 4

The Lord is undoubtedly not a proper name of God; it is not a distinctive name. It is a comprehensive term used not only for the different names of the divinities and of God in different religious traditions, but also for many other forms of preeminence in the human world: the pontiff, the king, the ruler, the judge, the husband, and so on, are called "lords" in many a culture, while in a personified way even the powerful natural phenomena are considered to lord it over human beings. Probably no other name is more universal and more appropriate to denote that mystery greater than ourselves which some traditions have called God. Not every tradition agrees in calling the Supreme either Being or Person or Creator or even God. Further, if we use a proper name, if we say Varuna or Siva or Yahweh, we are not only personifying but also limiting our reference to that one culture where the word is at home. The name of Lord, on the contrary, seems to be universal and capable, at the same time, of taking on a concrete meaning. It betrays, indeed, a certain personalistic bias, but this bias is not essential to it, as we may see not only if we consult the etymology of the many words standing for it, like bhagavat, ishvara, prabhu, or, in other traditions, ba'al, adon, kyrios, allah (al-ilah), ahura mazda, but also and mainly if we consider that the main import of the name Lord (and all its equivalents) is not that of being an individual or even a particular being, but of being the superior term of a relation. The Lord is probably the most universal symbol for that "other term" of the human-cosmic relation which has received so many different names.

On various occasions in the past and also recently it has been affirmed that the Vedas are both magical and pantheistic. It is not the purpose of this anthology to enter into controversy, but in order to facilitate prayer and understanding of the given texts something must be said on these two points.

First, the magical abuse of a text does not mean that the primordial intention and the primary meaning of a text are in fact such. Second, one must add that almost any description or manifestation of something for which one does not possess the clue is bound from an external viewpoint to look like magic; most of the achievements of science and technology would appear so to a Man from another culture, and this applies also to the utterances and descriptions of the Vedas when they are seen with eyes and felt with feelings alien to those of Vedic Man.⁷⁶

Concerning alleged pantheism, one should bear in mind that a process of identification (between worshiper and object of worship), which is bewildering to a rational mind detached from the object of its thought, is an almost obligatory feature of any committed existential attitude. If, when thinking about or desiring one thing or loving one person, we are at the same time thinking about another thing, desiring a different object, and loving a second person, we are bound to say that our acts are far from being perfect, satisfying, and perhaps even authentic. If, when considering one thing, we are being worried by another and are already considering how we are going to integrate this second into a wider picture, our thinking is not only not fully engaged in its primary concern but is already distorting the picture by adopting a double perspective which can only blur the image. When, full of thankfulness for a benefit, full of joy because of a happening, I have to control my feelings or modify my words in order to reserve place and time for another possible happening, I am already calculating, remembering, manipulating, and in the last analysis I am not fully given to what I am saying or doing. Therefore, there is no need to refer to a particular trend of thinking or an epistemological difference in order to explain the Vedic hymns, though this trend or difference may well be pertinent. We need only recall that each text is a prayer, a hymn, a song, or a commitment and that it does not vault outside itself, so to speak, in order to see its own impact on the reader or its compatibility with what has been said before or will be said afterward. Each ultimate attitude is unique and cannot be compared with another. Any comparison presupposes a neutral or a more general "platform" which makes the comparison possible at the price of robbing the particular attitude of its character of ultimacy.

It is easy to recognize that Light is not the same as Life, or Time Eternity, or Indra Agni, or Savitri Vayu. Yet when we receive properly a divine gift (that is, when we accept the visitation of the Lord), in whatever wrappings that gift may be, there is no room left for anything else. The lordship of the Lord, whatever concrete form it may take, is not only overwhelming; it is also in a way absolute and thus unique. Because of our temporal fragmentation, however, owing to the fact that we cannot live a whole life at one time, a second moment may displace the first one and we may be filled with another equally overpowering experience which will find another unique, and thus incomparable, form of expression. It is only from the outer platform of our memory or from the eyes of an outsider that we can relate the two experiences. Memory is a double-edged sword: it allows for continuity once the real continuity is broken, but because it is a temporal human faculty, memory cannot bear witness to the nontemporal. There is no memory in ecstatic moments or in actual consciousness.

It is tempting, and perhaps it would be rewarding, to take a certain evolutionary perspective and speak of the progressive evolution of the concept of Lord in the Indian scene, but we cannot do so here. The nouns Ishvara and Isha are not found in the RigVeda, although the verb form is frequently used to express the power of the Gods. Where the terms occur in the Atharva Veda and Brahmanas, they certainly do not have the connotations of later times. Certain Upanisads begin to put the concept of the Lord in the foreground and the Shvetashvatara Upanisad gives it still greater prominence. The personal Lord is finally fully disclosed in the Bhagavad Gita. On the other hand, if we take into consideration other generic terms such as pati, prabhu, adhipati, and so on,⁷⁷ we may certainly say that the concept of the Lord does in fact permeate the whole of the Vedas. In addition to the words denoting Lord we can also say that the concept is present in all the hymns, where it is

represented each time by one of the Vedic Gods. Thus, if we are considering the omnipotence and majesty of the Godhead, his sovereignty, it is Indra who springs spontaneously to mind. If we reflect upon the great importance of sacrifice or on the incarnate friendly aspect of God--though without in any way diminishing his divinity--it is to Agni that we turn. Indra, Agni, Varuna, the Master who surveys Men's deeds, punishes Men, and pities them, Soma, the radiant Lord of Light--each of these will make an appearance according to the place that he has made for himself in the minds and hearts of the Men of the Vedic period.

The different Gods described and worshiped in the Vedas testify to a strong urge in Man toward unity, a longing to arrive at a conception that is both totally divine and totally human. This dynamic process in Man has not yet ceased, and the fascinating evolution discernible in the Indian context from the Vedas through the Bhagavad Gita to modern times can be paralleled elsewhere. Furthermore, the situation presents in our days a new challenge. Is not the serious thrust of modern atheism a new step toward a deeper theandric unity by which God as Other is dethroned and yet Man as individual does not replace him? Not only does the concept of the Lord undergo an enriching process of inner unification, so that the different Gods and attributes or persons are no longer considered in a polytheistic way, but it also acquires a stronger bond of unity with the world, so that the Lord's relation with the world is no longer considered in either a dualistic or a monistic way: his transcendence does not exclude his immanence or his immanence his transcendence, and thus neither monotheism nor atheism appears satisfactory any longer.

The Vedic Revelation, however, does not need to be interpreted on these lines. Its main message is not to give us a historical picture of the development of human consciousness regarding the divine or to explain to us the evolution of Man's religiousness, but to lead us toward an ever deeper realization of this continuing universal and ever new mystery. The hymns, chants, injunctions, and prayers are not there mainly to foster an intellectual curiosity but to nourish a personal life. The Lord is not only from yesterday or only for tomorrow; he is also and primarily in today's life, as the Scriptures remind us.

The hymns that follow are dedicated to Savitri, Agni, Indra, Soma, Varuna, and Visnu. Each of them has a proper face and possesses his own symbolic power. But to those who are outside the atmosphere of the traditional religiousness of India, modern Hindus or others, these names may not convey all the riches crystallized in long centuries of fervent prayer and thoughtful meditation; such people may even feel disturbed by these names, interpreting them as mere mythological figures instead of as living symbols. We suggest, therefore, replacing the proper names on occasion with the widely used name of "Lord" and giving to it the broadest possible interpretation: any power superior to the individual. In later sections, where the role of each God is illustrated, there is a descriptive introduction of each, but we purposely introduce the Gods singly in order to allow each unique personality to shine forth clearly and thus to enhance the meditative use of this anthology.

The different texts may give some idea of the wide range of experience undergirding Vedic "theology." No merely naturalistic explanation of the worship of the Gods as natural powers will do justice to the texts or to the sophistication of Vedic culture. No supernaturalistic hypothesis should undermine, on the other hand, the realistic and humanistic approach of the texts. The Gods are intrinsically connected with sacrifice and with the idea of cosmic order; they constitute different expressions of the sacrificial act that maintains universal order. Within the cosmic realm the split that is productive of many Gods is not an ultimate one, just as the parallel split in our consciousness among ourselves, the world, and God is not ultimate either; these three are certainly not one, but neither are they many. The mystery of God is the mystery of Man and the mystery of Reality. The Vedic Revelation does not reveal one God; it just unveils a little the mystery of life by assuring us that Reality is neither dead nor blind, that there is a Lord of beings residing in the heart of every being as well as in the core of Being itself, and this affirmation is loudly proclaimed in a festive symphony.

Stotra
RV I, 44, 6

i) O most youthful God!
RV I, 44, 9

ii) God of the sacrifice, O Lord, and envoy of men are you.
RV I, 44, 10

iii) O most radiant One, all-visible!
RV I, 45, 9

iv) Good and bountiful, source of vigor!
RV I, 186, 3

v) I sing the Lord, the guest most dearly loved.
RV IV, 17, 17

vi) Friend and Father, most fatherly of fathers!
RV VI, 37, 5

vii) May our songs glorify God, the most mighty!
RV VII, 18, 1

viii) All is with you, O Lord!
RV X, 188, 3

ix) O All-knowing One, may your flames that convey
oblations to the Gods direct our sacrifice!

i) Agni. Time does not have a hold on him.

ii) Agni.
Envoy: duta, messenger.

iii) Agni. All-visible: vishvadarshatah, visible to all, conspicuous, revealed in all. This obviously does not refer to philosophical intelligibility.

iv) Agni.
Source of vigor: sahaskrta, produced by vigor.

v) Agni. Recurrent mystical theme of God's indwelling in the soul.

vi) Indra. The relationship of friendship is here added to that of fatherhood. Friendship implies not only a certain equality but also a free choice. Does this suggest nature and grace?

vii) Indra. One could say "magnify the mighty" or "glorify the glorious" God, in order to keep the same verbal root as in the original.

viii) Indra.

ix) Agni. All-knowing One: jatavedas.
Direct: inv-, also favor, inspire.
The Refulgent One
Savitri

22 The unique lordship of Savitri the resplendent Sun, the vivifier, is so much a part of everyday life that no one will contest his supremacy. We have already seen that the Sun inspired the most sacred Gayatri mantra,⁷⁸ and later on we encounter him as the dispenser of blessings⁷⁹ and, under the name of Surya, as the supreme light and dispeller of darkness.⁸⁰ The hymn that follows leads us to discover the varied facets of his lordship.

The ocean of golden light in which Savitri dwells is much more conducive to an ecstatic than to an analytic approach, but we can descry some of his main features.

The Lord Savitri is the giver of life and the origin and end of time.⁸¹ From his rising until his setting everything follows the course of the sun: the life of Men, the functioning of the cosmos, and even the rites of sacrifice. Everything on earth depends on his radiant light and warmth. The actions of Men are regulated according to the hours of the day, each moment of which depends on the sun.⁸² The life cycle of both animals and plants is under his surveillance, while the hours of the agnihotra sacrifice have been strictly fixed in relation to his appearance;⁸³ it is in communion with him that, evening and morning, Men pray, meditate, and worship.⁸⁴ As the hymn says (v. 5),

All beings, men and creatures, abide

forever in the bosom of Savitri divine.

It is he, Man's constant companion during the day, who brings him to his rest at night. Savitri, as we have said, is the "golden" Lord. His golden appearance is frequently mentioned in both descriptive and eulogistic hymns. There is no better adjective to convey simultaneously his shining splendor, his bounty, and his inestimable value for Man. He is "golden-eyed" (v. 8) and "gold-handed" (vv. 9, 10); he appears majestically in a "golden chariot" (v. 2) with "poles of gold" and a "golden shaft" (vv. 4, 5).

The Lord Savitri is gracious toward Men. He distributes his favors with magnanimity, repulsing sorrows and dangers (v. 3), conquering sickness (v. 9), and chasing away demons and sorcerers (v. 10). His realm is the realm of light, of beauty and well-being, and it is to him that Men turn when they are afraid of darkness, whether it be the darkness of night or the darkness of suffering,⁸⁵ and when they are longing for light, health, and joy. Their trust in Lord Savitri is so strong that they are confident in his power to free them from sin.⁸⁶

Lord Savitri abides with us till evening!

Savitri

RV I, 35

1. I call first on Agni for our salvation;
on Mitra and Varuna, that they may help us,
on Night, who lays the world to rest,
and Savitri divine, that he may aid us.
2. God Savitri advances in his golden chariot,
wheeling toward us through the pitch-black void,
conducting to their rest both men and Gods,
directing his gaze upon all created beings.
3. Worthy of worship, he pursues his path,
first up, then down, his horses resplendent.
From the ends of the world God Savitri comes,
repulsing all sorrow and every danger.
4. The God has now mounted his mighty chariot,
ornate, decked with pearls, with poles of gold.
Resplendent, adorable, he exercises
his powerful thrust, dispelling the darkness.
5. Drawing the chariot with the golden shaft,
his two steeds, white-hoofed, have gazed on mankind.
All beings, men and creatures, abide
forever in the bosom of Savitri divine.
6. Three heavens there are: two in the bosom
of Savitri, the third the realm of Yama.
Immortality rests stable as a chariot on its axle.
Let him who understands this now declare it!
7. The Bird in the heavens keeps watchful eye,
the inspired Asura, the perfect guide.
Where now is the sun? Who knows his place?
As far as what heaven has his ray extended?
8. He has surveyed the earth's eight peaks,
its continents three, its tracts, its seven rivers.
Savitri, the golden-eyed God, has come,
bringing his worshiper wondrous blessings.
9. Savitri, the skillful, gold-handed God
is passing over between Earth and Heaven.
He conquers sickness, directing the sun,
and mounts up to heaven through darksome space.
10. May our gracious God and kind leader, the Asura,
skillful, gold-handed, come now to our aid!
He who chases far both demons and sorcerers,
this God whom we hymn, abides here each evening.
11. Your ancient paths, O Savitri, were dust free

and well established in the vaults of Heaven.
Come to us now by these paths so fair!
Protect us from harm and bless us, O God!

1 . Salvation: svasti.

3. Sorrow and danger: durita.

4. The chariot of the night is meant.
The pearls probably refer to the stars.

6. Three heavens: the two in Savitri's bosom are heaven and earth, and the third one is the world beyond, the realm of the dead. For Yama and the world beyond cf. §§ V 2; 7.

7. Bird: suparnna, the Sun.
Asura: the Sun.
Perfect guide: sunitha.

8. Wondrous blessings: ratna. . . varyani, lit. desired treasures.

9. Here it is clear that Savitri is not necessarily identical with the sun, but is its impelling force. Cf. RV VII, 45, 2 (§ II 3).
The Friend of Man
Agni

23 The most appropriate Vedic symbol for the lordship of the Lord is perhaps the figure of Agni, the friend of Man, the mediator, the sacred and sacrificial fire, and at the same time the fire that is in the sun, in burning things, and in the heart of Man, everywhere the same and yet everywhere different, having varied and even almost contrary effects. The devotion to Agni does not represent nature worship, much less pantheism; it is the recognition of an underlying polymorphic reality that softens wax and honey but hardens mud, dries up plants, may bring life or death, and always transcends all our powers, mental as well as physical.⁸⁷

Agni is acclaimed with praise and veneration both evening and morning at the domestic hearth, when the home is not closed in upon itself but is open to the horizons of the earth and of men. Agni is near to Man, kindly disposed, intimately bound up with his life, the guest of his dwelling, the wise Lord who knows all things, the eternally young, the strong and powerful to whom one offers sacrifice and who is able to shower one with blessings. If modern Man does not follow what has been said, let him wait until winter and evening, kindle the hearth, and simply gaze at the live coals, and he will surely understand that the lord is he who breaks his isolation without disturbing his solitude.

This hymn, like many of those addressed to Agni, expresses his lordship in terms of wisdom and foreknowledge. He is powerful and yet accessible to Men, full of goodness and mercy, inspiring devotion in such a way that Man approaches him fearlessly as a friend, not as an abstraction or a distant and formidable deity. The lordship of Agni is not seen as the imposition of a divine will, but as an expression of the normal and beautiful order of reality. If nobody knew "the first word and the last," all the other human words in between would be utterly meaningless and could only convey despair. If there were no fire to burn what has already dried up, or what has been done wrongly, no renewal and no hope would subsist on earth for a long time.

Agni

RV I, 145

1. Uplift your prayer! He comes! He knows!
His wisdom is implored.
In him are counsels, in him requests,
his Lord of power.
2. Men pray to him, yet he needs no asking;
a his mind has grasped all things. He goes
as one who knows the first word and the last,

with mind composed.

3. To him ascend these hymns, these steed-swift prayers.

He alone hears my words. All-mover, all-conqueror,
conveyer of sacrifice, the Child, ever aiding,
he assumes great power.

4. What he meets he grasps and, newly born,
advances vehemently, darting with his fellows.
He brings to the weary pleasure and great joy,
accepting their gifts.

5. He is a being; of flood and forest
who passes aloft.
Knowing the Law, he inspires to right action,
this wise and true Lord.

1. Counsels and requests: In him are admonitions, advice, instructions, commands; in him are requests, consultations.
Lord of power: vajasya shavasah shusminaspatih, lit. vigorous Lord of strength and might.

2. His mind has grasped all things: dhiro manasa: by means of his own mind he attains to highest insight; having understood by his own mind, he needs no asking.

3. Hymns and steed-swift prayers: lit. ladles and sacrificial mares, being symbols for songs of praise.

All-mover: puru-praisa, spurring, inciting many.

All-conqueror: taturi, overcoming, conquering.

Conveyer of sacrifice: yajna-sadhana, perfect accomplisher of sacrifice.

Ever aiding: acchidra-uti, whose protection is unbroken, everlasting, uti may also mean source of joy.

The Child or "Babe ever young" is Agni, the protector of his devotees.

4. Fire is the symbol of Agni; Agni sets fire to whatever he finds. He creeps onward and when he seems to rest, i.e., ceases to burn, he suddenly springs up again vehemently (sara) with his "kin" (i.e., the flames, the yokefellows), ignites, comes nearer, and grasps all those who fall fascinated into his power, enkindling in them the highest joy. There is a triple metaphor running throughout the hymn: the fascination and consuming power of fire; its function in the purification and salvation of man; its use as a lofty symbol for the divine.

5. Passes aloft: lit. has been set in the highest sky. Cf. RV II, 1, 1, for Agni's relationship with the waters. There are both celestial and terrestrial waters.

Lord: Agni. In many texts Agni is said to have taken birth in wood (RV VI, 3, 3; X, 79, 7), to be the embryo of trees (RV I, 70, 4) and of plants. For his birth in the sky as lightning cf. RV I, 143, 2; VI, 8, 2.

The Master of the Universe

Indra

24 The facet of Indra most celebrated and extolled in the Rig Veda is his Lordship, his supreme mastery of men and situations. He is Master of the whole world:⁸⁸ "He who is Lord of every world that moves and breathes;"⁸⁹ "Yourself alone the universal Sovereign."⁹⁰ All the hymns dedicated to him contain an element of near ecstasy as they extol his grandeur and his universal dominion. In each hymn he is Master of the universe. He has conquered it, overcoming all foes.⁹¹

The hymn that follows refers, in the compass of a few concise and beautiful verses, to several of the features of his Lordship: he is Lord of sacrifice (vv. 1, 2, 7) and he is renowned as the drinker of Soma, that energy-giving drink in which he delights. Those who perform the sacrificial rites are at a loss to find words capable of extolling Indra in accordance with his merits. He is always the God-hero, the God of mighty deeds arousing awe and praise. Men are enraptured by the divine display of the Master of the universe.

The second stanza mentions the "two bay steeds" that pull his chariot. The chariot here refers to the Word, that Word whose power is manifested in the performance of the sacrifice. Elsewhere the poet speaks of "his steeds yoked by prayers."⁹² Such metaphors refer no doubt to the invocations that summon Indra to the sacrifice.

Lord of the universe (vv. 3, 6), Lord of hosts, all-powerful in battle (vv. 4, 8), Lord and Friend (v. 5), the one who chases away every evil, Indra is full of compassion for his worshipers. His friends are never done to death or overcome by violence.⁹³

Indra

RV I, 7

1. Indra the singers,
Indra the reciters,
Indra the choirs
have glorified!
2. Indra the golden,
armed with thunder,
with his two bay steeds
and the Word as his chariot!
3. The Sun is his eye,
raised on high.
Cloud masses he bursts
to release the rain.
4. By your dread power,
Indra, most fearsome,
help us in battle
to win ample spoils.
5. Indra we invoke
in all kinds of contests,
our Friend who hurls
at powers of evil his bolts.
6. Burst open for us
yonder cloud in the sky,
ever bounteous Indra,
irresistible hero!
7. Higher, yet higher,
I raise his praises!
I find no words
worthy of him!
8. He drives on his peoples
with strength irresistible,
even as the bull drives
onward the herds.
9. Sole sovereign is Indra
of men and of Gods
and of the fivefold race
of dwellers on earth.
10. Indra we invoke
from all the peoples.
May Indra be for us
and nobody else.

1. Lit Indra the singers with glory, Indra the reciters with praise (arka).

3. Or else: Indra, to see afar, has raised the sun in the sky: indro dirghaya caksasa a suryam rohayad divi.

4. Fearsome: ugra, inspirer of awe, a typical epithet of Indra.

7. Lit. the praises of Indra with the thunderbolt.
I find no words worthy of him: na vindhe asya sustutim.

9. The fivefold race: probably the five tribes of the Aryans, with whom Indra was most intimately associated.

10. May Indra be for us and nobody else: asmakam astu kevalah, may he be ours alone.
The Heroes of Sundry Exploits

Indra-Soma

25 Indra and Soma are so closely associated that on most occasions the one is not mentioned without explicit or implicit reference to the other. It is indeed after drinking deeply of Soma that Indra is rendered capable of his heroic tasks.⁹⁴ Soma is a God, a myth, a plant, and the special juice extracted from it, which is utilized in many sacrificial and other rites. In this hymn it is the celestial drink that is invoked.⁹⁵ One of the most important tasks of Indra was the liberation of the world from the dominion of the fearful dragon Vrtra, who was maintaining the universe in drought and gloom; the dragon was slain, the waters flowed, the shadows were dispelled, the sun rose, and the light shone. Thus Indra is hailed as conquering Lord and as Savior and, because of the work of liberation, achieved in partnership, Indra and Soma are said to give life to the world, for water, light, and sunshine are the necessary conditions for life.

Indra and Soma are thus intimately connected with light because they drive away all shadows, all evil. They cooperate in the task of bringing light to the world, and Soma, the sacrificial drink, the all-purifying (pavamana), is often praised as "Lord of Light." The identification of Soma with light--he is called indu, bright drop--derives no doubt from the appearance of the sacred liquid which is of a yellow-golden hue (hari). The poets highly praise Soma's luminosity, which may also be connected with his inebriating effect. Soma, the sacred drink drunk by Indra, not only inspires Indra to perform mighty deeds but is himself a God who performs great cosmic actions: he makes the sun and the dawn shine;⁹⁶ he is the Father of Heaven and Earth;⁹⁷ it is to please him that the winds blow and the rivers flow.⁹⁸ He is even praised as possessing the whole universe, including its five regions.⁹⁹ He is also, and independently of Indra, a great and heroic warrior who wins all his battles.¹⁰⁰ No evildoer, no wicked person, can withstand his mighty and luminous power, "for you, Soma purifier, repel all enemies."¹⁰¹

Indra-Soma

RV VI, 72

1. How great, O Indra and Soma, is your power!
It was you who performed those first and mighty exploits.
It was you who subdued the Sun, subdued the Sky,
and chased away all darkness, all the ribald.
2. Indra and Soma, you make the dawn to glow
and cause the Sun to rise in all his splendor.
You have propped up the Sky with a supporting pillar
and spread out Mother Earth in all directions.
3. Indra and Soma, you smote the serpent Vrtra
who sought to obstruct the waters. To you the heavens
yielded their load; you pierced the river torrents
as with a lance and filled full many a sea.
4. Within the cow's udder, unprepared,
it was you, O Soma and Indra, who placed the milk.
You held the cream-hued unimpeded stream
within the multicolored moving creatures.
5. Great are the riches you grant, O strong Ones,
which free from fear and pass to children's children.
With manly power you invest the sons of men
that they may be victorious in the battle.

2. Supporting pillar: skambha, cf. § I 3. In several other passages the same role is attributed to Indra alone. Cf. RV II, 12, 2 (§ II 4); II, 15, 2; II, 21, 4; III, 31, 15; III, 32, 8; III, 49, 4.

3. On the fight with Vrtra, cf. RV I, 32, etc.

4. Unprepared: lit. the raw belly, in contrast with the warm ("cooked") milk that is prepared in it.
The King of Heaven and Earth
Varuna

26 Varuna, one of the greatest among the Rig-Vedic Gods, represents the Lord in his aspect of kingship; he is the supreme Ruler who controls all things, the cosmos as well as the deeds of Men. The sun is the all-seeing eye of Varuna; nothing

escapes his glance, which sees all, penetrates, surveys, examines, and assesses.¹⁰² In order to symbolize this extraordinary power he is said to have "a thousand eyes."¹⁰³ The hymn here given describes the activity of this monarch, thus enhancing our awareness and making us conscious of his presence at all times and in all places. At the beginning of the hymn an invocation implores his mercy after the fashion of nearly all liturgical prayers. He is then depicted as the supreme overseer who has knowledge of all that happens both in heaven and in the ocean.

Varuna follows attentively the working of the cosmos which has been set in motion by him in accordance with well-defined laws, producing a procession of months. By his wisdom he rules also the "beyond" of time, taking into his purview both past and future. He is close to Men in friendship and consorts with them, watching over their activities. His theophany, that is, the manifestation of his presence, is sometimes so palpable that the worshiper can see him vividly in his mind's eye (v. 18). Men implore this wise Lord, whose gaze they fear, to be well disposed toward them, and they do not ask from him, as they do from other Gods, victory in battle or prosperity, wealth, the gift of children or long life, but to be freed from the fetters of sin and to obtain "true life," exempt from evil. Varuna is also, after Indra, the most anthropomorphic of the Rig-Vedic Gods and the most humane of all. It has been said that he acted as a bridge that enabled Men to pass from a so-called polytheistic to a more monotheistic world view.¹⁰⁴

Varuna

RV I, 25, 3-21

3. As a charioteer
tethers his steed,
so my songs shall bind
your heart, O Varuna.
4. My desires fly away
searching for happiness,
just as birds
fly to their nest.
5. When shall we move
Varuna to mercy,
the Lord of glorious might
whose eye is far-reaching?
6. Common to both
is the might. Their love
forsakes not the worshiper
faithful to Law.
7. He knows the path
of birds in the heaven;
as Lord of the sea
he knows each ship.
8. True to his Law,
he knows the twelve months
(and the extra month too)
with their offspring the days.
9. The path of the wind--
sweeping, high, powerful--
he knows, and the Gods
who reside in the heavens.
10. He sits among his people,
consistent to Law.
Most wise, he presides
and governs all things.
11. From there, surveying,
he beholds earth's marvels,
both that which has been
and that which shall be.
12. May the wise Aditya
prepare for us always
fair paths to tread,

prolonging our lives!

13. Varuna, wearing
a golden mantle,
is clothed in bright garments.
His watchmen sit round him.

14. No men of ill will
or evildoers
or those of wrong intention
wish to harm this God--

15. The One who gives consummate
glory to men,
imparting this glory
to these our own bodies.

16. Yearning for him,
wide-seeing Varuna,
my thoughts move onward
as cows to their pasture.

17. Again let us converse!
The nectar has been brought.
You eat, as a priest,
the food that you love.

18. I have seen the One
whom all may behold
and his car passing high!
My songs are accepted!

19. Hear, O Varuna!
Show Us your favor.
Longing for help,
I have cried to you.

20. Supreme Lord,
ruling the spheres,
hear, O wise God,
as you pass on your way.

21. Free Us from fetters
of every sort.
Loosen our bonds
that we may live!

1-2. Cf. § IV 8.

4. Desires: vimanyavah, which can also mean 'prayers to avert anger" (manyu).

5. Mercy: mr̥ika.
Of glorious might: ksatrashri lit. who brings glory to power (ksatra).

6. Both: Mitra and Varuna.
Faithful to Law: dhrtavrata (the same term as in vv. 8, 10), of firm resolve, established in law, is applied both to Varuna and to his worshippers.

8. Cosmic as well as moral Order is protected by Mitra and Varuna.

12. The wise Aditya: i.e., Varuna.

17. The priest (hotr) is the first to take from the Soma.

21. Cf. RV I, 24, 15 (§ IV 8), where the same thought is expressed.
Measurer of the Three Worlds
Visnu

27Visnu, who is so dearly beloved and who has inspired, and indeed still inspires, in his devotees such fervent worship either of his own person or of his earthly manifestations Rama and Krishna, is not a major divinity in the Rig Veda.¹⁰⁵ It is the Sama Veda and Shatapatha Brahmana, where Visnu is constantly identified with sacrifice, which accord him an important place, while at a later date the prolific literature of the Puranas, of which the myths concerning Visnu form the basis, made him immensely popular.¹⁰⁶ This prominence has been maintained and indeed enhanced right up to modern times.

Our hymn mentions the famous strides (pada) of Visnu so frequently featured in later iconography and legend. Two of his strides are visible to Men (those encompassing the earth and the air) and the third is in the heights of heaven (the sky). This third step is like a veil affixed to the sky, the proper abode of Visnu. The sky is his favorite haunt, a place of happiness, where Men go after death and rejoice together with the Gods and where there is to be found a fountain of honey, that is, nectar (hence the allusion to his third step being filled with honey).

His trivikrama, or three strides, have also been interpreted in a temporal way, connected with the sun's orbit: the rising, the zenith, and the setting of the sun. In any event Visnu, as the sacrificial rituals remind us, is the deity who encompasses both time and space, that is to say, past, present, and future as well as earth, air, and heaven. The power of Vishnu is a disguised one. Time and again he appears as a dwarf, thus hiding his true nature. It is in his dwarf's form that he deceives the asuras and makes them accept the challenge described in so many texts.¹⁰⁷

The story is delightfully told in the Bhagavata Purana. Bali, king of the asuras and grandson of Prahlada, was performing the ashvamedha or horse sacrifice. Present at the sacrifice was Vamana, that is to say, Visnu in the form of a dwarf, one of his avatars. The king received Vamana and, though reluctantly and against the advice of his guru, adhered to the rules of hospitality to the extent of allowing Vamana to take for his own "as much land as he could cover with three steps." Thereupon Vamana assumed his divine form and with just two strides covered all the worlds. This he achieved by virtue of the identification mentioned just now, "Visnu is the sacrifice."¹⁰⁸ Another text affirms in this same connection that "much have they given us, who gave us that which has the same size as the sacrifice."¹⁰⁹

Without having recourse to erudite theories that have been put forward regarding the origin and nature of Visnu, we may recall a certain pattern to be found in the later Visnuite myth: Visnu (over against Siva, who stands for the moon) is related to the Sun and thus he is a deity of daylight and of gold, whereas Siva is connected with darkness, the night, and silver. Visnu generally is related to the seas (Siva to the mountains), to life, and to the development of Man in history; thus Visnu, unlike Siva, has many incarnations.

In the Rig Veda the lordship of Visnu seems to follow in the wake of Indra. He is regarded as the close and true friend of Lord Indra,¹¹⁰ one who shares in his exploits, constantly assists him,¹¹¹ particularly in his combat with Vrtra,¹¹² and presses for him the Soma of which he is so fond.¹¹³ So close is their association that in one hymn they seem to be identified and addressed as a dual divinity, Indra-Visnu.¹¹⁴ In fact, the "realms" of verse 6 of this hymn are understood to be the realms of Indra-Visnu. At a later date, whereas Indra's lordship suffers diminishment and he is deprived of certain facets of his supremacy, Visnu develops far more clearly defined features and becomes for generations of worshippers the supreme Lord.

Visnu

RV I, 154

1. I will proclaim the mighty deeds of Visnu
who measured out the earthly regions and propped
the heavens above, accomplishing in his course
three mighty strides.
2. For this his prowess Visnu is acclaimed.
He inhabits the mountains, like a savage beast
wandering at will; in his three mighty paces
are set all worlds.
3. Now may my prayer ascend to the far-striding
Visnu, the Bull, who dwells upon the mountains,
to him who unaided measured with threefold step
these far-flung spheres.
4. The marks of his three strides are filled with honey
imperishable; each is cause of joy.
Alone he supports the three spheres--

Earth and Sky and all things living.

5. May I attain to Visnu's glorious mansion
where the faithful rejoice, where, close beside the Strider,
within his highest footstep springs the well
of purest honey!

6. O for your realms where dwell the tireless oxen
abundantly furnished with horns, whence shine
from the highest step of the widely striding Hero,
his multiple splendors!

3. Unaided: eka, lit. the One, alone. The same important symbolism of the one and the three (steps and worlds) is found in v. 4.

4. Honey: madhu, may refer to Soma. The third step is transcendent and thus is filled with the nectar of immortality (see also v. 5).

5. The Strider--urukramasya, "of the far-striding one," one of the oldest epithets of Visnu.
Highest footstep: pada parama, later understood as the transcendent abode of Visnu.

6. Tireless oxen: refers to Indra and Visnu.
Multiple splendors: the stars in the sky (the "highest step").
The Supreme Lordship
Sarveshvara

28 There are three traditional ways, followed by Men and carefully elaborated in the Indian tradition, by which one can reach human fulfillment, or, in religious terms, salvation: the way of works and action, karma-marga; the way of devotion and love, bhakti-marga; and the way of knowledge and contemplation, jnana-marga. Reflection upon the end and goal of each of the three ways will inevitably yield three different pictures. At the end of the path of action there is a heaven, a bliss, a new and perfect world, for that is what one was striving for in following one's own dharma or duty. At the end of the path of devotion there cannot but be a loving person, a personal deity, for love is essentially personal. At the end of the path of knowledge there will be total reality, absolute truth. Every human tradition has given different names to these three goals. Yet in one way or another the three goals, or rather that which stands at the end of the pilgrimage, must be ultimately equivalent: heaven is the vision and enjoyment of God, the love of God is communion with him, and God is only another name for absolute truth and supreme reality. God is here used as a universal symbol. But the unity or oneness of the three goals is only a postulate of our thinking and the fact that they somehow seem to coalesce should not be interpreted in the light of any of the three systems. It is here that the discourse on the Lord becomes relevant and the message of the Upanisads important. Let the karmakandins, the men of action even if the action is the performance of sacred rites and the offering of sacrifice--assume that the final goal is the building of a perfect world; let the bhaktas, the devotees of any kind, aver that there is nothing higher than a personal deity, and let the jnanins, the sages of the various schools, claim that God must be transcended in favor of an ineffable Brahman or absolute void. Let them all follow their own paths. At the end they will all find the goal, the aim of their efforts, or of their love, or of their thoughts, the Lord who is not a concept or a reality in the sense in which all other things are such; the Lord is at the end of every action, wish, desire, longing, tendency, thought, and will and is the end of them all. He is not necessarily a State or a Person or a Being. He cannot be circumscribed, and there is no discussion on this point, because the discussion has meaning only inside a concrete system. But the Upanisads, which are at the source of so many systems and schools, cannot be interpreted exclusively in favor of any one of them; the Upanisads are the Vedanta, the end of the Vedas, in the double sense of the word: they stand at the end of the Vedas as their culmination but they also represent the end, the surpassing, of them. If we view the Upanisads in this light we may have the clue as to why they seemingly have so many almost contradictory statements. For the Upanisads the Lord is not only Brahman, or exclusively a person, or simply a creator. Their standpoint is different. They would be syncretistic if they were attempting an overall synthesis, but they have never purported to offer a complete and coherent philosophical system. It is true that the Upanisads, emerging out of the Vedas and presupposing them, stress the complementary jnana perspective, but this must always be seen against the background of the four Vedas, which emphasize the other two paths. It is not our present task to develop these points further or to give an account of the idea of the Lord in the Upanisads. The following points serve as an introduction to our short selection of texts. By the time of the Shvetashvatara Upanisad the Lord has acquired a more "personal" aspect, or rather a more anthropomorphic character. He is called Rudra, which is not the divine personification of the Rig Veda under the same name, but rather Brahman manifesting himself in the One who creates and protects his creatures and who absorbs them at the end of time. He embraces the whole universe, and the Man who recognizes him as sole God is liberated and saved. Salvation is not achieved by human effort alone, nor is it a spontaneous act of divine grace, as later theologies declare, but it is rather a unique act in which "God" and "Man"--for we cannot dispense with these two at this stage--coincide. To recognize the Lord is to be saved, certainly; but, in order to recognize him, not only do I have to be united with him but also

he has to disclose himself to me, so that it has little meaning to discuss at this point whence the initiative comes.

This Upanisad sees the Lord in everything while carefully differentiating him from nature. Although the universe is ultimately Brahman, Brahman cannot be said without qualifications to be the universe.¹¹⁵ The Mahanarayana Upanisad, as its name suggests, extols Narayana, that is, Visnu, as the universal Lord, distinguishing him from Prajapati who is mentioned in the cosmogonic context. Narayana is the one who penetrates everything, including the human heart; he is the object of our worship. He is invoked in terms recalling the Vedic purusa and possesses recognizable features of a personal God. He is also the supreme Word, beyond the sound manifested in the Veda (vv. 233-234, 236). Although the weight of tradition is heavy, we should not forget that Narayana means he who walks the way of Man, of Nara, the original Man.¹¹⁶ He is the Lord of all things, the knower of all things. He controls the thoughts and the most intimate feelings. He is the matrix of all, for he is both the Origin and the End of all beings. So says the Mandukya Upanisad.

The Upanisads constantly remind us that the universe, Men, and the Lord are both united and separate; they are interrelated, but the link, being unique, cannot adequately be expressed by a simile. For the same reason knowledge of Brahman is radically different from any other knowledge. It is truly the only saving realization. The Man eager to learn, the student, the seeker, the one who is humble enough to sit at the feet of the Master, is constantly urged in the Upanisads to turn his eyes inward and to make discoveries for himself, to experience a knowledge that is not communicated in the Upanisads and is indeed not communicable. The Upanisads proffer an invitation to a higher life of contemplation, to the enormous and risky adventure of finding the Lord, who can neither be spoken of nor identified with any objective or subjective reality (which would entail converting him automatically into a deus ex machina or a mere idol).

According to the message of the Upanisads, both the subjective, or purely immanent, interpretation of the divine and the objective, or merely transcendent, interpretation are inadequate. A mere God within is the product of our heart, our weakness, and our desire for consolation and security; a God who is simply outside is the product of our mind which looks for a support and an end to its speculations. The latter amounts to a logical principle, whereas the former amounts to a psychological one. The Upanisads attempt to resolve the dilemma by propounding the way of self-realization, the personal discovery of the hidden treasure. The Lord is within and without, personal and impersonal, moving and unmoving,¹¹⁷ Being and Nonbeing.¹¹⁸ He is the Lord precisely because he is not limited by any one pair of opposites.

Sarveshvara

SU III, 3-4

i) 3. On all sides eye, on all sides face,
on all sides arms, on all sides feet,
he, God, the One, creates heaven and earth,
forging them together with arms and wings.
4. He who is source and origin of the Gods,
the Lord of all, Rudra, the mighty sage,
who produced in ancient days the Golden Germ--
may he endow us with purity of mind!
SU V, 13

ii) Without beginning and end is he; in the midst
of chaos he is and brings forth all things.
Creator is he, and sole pervader, of manifold forms.
When a man knows God he is freed from all fetters.
SU VI, 7-9; 16-19

iii) 7. Of lords the Lord Supreme, of kings the King,
of Gods the God, him let us worship--the transcendent
Lord of all worlds and wholly worthy of worship.
8. In him exists neither action nor organ of action;
no one is found his equal or superior to him.
His supreme power is revealed in manifold forms;
inherent to his nature is the working of his strength and wisdom.
9. None in this world is his master, none his commander.
He has no distinctive sign; he is the Cause.

Himself unruled, ungenerated, he rules the sense organs.

16. He is the Creator of all, the knower of all things,
the source of the Self, the Knower, the Author of time,
possessor and master of all the qualities, omniscient,
the Lord of both Nature and Spirit, the cause of liberation
from this world's cycle and the bondage of earthly existence.

17. Identical with it, immortal, by nature the Lord,
omnipresent and wise, the guardian and eternal ruler
of the world is he. No other Ground can be found.

18. In him who in days of old created Brahma
and imparted to him the Veda, in this God, who is illumined
by his own intelligence, I take refuge, longing for liberation,

19. In him who is undivided, inactive, peaceful,
irreproachable, free from blemish, the supreme bridge
to immortality, who resembles a fire whose fuel
is wholly consumed.

MAHANAR U 233-245

iv) 233. The sound that is uttered in the beginning of the Veda,
the sound that is also established at its end,

234. that which is beyond its absorption in Nature--
that is the supreme Lord.

235. [We adore] the God with a thousand heads,
with an all-seeing eye, who grants peace to all,

236. Narayana, universal God,
supreme Word, imperishable,

237. on every side supreme, eternal,
Narayana, universal Lord.

238. All this universe exists
vivified by the Person.

239. [We adore] the Master of all, the Lord
of the soul, eternal, benevolent, immobile,

240. Narayana, the mighty one to be known,
the Self of all, the supreme goal.

241-242. Narayana, Light supreme, the Self,
Narayana the Supreme, Narayana supreme
essence of Brahman, Narayana, the Supreme!

243. Narayana is both the supreme meditator
and meditation itself, Narayana, the Supreme.

244. Whatever moves in this universe,
whatever is either seen or heard,

245. whatever is inside or outside--
all is pervaded by the Lord.

He is therein established.

MAND U 6

v) This is the Lord of all, the Knower of all,
the inner controller. This is the source of all,
the beginning and end of all beings.

i) 2. Cf. § V 18.

3. The creator is a smith: d. RV X, 72, 2 (§ VII 2), X, 81, 3 (§ VII 7); AV XIII, 2, 26; YV XVII, 19.

4. Golden Germ: hiranyagarbha.

With purity of mind: buddhya shubhaya, lit. with a pure mind, with clear insight.

7-21. Cf. § VI 7.

iii) 1-6. Cf. § II 9.

8. His supreme power: parasya shaktih, cf. the Sivaite conception of shakti.
The working of his strength and wisdom: jnana-bala-kriya.

9. Distinctive sign: linga.

10-13. Cf. § VI 2.

14. The same as KathU V, 15 (§ V 5), and MundU II, 2, 10 (§ III 6).

15. Last two lines the same as SU III, 8 (§ VI 7).

16. Source of the Self: atmayoni, or his own origin.

Lord of both Nature and Spirit: pradhana-ksetrajna-patih, which in classical Samkhya is prakrti and purusa.

17. Identical with it: sa tanmayah, the same as that, consisting of that, becoming that, being all this.

By nature the Lord: isha-samsthah, existing as the Lord, subsistent as the Lord, or established in his own glory.

18. This verse implies a personalistic conception of revelation in contrast with the apauruseya principle.

19. Supreme bridge to immortality: cf. CU III 4, 1 (§ V 27).

Who resembles a fire. . . : cf. MaitU VI, 34 (§ III 28).

20. Cf. § IV A Antiphon.

iv) 233 Sound: svava.

234. Absorption in Nature: prakrtilina

236. Supreme Word: paramam padam, supreme abode.

239. The Lord of the soul: atmeshvara.

242. Supreme essence of Brahman: brahmatattva, or the true Being (nature) of Brahman.

v) Lord of all. sarveshvara. Cf. BU IV, 4, 22 (§ VI 6).

The Knower of all: sarvajna, the all-knowing. Cf. MundU I, 1, 9; II, 2, 7 (§§ II 11; VI 5).

The doctrine of the antaryamin, the internal atman or purusa as inner controller, is of capital importance in Upanisadic spirituality. Cf. BU III, 7 (VI 5; I 14). The dual prabhava-apyayau represents the cosmic movement of the coming-forth-into-existence and the absorption-into-the-avyakta, the unevolved, unmanifest, the prakrti of certain systems. Cf. its application to yoga in KathU VI, 11 (VI 11).

7. Cf. § VI 6.

The Savior
Jagannatha

29 Perhaps we can summarize the whole message of the Gita by saying that "this," "he," the "absolute," "Brahman," the true atman, the tad, and the idam, that which the Vedic sages sought to clarify and which mankind is constantly seeking, is the Lord, whose subtle and lofty lordship can adopt as many forms as there are types of Men, or even Men, here on earth.

The Bhagavad Gita does not contradict either the Vedas, the Brahmanas, or the Upanisads; it can be understood only against the background of all the previous Scriptures, but it does not elaborate on their past insights; rather, it simplifies all that it has to say, affirming that this mystery, about which any word is improper, is the Lord of all and thus the Savior of mankind as well as of the entire universe. It is not an artificial syncretism that the Bhagavad Gita preaches. It is, rather, a masterly simplification which takes into account the different trends both of Indian tradition and of the human spirit and blends them

harmoniously in lofty words, words that are all the more striking by virtue of their simplicity. The Lord is the Master of the universe and, equally, the Master of the human heart and mind. His lordship is not only cosmic, political, ontological, or psychological. When it is said that he saves all that come to him in good faith, this is not a plea for mere subjectivism, but for a deep personalistic attitude, which we could perhaps call existential.

The Bhagavad Gita truly brings a message of liberation. It reveals, first of all, that there is a Lord, but it adds immediately that this Lord has many names, presents many faces, and performs many functions. Furthermore, it says that nobody can live without a Lord, a master, an ideal, an ambition, a desire, and that it is He, the Lord, the Savior, disguised in accordance with all the variety of the human imagination, who gathers up and vouchsafes the longings of mankind. Nobody escapes his Lordship which acts gently and, many a time, invisibly. Human maturity consists in discovering the face of the Lord and in accepting this growing revelation, for which there are no fixed patterns. All ways lead to him (even the way of wrath),¹¹⁹ provided they remain ways and do not become final stopping places. Otherwise there is stagnation.

The Bhagavad Gita uses the same expression, gati, to express both the way toward the goal and the goal itself, often called the parama gati, the supreme goal. As the word itself suggests, gati (from the root gam-, to go, to move) means a going, a movement, motion in general. In the Bhagavad Gita it has the connotation of the pilgrimage that constitutes human life, a connotation that allows the text to say that he who is on the path has, in a certain sense, already reached the end of it, because the end is not another place outside or after the way itself, but is already contained in it.¹²⁰ Like other parts of the Vedic Revelation, this truth can be grasped only by personal experience.¹²¹ The pilgrimage that is life may lead us to its goal, which in the Bhagavad Gita is described as union with the Lord. The Lord comes down to earth and manifests himself to Man in order to proclaim his message of love and salvation. The Lord is not only the powerful ruler, the mighty God, the just judge, but also the Savior. This is what Krishna is telling Arjuna, what the Lord is telling Man.

Jagannatha

BG IX, 18; 22; 31-32; 34

18. I am the Way, the supporter; your Lord and your witness,
home, refuge, and friend,
origin and dissolution, foundation and treasure-house,
imperishable seed.

22. On those who meditate on Me and worship
with undivided heart,

I confer attainment of what they have not,
and preserve what they have.

31-32. No devotee of mine is ever lost.

Taking refuge in Me,

lowly born, women, artisans, even servants,
reach the highest goal.

34. Let your mind and your heart, your offerings and worship,
to Me be devoted.

With your self thus controlled you shall strive toward Me and to Me you shall come.

15-16. Cf. § III 29.

18. Way: gati, goal; cf. BG IV, 17; VI, 37; VII 18; VIII, 26; XII, 5. Cf. CU I, 9, 1, where the question is asked, "What is the gati of this world?"

Foundation: sthana, substratum, maintenance.

19. Cf. § V 6.

21. Cf. § V 28.

23-27. Cf. § III 29.

31-32. Devotee: bhakta.

Artisans: vaishya.

Servants: shudra

Highest goal: parama gati, highest way. Cf. BG VI, 45; VIII, 13; XIII, 28; XVI, 22-23

E. EMERGING LIFE

Jivana

God ever true,
we faint with despair.
Source of all treasure,
grant to us hope
of blessings to come.
Subdue the malevolent
spirits that haunt,
the kindly awaken.
Grant to us hope
of blessings to come.
RV I, 29, 1-2; 4 122

This final section of Part I is both a conclusion and a beginning. It is a conclusion, for Dawn, Human Birth, and Faith are really at the end of a divine process: the genesis of the Gods. The prelude of the world, the preparation for the emergence of Man, the rising of human consciousness--none of these happen in a single day nor are they the results of spontaneous generation; the way for them has been carefully and painfully prepared. Cosmogony, anthropogenesis, and the first intimations of spiritual life do not constitute an absolute beginning but the conclusion of an elaborate preparation, the result of the victory of light over darkness, of the devas over the asuras, of the spirit over matter. The night has been long, the fight intense, and the tension has almost reached a breaking point, but Life has emerged. Theogenesis has given birth to life.

This section is also a beginning, for Dawn, Human Birth, and Faith are nothing if not ignition sparks; starting points of the real cosmic and human process. Up to now all has happened "behind the curtain." There has been the sacrifice of Prajapati, the fight of the Gods and the demons, the preparation for human consciousness, the accumulation of conditions favorable to the possibility of human life. Dawn is simply the herald of day, the forerunner of the sun, just as the child is the living hope of growth into a Man and faith the foretaste of things to come and to become. This process, of course, does not need to be understood in a modern evolutionary way, nor must it be interpreted in a merely temporal manner. The mystery of life goes on under our very eyes day by day, for every day we experience the marvel of dawn and every day we may also experience the reality of faith which comes to us discreetly, invisibly, yet all the more luminously: a light that makes us aware of the ever deepening, the unfathomable, dimension of every spark of reality. The Vedic Revelation is not a historical record or a document concerning something that took place a long while or even a short while ago. It conveys a transtemporal message, if we are permitted to use this word with reference to the present, in order to make us more aware of the mystery of existence and of life. Dawn, Human Birth, and Faith, from this perspective, belong together. There is no such thing as a purely astronomical dawn. Dawn postulates an eye, or at least a limited and concrete point of reference rooted in the earth. The birds can discover and enjoy the dawn, but a supersonic aircraft traveling around the earth may very well avoid sunrise altogether or may, on the other hand, have it constantly present. In either event it would cease to be dawn. A merely physiological procreation does not constitute a human birth, nor is a simple rationalization of one's situation in the world the emergence of mature human consciousness. The following texts may succeed in conveying that unified vision in which differences are not overlooked or distinctions ignored, but in which reality is not dissected into small portions, or observations, experiences, and experiments isolated so as to prevent their being integrated into one simple and life-bringing insight. It is not necessarily pantheism to worship dawn, just as it is not always superstition to perform a ceremony of blessing over an infant; nor is it fideism to consider faith a constitutive dimension of the human being, though variable in accordance with a man's individual personality.

Life emerges in and around us, on the cosmic plane and on the human level. We do not need to read any text to become aware of this. The texts we have chosen are an invitation to see reality, not through them, but along with them.

a) Dawn
Usas

Usas is the Daughter of Heaven who was born in the Sky. 123 She is the Lady of Light, the mistress and wife of the Sun. He follows her as a young man follows a maiden. The Goddess of hope, the elder sister of Night, 124 is mentioned more than 300 times in the Rig Veda, in hymns that are among the most beautiful of all the Samhitas.

The poetry of these hymns is imbued with intense luminosity. The yearning for light, the deep longing for the sun, and, by contrast, the fear of shadows and of darkness are strongly marked characteristics of the soul-strivings of the Vedic people. It is in keeping with these qualities that in the Rig Veda some twenty hymns are addressed to Usas and many to the Sun; the name of dyu, the sky, is mentioned more than 500 times, but only one hymn is dedicated to Night. 125 The fascination with light bursting forth from the cosmos is heightened in the speculations of the Upanisads, where the Spirit is named Light. It is not difficult to imagine why Usas has so prominent a place. The experience of Dawn is one of the simplest and most complete of all human experiences. It unites in itself a vision of nature, an aesthetic awareness, a fresh opening for Man toward a hopeful future, and a mystical insight into the horizon beyond the rising light from where all good things come. A vision of the Dawn is not an experience of the Sun. You do not see Dawn, but you share in her light; you are not illumined by the Dawn as you are by the Sun; you are enwrapped in her light, you participate in her all-encompassing beauty and sense that nature is more than nature and that God is less than supernatural. In the twilight before sunrise, the union between light and darkness, there are no fixed limits for the senses or the mind. At Dawn you cannot say where the earth begins and where the sky ends, where the light dispels darkness or where the darkness has still the upper hand; you cannot assert what comes from the God or what emerges from the earth. At Dawn you do not mix anything, but you do not separate either; all remains a message, an expectation, a promise. Dawn is the Goddess of hope. 126 Although there are no lines specifically addressed to Hope in the Rig Veda, most of the hymns addressed to Dawn could be said to be songs and prayers of hope, mirroring the high optimism and great joy of Vedic culture. Rather than attempting to describe or to extol the excellences of Dawn, we may compose a hymn of praise by quoting the following:

Stotra

Dawn is "beloved" of Heaven:

RV I, 46, 1

i) Now Dawn with her earliest light shines forth,
beloved of the Sky.

She is closely associated with her lover the Sun:

RV I, 115, 2

ii) Just as a young man follows his beloved,
so does the Sun the Dawn, that shining Goddess.

She becomes his consort:

RV I, 123, 11

iii) Fair as a bride adomed by her mother,
you show your beauty for all to see.
Happy are you, O Dawn. Shine ever more widely,
surpassing every dawn that went before.

Resplendent with light, she drives away darkness:

RV V, 80, 5

iv) Fresh from her toilet, conscious of her beauty,
she emerges visible for all to see.

Dawn, Daughter of Heaven, lends us her lustre,
dispersing all shadows of malignity.

RV VI, 64, 3

v) Like a swift warrior she repulses darkness.

RV VII, 75, 1

vi) She drives off wicked spirits and dread darkness.

She awakens living creatures:

RV I, 48, 5

vii) Usas comes carefully, fostering all creatures,
stirring to life all winged and creeping things.

RV I, 49, 3

viii) Bright Usas, when your rays appear,
all living creatures start to stir,
both four-footed and two.

RV IV, 51, 5

ix) Arousing from deep slumber all that lives,
stirring to motion man and beast and bird.
She is always faithful to the divine order of the universe:
RV I, 123, 9

x) This maiden infringes not the Eternal Law,
day after day coming to the place appointed.
Now Light Has Come
Jyotir agat

30

RV I, 113

1. Now there is light, the fairest of all lights.
Now comes to shining birth a glow of brightness.
Night, sent away before the Sun is rising,
has yielded up to morning her domain.
2. Trailing white offspring the radiant [Dawn] advances
to claim the dwelling by dark [Night] relinquished.
Morning and Night, the immortal sisters, follow
hard on each other's heels with alternate colors.
3. They follow the same pathway, never ending.
Instructed by the Gods they ply their course.
Fair, yet contrasting, following one spirit,
Morning and Night neither collide nor linger.
4. Dawn, the glorious bringer of graces, shines forth
and flings wide open for us her shining doors.
Stirring the whole world, she displays her riches,
raising to consciousness all living creatures.
5. She wakes to action all who repose in slumber.
Some rise to labor for wealth, others to worship.
Those who saw little before now see more clearly.
Dawn raises to consciousness all living creatures.
6. One she leads on to power, another to glory;
another she leads on to pursuit of gain;
yet others she directs to varied callings,
raising to consciousness all living creatures.
7. The Daughter of Heaven now appears before us,
a fair young woman clothed in shining garments.
Auspicious Dawn, mistress of earthly treasure,
shine upon us today in queenly splendor.
8. She, first of endless morns to come hereafter,
follows the path of morns that went before.
Dawn at her shining summons forth the living;
the dead she never wakens from their slumbers.
9. O Dawn, you shine forth with the eye of the Sun.
You wake the worshiper and inspire his heart
to kindle the fire and offer sacrifice.
Thus to the Gods you render noble service.
10. How long a time until they meet together,
dawns that have shown and dawns to shine hereafter?
Eagerly she yearns to join her predecessors

and goes forth with the others, gladly shining.
 11. Vanished are those who in the days before us
 gazed at the rising of the morning Sun.
 It is we the living who now behold the Dawn,
 and after us her shining others will see.
 12. Disperser of our foes, bringer of joys,
 born child of Order, to Order ever faithful,
 convey our offerings to the Gods, O Dawn,
 and shine on us today for wealth and fortune.
 13. Never has Goddess Dawn failed to appear.
 Again today the generous One has risen.
 Ever hereafter will she rise each morning.
 She proceeds by her own power, unaging, deathless.
 14. On the sky's borders she appears in splendor.
 The Goddess has thrown off the robe of darkness.
 Her well-yoked chariot of tawny horses
 heralds the approach of Dawn and rouses all men.
 15. With her she brings all life-sustaining blessings.
 Brightly she shines and sheds abroad her radiance.
 She is the last of countless vanished mornings.
 She is the first of more bright morns to come.
 16. Arise! The breath of life again has reached us.
 Darkness has fled and light is fast approaching.
 She leaves a pathway for the Sun to travel.
 We have arrived where life will again continue.
 17. With the reins of speech the priest, uttering praises,
 drives onward, steering their course, the shining Dawns.
 Shine then today, O generous Dawn, for your singer!
 Convey to us the gift of life and children!
 18. To the mortal who honors them these ascending Dawns
 impart both wealth of cattle and hero sons.
 May the same accrue to the sacrificer, giver of horses,
 when swift as the wind the gifts have been summoned by song!
 19. Mother of Gods and brightness of the Godhead,
 token of sacrifice, shine forth on high.
 Rise up and look upon our prayers with favor.
 Bless us among people, Dawn ever desired!
 20. Whatever wondrous gift the Dawns convey
 as blessing to the offerer who shows himself zealous in worship,
 that may Mitra and Varuna grant to us,
 and Aditi, the Sacred River, Earth, and Heaven!

1. The Sun: Savitri.

2. By "white offspring" some understand the white clouds attending the Dawn; lit. a white calf. Usas's calf is said to be Agni in RV I, 95, 1, and I, 96, 5, while some commentators affirm it to be the Sun.

3. Following one spirit: samanasa, of one and the same mind.

7. Young woman: yuvati, maiden.

9. The eye of the Sun: lit. the eye of Surya, referring to the sun in heaven. Usas causes the fire, Agni, to be kindled, for this takes place at dawn.

11. Allusion to the mystery of life and death, which is only tragic when viewed from an individualistic perspective.

12. Foes: dvesah also obstacles, adversities.

Order rita. LI. 2-4 lit.: Born [child] of rita [truth, Order, divine law], rteja, you are the keeper of the divine rita [rtapa]; [bestow] your favor upon us, let our songs of joy [offerings of praise], resound, [be] propitious, you who transmit the food

divine [deva-viti], shine on us today, O Dawn, O you most bright.

14. Cf. RV I, 48, 7, where Usas is said to arrive on a hundred chariots drawn by tawny horses (the reddish rays of the morning sun).

The robe of darkness: the night.

15. Lit.: Appearing, she spreads out her bright-colored [glittering, shining] banner.

16. Breath of life: jivo asur.

19. Brightness of the Godhead: aditer anikam, face of Aditi (the Goddess of the infinite, also associated with light). Cf. RV IV 25, 3; VII, 82, 10; AV XII, 1, 61 (§ I 19 and notes).

Dawn ever desired: vishvavare (vocative), lit. O you desired by all.

Daughter of Heaven

Divo duhita

31

RV VII, 81

1. See now, the shining Daughter of Heaven approaches,
dispelling gloom of night that we may see.

The friendly Lady ushers in the light.

2. The ascending Sun, refulgent star of heaven,
co-worker with the Dawn, pours down his beams.

O Dawn, at your arising and the Sun's,
grant us, we pray, our portion in your light.

3. O Dawn, glorious Daughter of high Heaven,
promptly we rise and come to welcome you.
Most generous one, granter of all desires,
to worshipers you give both joy and treasure.

4. O glorious Dawn, you bring the earth to view
and lighten up the lofty vault of heaven.

We yearn to be yours, partaking in your rewards.
Accept our love as that of mother's children.

5. Bring to us, Dawn, your grace most bountiful,
that shall be celebrated far and wide.

Give us what you possess as nourishment for men,
that we may rejoice therein, O Daughter of Heaven.

6. Give to our princes wealth and everlasting fame.
To us grant in the contests herds of kine.

O shining Dawn, you who inspire the generous
and are full of grace, drive from us all our foes.

1. Ushers in: lit. makes light.

2. Pours down his beams: lit. lets out his cows.

Grant us. . . our portion sam bhaktena gamemahi, may we obtain (our) share, i.e., may we share in (partake of, enjoy) your light.

5. Grace radhas, gift, favor.

6. Everlasting amrta, immortal, deathless.

Contests: refers to the poetical contests well known in the RV.

Full of grace sunrtavati (vocative), graceful, bringer of gladness.

Lady of Light

Hiranyavarna

32

RV VII, 77

1. Dawn comes shining
like a Lady of Light,
stirring to life all creatures.
Now it is time to kindle the Fire.
The light of Dawn scatters the shadows.

2. Her face turned toward
this far-flung world,
she rises, enwrapped in bright garments.
Shining with gold,
with rays of light bedecked,
she sends forth the world on its course.

3. Our Lady of Light
brings the Eye of the Gods,
as she rides her white, beautiful steed.
Dawn shines apparent,
bestowing on all men
her store of marvelous treasure.

4. Come with your bounty;
drive away foes.
Grant us secure and lush pastures.
Disperse those who hate us.
O bountiful One,
give to your singer reward.

5. Beam forth your light
to guide and sustain us,
prolonging, O Goddess, our days.
Give to us food, grant to us joy,
chariots and cattle and horses.

6. Lady nobly born,
Daughter of Heaven,
worshiped by all the illustrious,
grant us your blessings,
riches and wealth.
Now and forever protect us!

1. Fire: Agni.
The light of Dawn. . . : lit. she made the light, chasing away darkness.

2. She sends forth the world on its course: lit. mother of kine (i.e., the rays of light), guide of the days, she shines. Cf. RV IV, 52, 2-3.

3. Our Lady of Light: lit. the shining one, auspicious one, the blessed one.
The Eye of the Gods: the Sun.
She rides. . . : lit. leading her white, beautiful steed.

5. Joy: radhas, gift, favor, or reward.

6. Nobly born: sujata.
Illustrious: Vasishtha, name of the rishi who composed the VII mandala of the RV, a priestly family. Lit. the most bright.
b) Human Birth
Janman

Man has a peculiar and very special place in the universe. Every origin is sacred and unfathomable, but human birth is a mystery which no amount of rationalization can explain or explain away. To become the father or the mother of a newborn baby dispels any doubt one may have about it. We can speculate and generalize, but when the parents see and feel that the

new creature is part and yet more than just a part of them, they cannot be satisfied with any merely scientific or philosophical explanation. No wonder that the danger of exploitation by priestcraft has not always been avoided. The dawn of the human being involves the rising of Life and a new sort of life in the world. The horizon is filled not only with red clouds and auspicious signs, but with the light of a new spark of that universal consciousness in which we are all enwrapped. The continuation of the universe, of human life, and, more intimately, of the sacred order of things, depends upon the birth of a child and mainly, as far as the continuity of traditional wisdom and sacrifice is concerned, upon the birth of a son. No wonder that the desire for a son is a most holy wish and that the bringing forth of children is a sacred duty. Therefore the mystery of life, from the moment of conception onward through the stages after the birth of a child, is attended by prayers and ritual actions. 127

The dialogue in the Rig Veda carried on by the wife of the sacrificer, the sacrificer, and the priest (who assumes the role of Prajapati or the genius of procreation) shows the delicacy of the relationship between husband and wife and the sacredness of the act of procreation. It is after performing tapas, after concentrating energy in an act of restraint, and after deep meditation that the two, husband and wife, meet. The blessing is given by the priest who affirms that all life is produced by Prajapati, Father of all creatures, who places the seed and brings about new life. The Atharva Veda contains many prayers for successful conception and childbirth¹²⁸ and for the protection of both mother and child against every kind of danger. Various divinities closely connected with fertility are invoked, such as Sarasvati, Sinivali (Goddess of the new moon and of female fertility), the Ashvins (the divine twins),¹²⁹ and certain creative divine powers such as Savitri, Dhatri, Tvastri, and Prajapati.¹³⁰ It is Agni, the life germ of all creatures¹³¹ and the power that fecundates the waters,¹³² who bestows children:

May a son of our flesh be born to us!

May this your grace come upon us, O Agni!¹³³

Human birth is both a part and also the culmination of the cosmic birth of all living things. The mother who bears the child is just like mother Earth who patiently carries all beings. The Grhya Sutras contain a collection of rites and prayers for the celebration of a birth, most of them of shrautic origin (i.e., related to the revealed tradition) and for this reason justifiably included in this anthology. Blessings are invoked upon the newborn male child.¹³⁴ Some ancient texts stipulate that the ceremony be performed before the cutting of the umbilical cord, though very soon this custom was no longer observed.¹³⁵ The child is fed a little butter and honey, symbols of wisdom, and the protection of Savitri, the Goddess Sarasvati, and the divine Ashvins is entreated. There follows a prayer in the form of a litany for the longevity of the child. It is by faithfulness to the distinctive characteristics of the personages invoked that long life is ensured. To conclude the litany, sacrifice and water are mentioned. Next comes a short paean to the Earth, to the particular place on earth where the child has been born. May this plot of earth accord him a long life! A prayer for strength for the newborn child concludes the ceremony. The protection and blessings of Indra, the most powerful of all the Gods, are implored. A short benediction, addressed to the child's mother, asks that she be blessed for having given birth to a son, and in the last petition Water is also implored to grant the mother watchful protection.

When the baby is ten or eleven days old the ceremony called namadheya or name-giving takes place.¹³⁶ The choice of name, based on the caste and the sex of the child, is determined by well-defined rules and is accompanied by offerings. In the sixth month annaprashana, another important ceremony of early infancy, takes place. As an accompaniment to the first morsels of solid food given to the child, some verses of the Rig Veda are recited.¹³⁷ The symbolism of food is important here.¹³⁸ Later on, in about the third year, the ceremony of the first haircut or cudakarana takes place. Thus the child's first years are hallowed by religious ceremonies marking each stage of its growth.

Desire for a Son

Putrakama

33

RV X, 183

i) [The wife]

1. I saw you as within your mind grew insight,
born from Ardor, strengthened through Ardor.
Bestowing here offspring, bestowing treasure,
produce now, desirous of a son, a progeny!

[The husband]

2. I saw you meditating within your heart,
your body being afflicted at the season.
Rise now to meet me! Be a young woman!

Produce now, desirous of a son, a progeny!

[Prajapati]

3. It is I who have placed in every plant a seed;
it is I who have placed a seed in all creatures;
it is I who bring forth children on the earth.
I will ever henceforth produce sons in women!
AV VI, 17

ii) 1. Just as the mighty earth bore the seed of all life,
so may you carry the child and bring forth a son!
2. Just as the mighty earth bore the trees of the forest,
so may you carry the child and bring forth a son!
3. Just as the mighty earth bore the mountains and peaks,
so may you carry the child and bring forth a son!
4. Just as the mighty earth bore the whole world's weight,
so may you carry the child and bring forth a son!

i) 1. Ardor: tapas.
Treasure: rayi; the first of all treasures is a son.
Desirous of a son: putrakama.
Meditating within your heart: manasa didhyanam.

3. Seed: garbha, germ, embryo, etc.
The First Birth
Prathamam janma

34

BU VI, 4, 22-24

i) Then he comes to her and says:
22. With a golden fire stick the Ashvins
produce from fire a flame.
Thus we pray for you a seed
that shall come forth in the tenth month.
As the earth bears fire in her womb
and the heaven is pregnant with lightning
and the quarters have wind as their seed,
so I place in you, my wife, this child.
23. As the wind agitates a pond
of lotus from every side,
so may the child stir in you
and come forth together with the afterbirth!
This thunderbolt of Indra is fashioned
with a covering for protection.
Let him come forth, O Indra,
the afterbirth along with the child!
24. In this child I shall prosper a thousandfold, i
ncreasing within my own house.
His fortune, along with his offspring
and cattle, shall never diminish.
Svaha!
The life-powers that are in me,
I offer them to you in spirit.
Svaha!
Whatever in my sacred duties
I have done too much or too little--
may Agni, the wise, perfect offerer,
correct and perfect on our behalf!
Svaha!

AU II, 1-6

- ii) 1. In a man this [atman] first becomes a germ, and this semen is his essence taken from all his limbs; in himself, indeed, he carries the Self. When he fecundates a woman, then he causes [a child] to be born. This is his first birth.
 2. Then he enters into the very self of a woman, just as a limb of her own. Therefore it does not injure her. She nourishes this self as it has entered into her.
 3. As she is the nourisher, she should be nourished. The woman carries it [this self] as an embryo. He [the father] takes care of the boy before the birth and after the birth, and as he takes care of the boy before and after the birth, he takes care of his own self, for the extension of these worlds: for these worlds are thus extended. This is his [a man's] second birth.
 4. He [the son] becomes the self of his father for the performance of sacred actions. Then his other self, having accomplished his work and having grown old, departs and, after departing [from this world], is reborn. This is his third birth. Thus it has been said by the seer.
 5. "While I was still in the womb I already knew all the generations of the Gods. Though a hundred fortresses of iron guarded me, I came forth with the swiftness of an eagle." Thus spoke Vamadeva even while he was as yet lying in the womb.
 6. He who knows this and rises up [from the body] through the head at the time of separation from the body, having satisfied all his desires in the heavenly world, he becomes immortal, yes, he becomes immortal.

i) The entire section is consecrated to the mystery of procreation.

22. The Ashvins are connected with fertility (cf. RV X, 184, 3; AV V, 25, 3). The production of the embryo is compared to the production of fire from the fire sticks.

Seed: garbha, embryo.

Heaven: one of the few passages where dyu is a Goddess.

Lightning: Indra.

My wife: lit. so-and-so, i.e., the name of the woman has to be uttered.

23. Cf. RV V, 78, 7-8; PGS I, 14, prayer for successful childbirth.

Thunderbolt of Indra: indrasya. . . vajrah; the child is compared to Indra's thunderbolt (v. 23 c).

24. I offer them to you in spirit (manasa): because the real transmission of the father's life-power into the son takes place at the time of his death (cf. KausU II 15; § V 12).

Sacred duties: karman. The father prays that any mistake he has made in performing the sacrifice may not affect his family, i.e., the newborn child.

ii) Cf. AV VI, 11, 2.

1. Semen is his essence: cf. BU VI, 4, 1 purusasya retah (rasah).

His first birth: a human being's first birth. For the three human births cf. SB XI, 2, 1, 1 (§ III 23).

3. Nourisher: bhavayatri.

His own self: atman, body. The son is the continuation of the self of the father; the father is born as the son.

For the extension: the verb is sam-tan-, to spread, to extend, to continue.

Second birth: dvitiya janman, not referring here to the conception of the second birth by initiation (cf. dvija).

4. Other self: the father.

5. Cf. RV IV, 27 1. The seer Vamadeva applies to himself the saying of the eagle in the RV, which refers to an ancient legend where the eagle was detained by demons in a hundred fortresses. The story is here used as an image for liberation.

Ceremony After Birth

Jatakarman

35

Prayer for Wisdom

AGS I, 15, 1-2

i) 1. At the birth of a son, the child's father, before anyone else touches him, should feed him (with a golden spoon) a little butter and honey in which a trace of gold (dust) has been mixed and say:

"I feed you with the wisdom of honey,
I feed you with ghee, the gift of God,
the beautiful. May you have long life, protected by the Gods,
may you live in this world a hundred circling years!"

2. Putting his lips close to the child's ears he murmurs:

"May God grant you intelligence,
may his Power grant you intelligence,
may his two divine Messengers, lotus-wreathed,
grant to you intelligence."

Prayer for Vital Power

PGS I 16 6

ii) Near the [child's] navel or right ear he says softly:

"The Lord is full of life: through firewood he is full of life.

By this vital power I make you full of life.

The divine Drink is full of life: through herbs
he is full of life.

"By this vital power I make you full of life.

The Brahman-priest is full of life: through the Brahmanas he is full of life.

"By this vital power I make you full of life.

The Gods are full of life: through their nourishment
they are full of life.

"By this vital power I make you full of life.

The sages are full of life: through their observances
they are full of life.

"By this vital power I make you full of life.

The ancestors are full of life: through their offerings
they are full of life.

"By this vital power I make you full of life.

Sacrifice is full of life: through sacrificial fees
it is full of life.

"By this vital power I make you full of life.

The ocean is full of life: through the rivers it is full of life.

By this vital power I make you full of life."

Prayer to the Earth

PGS I, 16, 17

iii) On the spot in which the child was born he prays;

I know your heart, O Earth, that rests in heaven,

in the moon. I know your heart; may it know me!

May we see a hundred circling years,

may we live a hundred circling years,

may we hear [the sounds of] a hundred years!

Prayer for Strength

AGS I, 15, 3

iv) He touches the [child's] shoulders on both sides, saying:

Be a stone, be an ax, be unsurpassed gold.

You in truth are the Veda, called my son.

Live, therefore, a hundred years.

Powerful God, give us the best of treasures.

Grant us your gifts, O bountiful, O swift one.

Infusion of Holy Learning

SGS I 24 8

v) Bhuh!

I instill the RigVeda into you--so and so.

"Bhuvah!

"I instill the Yajur Veda into youso and so.

"Svah!

"I instill the Sama Veda into youso and so.

"Svaha! Bhur, bhuvah, svah!

"I instill the Speculations into you,
the History and the Legends into you--Om;

all the Vedas I instill into you--so and so.

"Svaha!

Prayer for the Mother

PGS I, 16, 19; 22

vi) 19. He then prays over the mother:

"You are Ida, the daughter of Mitra and Varuna.

You, a courageous woman, have borne a vigorous son.

May you be blessed with vigorous children,
you who have blessed us with a vigorous son."

22. He places a jar of water near her head, saying:

"You, O waters, are co-watchers with the Gods.

As co-watchers with the Gods, watch over this mother,
who is now confined, and also her child!"

i) 1. Wisdom: veda.

God: Savitri.

Years: lit autumns.

2. He murmurs the medha-janana or "production of intelligence." Ghee, honey, and gold were considered to stimulate the intelligence.

God: Savitri.

Power (of God): Sarasvati.

Two divine Messengers: the Ashvins.

ii) This is the rite for ensuring long life and vital power to the child, called ayusya. The entire prayer is constructed on the idea of ayus, or vital power, health.

Lord: Agni.

Full of life, vitality: ayushmat, possessed of vital power, health, life. Life-possessing.

Divine Drink Soma.

The meticulous performance of the brahmana rites ensures long life for Brahmins.

Nourishment (of the Gods): amrta.

Sages: rishis.

Offerings: the svadha, the food offered as an oblation for the dead. Cf. RV X, 15, 3.

iii) Prays: mantrayate.

Years: lit. autumns.

iv) Cf. PGS I, 16, 18, where it is said atma vai putra namasi "you are the atman called son."

Powerful God: Indra. This line quotes RV II, 21, 6 (§ II A Antiphon). The next line quotes RV III, 36, 10.

v) Speculations: vakovakya.
History and Legends: itihapurana.

vi) 19. Ida: cf. the myth of the flood, SB I, 8, 1, 1-10 (§ V 17).
Courageous, vigorous: vira, brave, strong powerful, generally as male virtues (cf. Latin, vir), from which also hero, chief.

20-21. Ceremony of washing the mother's two breasts and giving them to the child.

c) Faith
Shraddha

Vedic faith is not primarily an intellectual assent, for if it were it would be subservient to the "thing" to which assent is made with the mind. Nor is it a kind of blind trust in certain superhuman beings. We have examples of hymns expressing not only doubt but what some today would call unbelief.¹³⁹ Vedic faith is, furthermore, not a result or a product of the will; thus there is no stress on the moral responsibility of the believer. It is rather a quality of the full human being; it is something given to or rather grafted into his being. Man is endowed with faith as he is endowed with other human qualities. For this reason, there are ultimately as many types of faith as there are types of Men, or even as there are human beings.¹⁴⁰

Vedic faith is previous to thinking and anterior to willing and deciding. It is precisely faith that makes thinking possible, for faith offers the unthought ground out of which thinking can emerge. It is faith that makes moral and other decisions possible, opening to us the horizon against which our actions become meaningful. Any action performed without faith is only an instinctive or automatic movement, without any truly human content; it can hardly be called a truly human action.

You act with faith when you act from such a depth that hesitation is not possible, when you are sure that what you are doing is what you are doing, that is, when you perform an action that springs up from your inmost self and not from a whispered external influence. The Man of doubt perishes; he, in fact, destroys himself. It is not intellectual hesitation we are now talking about, or indecision of the will. It is the main and central thrust of the human being which is our theme here. The word of the Bhagavad Gita quoted below is self-explanatory: it is the doubt penetrating the very heart of the atman which is lethal. Faith is not made up of those beliefs about which you can entertain intellectual doubt; faith is made of those convictions that are rooted so deeply in your own being that you are not conscious of them; faith is the first emanation of life, as we shall read in one text; faith is the hidden root of Man out of which real human growth proceeds; faith is rooted in the heart and is composed of the heart's intention, the heart being the symbol for the core of Man. This faith is expressed in beliefs and actions which, when they come directly from that inner source, can be called authentic; otherwise they are make-believe, pseudo actions which shoot wide of their mark. Faith is authentic human existence.

A girdle is called "Daughter of Faith" in the Atharva Veda because she is born of tapas and seen as its deepest dimension.¹⁴¹ "Faith wraps the Gods, faith wraps this whole world," says another text,¹⁴² stressing the all-encompassing nature of faith. Without faith the entire universe degenerates into a merely mechanical model; all would be automatic, the result, at best, of a logical syllogism, but with no freedom and with no place for human ambivalence. Shraddha, faith, and rita, cosmic order, go together.¹⁴³ Cosmic order is not to be equated with modern scientific "laws of nature:" the faith of the agent is an integral part of the action performed according to rita. The three groups of texts given here stress different aspects of faith according to the main thrust of the period. The titles given are intended to express this emphasis. Some of the Upanisadic texts have to be read in their own context for a better understanding, but even isolated they are meaningful. The concrete manifestation of faith, according to our first hymn which is representative of the first period, consists in a belief in the meaningfulness and efficacy of the sacrificial action. Indeed, such belief is essential for the man performing the sacrifice, for without it there would be only a mechanical and thus a fruitless action.¹⁴⁴ In the second period, that of the Upanisads, faith is represented as the condition for approaching the guru, for without such an approach no real knowledge can be transmitted or received. Faith acquires here the form of a concrete personal confidence for the sake of supreme realization. Yet this faith does not depend on our will alone, for, although the germ of faith is given with life itself, an awakening to faith is given as a second grace. The beginning of the story of Naciketas, given here, shows how the Katha Upanisad envisages faith as a grace that takes possession of the young man and gives him the courage to resist his ritualistically minded father, a courage that leads him up to the kingdom of death, guides him throughout his discourse with Death, and leads him finally to attain the highest wisdom.¹⁴⁵ In the Gita, just to mention our third group of texts, faith is experienced as a loving surrender to the Lord, and here faith is strongly tinged with bhakti.

Acting Faith
Shraddhahavih

RV X, 151

1. By Faith is Fire kindled.
By Faith is offered Sacrifice.
Sing we now Faith, the pinnacle of joy.
2. Bless Faith, the one who gives.
Bless him who wills, but has not.
Bless him who gives his worship unstinting.
Bless this song I sing.
3. As the Gods evoked Faith
from the mighty Asuras,
so may my prayer for the generous worshiper be accepted!
4. The Gods, led by the Spirit,
honor Faith in their worship.
Faith is composed of the heart's intention.
Light comes through Faith.
5. Through Faith men come to prayer,
Faith in the morning,
Faith at noon and at the setting of the Sun.
O Faith, give us Faith!

1. Fire: Agni.
Sing we: lit. we celebrate, vedayamasi.

3. Asuras: cf. RV X, 124, 3; 5.

4. Spirit: Vayu, in his aspect of uplifter of oblation. This elevation of the heart is also worship and thus the devas come near to Faith, inspired by Vayu.
Thinking Faith
Vijijnasa

37

BU III, 9, 21

i) "And on what are the offerings to the priests based?
On faith, for when a man has faith, he gives offerings to the priests.
Therefore it is on faith that the offerings to the priests are based.
On what is faith based?
On the heart, for through the heart one knows faith.
In fact, on the heart alone is faith based."
CU I, 1, 10

ii) What one performs with knowledge, with faith, with meditation, that, indeed, becomes more effective.
CU VII, 19-20

iii) 19. "When a man has faith, then he thinks. Nobody thinks until he has faith. Only by having faith a man thinks.
So you should really desire to understand faith."
"Sir, I do desire to understand faith."
20. "When a man perseveres, then he has faith.
No one has faith without having perseverance.
Only by having perseverance one has faith.
So you should really desire to understand what it is to have perseverance."
"Sir, I do desire to understand perseverance."

TU I, 11, 3

iv) Give with faith; give nothing without faith.
KATH U I, 1-2

v) Desiring the fruit of the sacrifice, Vajashravasa gave away all that he possessed. He had a son named Naciketas. As the sacrificial gifts were being led up, faith entered into him, boy though he was.
MUND U III, 2, 10

vi) This has been said in a sacred verse:
Those who perform ritual acts, who know Scripture,
who are firmly established in the Ultimate,
who offer themselves with faith to the unique Seer--
to them should perfect knowledge be declared.
PRASN U I, 2

vii) To them the sage responded: "Dwell with me a year more in fervor, purity and faith. Ask then all the questions you like and, if we know, we will tell you everything."
PRASN U VI, 4

viii) He [the Person] emitted life, and from life came faith, then space, wind, light, water, earth, the senses, and the mind. . .

Faith: shraddha throughout.

i) 10-17. Cf. § VI 7.

21. based: pratisthita

24-25. Cf. § I 14.

ii) 1-9. cf. § VI 12.
Knowledge: vidyda.
Meditation: upanisad.

iii) For the rest of CU VII and ref. cf. § VI 3 (v. and notes).

20. Perseveres: nististhati, to endure, tolerate, to be steadfast. The verb nih-stha-, meaning to grow forth. Nistha means the state of being grounded, of resting on such a firm basis that further growth is rendered possible: steadfastness. Thus, used in conjunction with faith it suggests a firm reliance on truth (thus firmly believed): deeply rooted growth. It suggests a steady growth because one is rooted in the ground of one's own being. Faith is not a matter of holding an opinion, but of being. The following verse affirms that only by acting can one prove one's own steadfastness. Cf. BG III, 3, where nistha has the meaning of basis, ground, method, and thus law, way of life, perfection.

v) The text suggests that faith is a gratuitous gift but that it is linked nevertheless with the generosity of having given everything away.

vi) 1-9. Cf. § VI 11.
Firmly established in the Ultimate: brahmaistha, deeply rooted in the ultimate Ground, brahman, holy word.
Perfect knowledge: brahma-vidya

vii) 1. Cf. § II 6.
In fervor, purity, and faith: tapasa brahmcaryena shraddhaya. Faith is a condition for true wisdom.

viii) Emitted: from the root srj-, cause to emanate, send forth.
Life: prana, from which faith comes forth because the breath of life is the lord of all living creatures, lord of all that is; cf. PrasnU II, 11 (§ II 6). Faith is the first offering to the Lord of all that lives. Cf. also CU V, 4, 2; VII, 15, 1 (§ VI 3).
Loving Faith

Bhakti

38

BG IV, 39-40

i) 39. A man of faith, absorbed in faith,
his senses controlled,
attains knowledge, and, knowledge attained,
quickly finds supreme peace.
40. But the ignorant man, who is without faith,
goes doubting to destruction.
For the doubting self there is neither this world,
nor the next, nor joy.
BG VI, 47

ii) Who worships Me full of faith, his inmost self
absorbed in Me,
him of all yogis I consider most completely
integrated in Me.
BG IX, 3

iii) Men who, O Arjuna, have no faith
in this Way of Truth
do not attain Me but return to the path
of ever recurring death.
BG XII, 20

iv) But those men of faith who make Me their goal,
adhering to Truth,
exceedingly dear are they to Me,
my loving devotees.
BG XVII, 3; 17; 28

v) 3. The faith of every man, O Arjuna,
accords with his nature.
Man is made up of faith; as is his faith,
so is he.
17. This threefold austerity practiced with faith
by men of balanced mind,
without expectation of any reward,
is said to be "pure."
28. Without faith whatever offering or gift
is made or work done
or penance performed, it is reckoned "not-being"
both now and hereafter.

i) 36-38. Cf § IV 22.

89. Knowledge: jnana.
Supreme peace: para santi, highest peace.

40. Ignorant: ajna.
Without faith: ashraaddadhana.
Doubting self: samsayatman.

iii) Way of Truth: dharma, order.
Ever recurring death: mrtyu samsara, cycle of death. Cf. § V 6.

4-5. cf § I 8.

iv) Truth: dharma.

Devotees: bhaktah, partakers, sharers of myself (my love).

v) 3. Accords with his nature: sattvanurupa, according to the fundamental form of being (is the faith of everything: sarvasya).

17. The threefold austerity (tapas) of action, words, and mind. Cf. the previous shlokas: control of the body, of the tongue, and of the mind; but all has to be motivated by faith.

28. Not-being: asat.

Part II - Germination and Growth

PART II



GERMINATION AND GROWTH

Part I of this anthology describes the appearance of Life on earth and in heaven. In Part II we shall watch the growth of Consciousness in Man into self-consciousness. Consciousness is not necessarily self-conscious. In the whole of Part I Man's consciousness was alert and very much alive, but Man had not fully realized that it was he who was conscious; he was not aware of the subject of his own consciousness. Man did not consider himself the real owner but only the enjoyer of consciousness. Now with the discovery of ownership the history of Man begins. In Part II we embark on a path that will lead us to the discovery of Man, and we leave behind that first moment that was primarily cosmological. Man's honeymoon period with a world that encompassed him above and below is over. He will have to come to terms with the Gods, with himself, and with the world. This trilogy is the subject of the three sections of Part II.

Man becomes conscious that he is that pole of the universe which recognizes itself to be something other than the center. He is not the real center, for he discovers that reality evolves and moves around a center that is, by definition, God-whatever this God may be-and not himself; but he is the epistemological pole (which some consider to be the ontological one also), for it is he who recognizes God to be the center of the universe. This discovery gives Man a special and privileged role, even if the role is merely viewed as one of listening and of being open to the real center of everything. Even if we assume the existence of a personal God speaking and revealing himself, the speaking and revealing must of necessity take place with reference to Man and in a way that is intelligible and appropriate to him. Otherwise God's revelation would all be meaningless to him. The initiative may rest with God, but it is up to Man to "tune in," to understand and to accept it.

In other words, Man discovers himself, not as a separate individual, but as a creature that grows toward fulfillment by discovering itself to be that particular pole on which the true center is seen to rotate. God may be the center of the universe and bigger than Man; God is nevertheless God for Man and turns around him like the great and powerful sun that seems to rotate around the tiny earth. Henceforward the dialogue between these two poles will not cease, in spite of the tendency of each pole to overwhelm the other and stifle all dialogue: the total victory of either side (divine or human monism) would amount to the annihilation of both. God without Man is as impossible as Man without God. An idle and solitary God without Man is not only psychologically and epistemologically impossible but is also ontologically untenable-if ontology has to do with more than sheer possibilities. An isolated and single Man without God is also unthinkable, for in order to think "Man"

one is bound in the first instance to transcend him in one way or another, and this transcendence is, precisely, God. On the other hand, a total separation (theological or ontological dualism) is tantamount to destroying one of the two, that is to say, to falling again into some type of monism. Only the polarity that does not destroy unity will allow for growth and for the unhampered manifestation of reality. This intuition would seem to point to the work of the Spirit.

However this may be, the movement of the Vedic Revelation is readily discernible. After the Prelude, which sets the stage for the total manifestation of reality, comes the birth of the world, produced by the first disclosure or explosion of the original source: the Word, followed by the existence of the world's elements. Then the Lord, the divine manifestation, appears in splendor in multifarious guises: the Gods of Heaven and Earth. There follows the Emergence of Life in its threefold stage, cosmic, human, and divine (Dawn, Human Birth, and Faith). Now we turn our attention to the germination and subsequent growth of this process.

The three sections are devoted to an exposition of this opening up to reality: first, Man becomes conscious of the existence of the universe as a hierarchical whole consisting of all sorts of gifts: Gods, men, animals, other beings, spirits, souls, the temporal and the timeless. A very special place is occupied by food, that life stuff that is material and spiritual at the same time, human, divine, and even cosmic, for everything in the universe "eats." Furthermore, the law of eating is so central that not only does everything eat, but all things eat one another, eating being the symbol of the solidarity of the whole universe. We all grow together; we all eat one another.

The second section deals with human self-consciousness in its most immediate form, the discovery of love and of the human person, which implies initiation and marriage. There is no human growth without this coming of age. These acts are simultaneously both cosmic and human, but the human aspect patently becomes more and more important; the center of gravity is being shifted from the cosmic to the human.

The third and final section describes that world that is not given, but made, not received, but manufactured, not found, but created: the world of Man, the result of his toil and of his effort. First of all, Man works on the earth, which nourishes him in proportion to his collaboration with the powers of nature. Second, he works in the technical world, by which we do not mean technological in the modern sense, that is, a world where Man becomes subject to his own constructions (which gradually become indispensable for his survival), but a world where Man remains the master of his own creations, embarking on the untried, handling objects of his hands, of his activity, of his work: the world of instruments and utensils. Third and finally, the world of Man does not consist simply in what he does, but in what he enjoys, that is, in everything that contributes toward a harmonious, civilized, and happy life. The first two realms Man employs as means toward an end; the third one is quite different. It is the stuff of human happiness.

A striking feature of the Vedic Revelation is the way in which its secular character in no way undermines the sacredness of life. We may exemplify this by calling attention to one particular point: the power that guides growth, gives direction, and inspires the way, in other words, the power that has sometimes been called the God of the roads, pathaspati, "the Lord of the path."¹ Divine Providence is more than just a benign surveillance; it is fundamentally a directing of the growth of all creatures, each according to its nature. Let us quote some passages:

O God, you are our Providence, our Father.
 We are your brothers, you our Source of life.
 You are called Father, caring for the humble;
 supremely wise, you teach the simple wisdom.²
 The One who is the life spark of the waters,
 of wood, of things both moving and inert,
 who has his dwelling even within the stone,
 immortal God, he cares for all mankind.³
 He who sees all beings at a glance,
 both separate and united,
 may he be our protector!⁴

The "he" of the last stanza, which immediately precedes the Gayatri, is Pushan, the divine protector and guard, Vedic providence, the keeper of herds⁵ and the surveyor of all, the conductor on the way.⁶ He is the Lord of the roads,⁷ the one who guards all pathways,⁸ and the guardian of hazardous highways.⁹ It is Pushan's familiarity with the roads which ensures him the privilege of escorting the dead to the abode of the Fathers and has popularized him as a protector and guide in difficult or delicate undertakings, such as travels and marriage. He is the friend of everyone in need.¹¹

The Vedic concept of providence seems to emphasize the aspects of protection and nurture (both of which concepts are included in the etymology of the name).¹² The "providence" of God is not seen here in terms of his attributes of knowledge

or wisdom; God is not "provident" because he "foresees" and thus warns, but because he protects and shields, bestows riches and blessings. He is in point of fact "Master of wealth,"¹³ "Lord of wealth abundant."¹⁴ The function of God is not primarily to judge, but to protect, to help us to thrive and flourish. The underlying presupposition here is that Man is not burdened with a guilt complex and that he is neither afraid to ask for fulfillment of all his desires nor beset by qualms when he is happy. We are still in the period of germination and growth.

A. THE FIRST BLESSINGS OF THE LORD

Svasti

O God, grant us of boons the best,
a mind to think and a smiling love,
increase of wealth, a healthy body,
speech that is winsome and days that are fair.
RV II, 21 615

The last section of Part I brought to our attention certain tokens of Emerging Life: Ushas, the cosmic phenomenon of Dawn, janman, the biological phenomenon of Birth, and shraddha, the spiritual phenomenon of Faith. The three themes of the next section in Part II are linked in a homologous manner to these phenomena, for the Sun follows Dawn and Breath follows Life, while the discovery of the temporal can be made only against the awareness of the nontemporal¹⁶ which follows the appearance of faith.

The moment that human consciousness becomes conscious of itself, the question of the origin of things arises. Man may not necessarily be investigating the chain of cause and effect, but the moment he becomes conscious of his own existence, he no longer takes the existence of the things he sees around him for granted. He begins to question their origin: first he asks "whence" and then "why."

The Vedic Revelation depicts now Man's environment, that is, the little portion of reality man experiences every day, as being a gift of the Gods, the result of divine blessings. It would be catastrophic, and thus wrong, to interpret this Vedic awe and wonder at the works of the Gods as simply the primitive attitude of an unscientific mind. The myth of the Gods may be more sophisticated than the myth of science; furthermore, the Vedic Gods are not considered to be extrinsic beings bestowing upon Man their favors according to whim or wisdom. The same cosmic venture in which Gods and Men are engaged is hierarchical rather than democratic, and both perform in their proper way the recreating and restorative sacrifice of time and space and of all that they contain. "Prajapati [i.e., the total reality] is both Gods and Men."¹⁷

The texts of Part II urge us to accept reality and, in concrete terms, to recognize human reality as a gift. These texts are only a selection from the vast treasure-house of the shruti concerning this world view. It would be naive to interpret the hymns that follow as expressions of an uncritical mind begging the Gods for blessings that could be obtained in no other fashion. The main thrust of this type of mantra is to awaken the consciousness that life itself is a gift, and that all that comes with it or that makes it really alive, and thus worth living, is also a gift, that is, a "coming," something that "happens" to us, in the happening of which we are constitutively involved, though each in a different way. This type of hymn stresses cosmic solidarity in a markedly anthropological way. The world of the Gods overarches that of mortals; the Gods are bridges between Men. Men fight one another, but then they discover that both sides are invoking the same God; Men tend to think of themselves as the center of the universe, and then they realize that the breath of life is common to all living beings; Men are really united when they look in the same direction, contemplating the marvels of the divine. The discovery of time brings with it a realization that it is like a net that not only draws together the different moments of a Man's life but also ties him up with all other temporal creatures. Man may, furthermore, experience a depth in his own being which does not belong to the sphere of temporal reality: all are blessings of the Lord, graces and favors that form the warp and woof of human existence. The fundamental meaning of a blessing is, perhaps, that it communicates life by means of an action, generally embodied in word or gesture. Recognition and acceptance of the fact that there is a blessing at the source of all that we are and have and do are both signs of an already mature spirituality.

Where there are blessings, there may also appear curses. In later periods, and especially in some of the hymns of the Atharva Veda, we find an ample repertoire of curses, but they are then used on another level, on the level of the human word which may be employed either for good or for bad purposes. Indeed, the human word is always powerful, because it is more than just a sound, a wish, or a thought; it is a partial incarnation of the primeval dynamism of the Word. Here, however, we are dealing not with utterances, or with the effort of Man to divert the flow of cosmic energy in one direction or another; we have

to do with the very structure of human and divine reality and with the discovery of one of the fundamental "laws" governing the relation between Men and the Gods. This relation is not physical or psychophysical or dialectical; it is specifically religious. Prayer enters at this point and blessing is one of its main categories.

a) Divine Gifts Mangala

Desire for happiness is a basic human urge, but dissatisfaction with every achievement of it is equally human. It seems as if bliss and well-being are ever elusive, never absent and yet never fully grasped. Mangala, the word summing up this subsection, expresses in itself the ideal of beauty, goodness, and happiness.¹⁸ This felicity, which is elusive or transient in spite of much patient waiting for auspicious moments, is influenced by the conviction that happiness is a divine prerogative, coming to men only as a free gift. In any event true human happiness not only comes from on high, but is also of a "higher" nature.

Those gifts in the Vedas are simple: Savitri, Indra, prana, kala. The Gods and certain "divinized notions" represent the embodiment of human longings, though they are by no means merely subjective projections of unfulfilled desires. The fundamental human values that make life the gift par excellence are, at the same time, the most simple and universal.

This subsection enumerates only a few of these values, of which one of the most precious is the ability to recognize the existence of the ideal, the reality of beauty, the realization of happiness; in short, the sublimity of Savitri, one of the most comprehensive divine symbols.

A fundamental human experience is that of being neither alone nor a multitude, but rather of being jointly under the influence of a power that embraces what to us appear to be incompatible. Indra is invoked by those who fight one another. Human enmity is not ultimate, and there is an archway over our heads which links together friends and enemies, and thus also good and evil. There is no ontic excommunication, as it were. Encompassing the whole of the universe there is something greater than Man.

Third, Man is conscious of life throbbing within him; he is aware that he is living and discovers his own vital power. This discovery is not the intellectual discovery of a principle, but the experiential encounter with life itself in its most concrete form: in our lungs, in our organs, in our brains. We observe it ebbing and flowing, increasing and decreasing, and are able to experience its rhythm and even to control its flow: the word for this is prana.

Man can be happy here on earth if, finally, he realizes both the reality and the value of his temporal structure and also the nontemporal dimension that accompanies temporal life all the "time." The awareness, not of our historicity, not of the accumulation of time in our lives or in the life of our group or of the whole species, but the awareness of elemental time, of the harmony of our rhythms, of the moments in and through which we really live, the realization of the temporal nature of our being, the experience of the flowing of our own life according to a mysterious pattern which we call time this is a fundamental human experience. Significantly enough, this experience of the reality of time within ourselves, the realization of our temporal existence, of its passage along the temporal shore, goes hand in hand with the more obscure but no less real intuition of an element incommensurable with time and yet inseparable from it: this is akala the timeless. None of these gifts can be totally snatched from Man as long as there is life. Living with them he discovers that happiness is neither a mere idea, nor just an ideal, but part and parcel of his life.

His Golden Arms the Godhead Has Extended Savitri

1 It would be misleading to say that Savitri is the divinization of the Sun, that is, the Sun as a personified Deity. It would be equally misleading to affirm that they have nothing to do with each other. The angle of vision from which modern Man may be tempted to consider either statement leads him into confusion. Savitri is indeed the name of a divinity, celebrated in eleven hymns in the Rig Veda alone and mentioned there some one hundred and seventy times; of this divinity the Sun is the symbol, while the reverse is also true, for the Sun, the golden disk in the sky, is itself symbolized by Savitri. This interchangeability reflects the fact that by "Sun" is always understood more than just the sun and that by "God" is always understood less than God. The whole reality of the Sun or of God cannot possibly be contained by what we think or imagine, let alone by what we measure or experiment with, in relation to the Sun or to God. The sun in the sky leads us to the supreme Godhead, but this leading is not the leading of one who points out the way and afterward vanishes; God without the creatures is no longer God, because he is, precisely, God of the creatures. To mix God and the creatures would be pantheism; to separate both amounts to idolatry (or atheism if we eliminate the divine). The relation is more intimate than any causal thinking may incline us to suppose. It is not, for instance, that God through the Sun gives us his blessings, warmth, light, and

life, as if a higher being were utilizing an instrument. It is rather the awareness that the "Sun" is more than what we may call and think of as the sun, and that God is no stranger to it.¹⁹

Savitri

RV VI, 71

1. His golden arms Godhead has extended
in potent blessing toward the sacrifice.
Like a grave young priest, he lets the chrism drip
from his hands onto the airy spaces.
2. May we enjoy the vitalizing force
of God, the radiant; may he grant us wealth!
He is the God who sends to rest and wakens
all life that moves on two feet or on four.
3. With kindly, never failing guardian powers
protect our house, O Savitri, today.
O gold-tongued God, preserve us in the right path.
Let no ill-wisher have us in his grasp.
4. God Savitri, friend of our homes, gold-handed,
has risen to meet the evening. With iron cheeks
and honey-sweet tongue the God, worthy of praise,
imparts good gifts to every worshiper.
5. Like mediating priest, the God has extended
his golden arms so lovely to behold.
The heights of Heaven and Earth he has ascended
and made each flying monster speed away.
6. Grant favor today, Savitri, and tomorrow.
O you who own an ample treasure store,
enrich us daily by your life-bringing power.
May this our song now set us in your grace.

1. Godhead: Savitri.

In potent blessing: lit. full of wise efficacy (sukratu), toward the libation(savanaya). Grave: sudaksha, skilled liturgically.
Chrism: ghrta, fatness, cream, sacred and consecrating oil.

2. The radiant: Savitri

3. Right path: suvita. The meaning could also be: keep us in ever-renewed joy, welfare.

4. Cf. RV I, 35, 10 (§ I 22); II, 38,1.
Good gifts: bhuri vamam.

5. Lit. like an upavaktr (cf. Sayana's commentary), like a mediator, i.e., like a mediator with a priestly function.
Flying monster: patayat... abhvam; most probably the terror of the night.

6. Favor: vama, wealth, from the root van-, to love, to desire, to strive after, to worship. Vamabhajahsyama, may we share in
your grace, favor, reward (by this our song), or, may it impart to us your grace.
Inspirer of Heaven and Earth
Divo dharta

2 The verbal root underlying the name of Savitri, like that of Surya is su-, meaning to impel, to enliven, and to beget Savitri impels the movement of all beings, arousing and enlivening them; he begets new consciousness, the light of the intellect; Savitri illumines not only our physical eyes, but principally our spiritual vision. Savitri is the awakener or rather the enlightener, the great stimulator. Our vision, surely, is different once the light of dawn has given way to the refulgent radiance of the sun. No longer is there "morning" or initial knowledge-matutinal consciousness--but the fullness of light which Savitri brings to us--zenithal awareness. This does not come solely from without, of course; our own eyes must be ready and open. Savitri must also be in our own eyes, in our own inner beings, so that we may really enjoy the fullness of

vision which he bestows.

Savitri is obviously connected with truth and cosmic order.²⁰ He enlightens us according to truth and the dynamic realities of things. Savitri himself observes the cosmic laws (v. 4). He is the Lord of all that moves and of all that moves not (v. 6). He has been identified thus with Prajapati (v. 2) and also with Pushan.²¹

This hymn is a wonder of poetry and balance. Nothing has been omitted. Savitri is the sustainer of heaven and earth and the arouser of all creatures; he brings life and warmth to everything: following his own course, he comes nigh when the seasons change. Finally the poet expresses the thought that the life of Men must likewise be attuned to that cosmic order of which Savitri is both the revealer and the observer.

Divo dharta

RV IV, 53

1. From Savitri the God, wise supreme Spirit,
we crave that gift most worthy to be sought,
by which he grants his worshipers protection.
His rays vouchsafe to us the great God's boon.
2. Sustainer of the Heaven, Lord of the cosmos,
this sage puts on his golden-colored mail.
Clear-sighted, far-extending, filling the heavens,
Savitri has brought us bliss our lips must praise.
3. Amply he fills the realms of Earth and Heaven;
in tune with his own being he sings the hymn.
The God, with arms outstretched, all creatures fosters,
arousing, lulling all life with his rays.
4. He lights up all things, guards each holy ordinance.
None can deceive him, the great God, the radiant.
He has stretched out his arms to all earth dwellers.
Maintaining his own laws he runs his course.
5. With his own greatness Savitri has filled
the three domains of space, three worlds, three heavens.
He moves the threefold Heaven and threefold Earth.
With ordinances three he himself protects us.
6. Most gracious God, life-stirrer, bringer of slumber,
controller of all, what moves not and what moves,
may Savitri the God vouchsafe us shelter
and security, distress held thrice at bay.
7. God Savitri comes nigh with changing seasons.
May he enhance our stock of food and sons!
May he grant strength through days and nights to follow
and may he send us wealth with progeny.

1. Supreme spirit Asura. Though Asura is used here as the name of a class of Gods, we have translated it according to the word's etymological meaning: spiritual, incorporeal, divine (from asu, spirit, breath, life).

2. Lord of the cosmos: bhuvanasya prajapatih.

3. In tune with his own being or in accordance with his own tune he creates the hymn: svaya dharmane.

4. Ordinance: vrata, the divine order (also in v. 5).
Maintaining his own laws: dhrtavrata, vrata meaning law by personal resolve.

5. Three is here the symbol of fullness and perfection, expressing a quality rather than a quantity.

6. The last line is a metaphor from warding off wild animals.

The Dispenser of Blessings from on High
Vasupati

3 If human life were lived merely on the horizontal two-dimensional level, not only would forgiveness be impossible (for what has been done, has been done), but also prayers and entreaties would be pointless. Furthermore, the gratuitous blessings that revive life, strengthen Man's hopes, and sustain his expectations would be inconceivable. Of this openness Savitri, again, is the living symbol. It is he who bestows blessings,²² which he can do because he is not entangled in the two-dimensional world, but is on high overseeing both Men and cattle, keeping an eye on every creature, not in order to punish or to judge, but in order to bless, for he is the Lord of all wealth (v. 3). A blessing cannot be something "due," nor can the act of blessing be termed a "duty." A blessing is not an automatic action or the fruit of any kind of regular process. Blessings belong to the realm of spontaneity and freedom. No one has a right to a blessing, for a compulsory blessing would cease to be a blessing. Prayer is an actualization of human freedom, as many a chant of the shruti discloses to us. When you pray for a blessing it is not that you try your luck with the Gods on the chance that they may be well disposed toward you; it is rather that you dare to enter and even to interfere in their internal unrestricted sphere and participate in it. Prayer is a joyous and free interplay between Gods and Men, the results of which are always unpredictable. Who is going to win? Will Men make the Gods human or the Gods make Men divine?

Vasupati

RV VII, 45

1. May God Savitri, chariot-borne, come hither,
filling the heavens, rich in treasure divine,
dispenser of everything that makes man happy,
lulling to sleep, then stirring all that breathes
2. His arms are far-extended, mighty, golden.
They reach as far as the utmost limits of Heaven.
Now is his greatness highly to be praised.
3. Now may this God Savitri, the strong and mighty,
Lord of all wealth, vouchsafe to us his riches!
May he, extending his far-spreading luster,
bestow on us the food that nourishes men!
4. These songs praise Savitri of gentle speech,
whose arms are full, whose hands are beautiful.
Preserve us evermore, O Gods, with blessings.

1. Chariot-borne: lit. driven by horses.

2. Limits of Heaven: divo antan, the ends of the sky.
Sun: surya. Here again Savitri is not identical with the sun. Cf. RV I, 35, 9 (§ I 22).
Course: apasya, lit. activity.

3. Nourishes: rasate, gives taste to men.

4. Of gentle speech: lit. the honey-tongued one.
The One Invoked by Both Sides In the Battle
Indra

4 Indra, whose power is praised in more than three hundred hymns in the Rig Veda, that is, in more than a quarter of the whole corpus, possesses all human virtues in superlative degree; he is the Hero, the Man-God, of Vedic times. It is natural that it is his prerogative to bless Men in all their enterprises, for power and guidance lie with him.

The hymn we give here recapitulates nearly all the characteristics of Indra. The text starts with an acclamation of praise to Indra who from the moment of his birth establishes his power and fills the whole universe with his incomparable deeds. Then follows a description of these same deeds and of the characteristics of Indra with a wealth of praise, expressions of awe, and petitions.

Indra organized the whole universe (vv. 2, 7). It is he who has fixed in their places the earth and the mountains, who has measured out space, stretched out the sky, and created both sun and sunrise. The establishment of the universe is one of his functions, for Indra is the Lord especially of space.

He is the hero of sundry exploits (vv. 3, 11-12). The most famous and most frequently recounted is that in which he killed the dragon or "serpent," Vrtra, who was holding the waters captive. Etymologically vrtra means resister and hence "enemy," "obstacle," "upholder." In the Rig Veda Vrtra is usually interpreted as a demon representing drought, but he has also sometimes been regarded as the personification of darkness. It is by defeating him that Indra imparts light to the whole world. It is not improbable that these struggles with various demons allude to both historical and cosmogonic acts. In myth cosmogony and history converge, and if worship or liturgy is more than sheer magic it is, among other things, because it offers a platform where they can meet. The regeneration of the world is both the cause and the effect of the regeneration of Man.

On another occasion Indra freed the light (called here "cows") that a demon, Vala, had imprisoned in his cavern. In this exploit Indra is called the "powerful bull." The Rig Veda says in several passages that it was after liberating the waters that Indra produced the Sun, the Sky, and the Dawn:

When, Indra, you had slain the chief of dragons
and overcome the charms of the enchanters,
then you gave life to Sun and Dawn and Heaven
and found no single foe to stand against you.²³

Indra is chief of warriors, endowed with matchless power (vv. 4, 7-9). He was a warrior from birth. ²⁴ As protector of warriors and princes he is hailed as commander in chief in the struggle of the invading Aryans against the original inhabitants of the land. Men on all sides, at least among the Aryans, call him to their assistance in battle, for without his help none can be victorious. There could hardly be a better metaphor to express his transcendence. His weapon of war is visible in both east and west: the vajra or thunderbolt is the mythical name for lightning. He destroys sinners and all evil (v. 10). His zest in combat is directed toward victory over his foes, and particularly toward victory over all evil demons. He is uncompromising and relentless toward the proud.

Indra is the drinker of Soma, helping and encouraging those who sacrifice (vv. 6, 13, 15). He is famous for his passionate love for the Soma juice and it is thanks to Soma that he can accomplish his extraordinary feats. ²⁵ However we may assess or explain the use of intoxicating agents, one feature may be stressed and pondered here: immortality, strength, and courage come from the outside, that is, from an external agency and through the use of a material substance, not from a merely endogenous procedure.

Our hymn, we may note, makes scant reference to the beauty of Indra, so many aspects of which are acclaimed in other hymns. Here he is, rather, the "terrible," concerning whom Men are seized by fears and doubts. "Where is he?" "where, he who is the God of all the spaces?" Some may even say that he does not exist. Yet "believe in him," says the text (v. 5) without equivocation, though only at the end is doubt overcome by the experience that he really is (v. 15) .

The following stotra will make the personality of Indra more familiar.

He is everywhere:
RV VI, 47, 18

i) He became the original form of every form; It is his form that is everywhere to be seen.²⁶
He is all-powerful:
RV I, 100, 15

ii) The limits of his power cannot be reached; neither by Gods, albeit divine, nor mortals, nor yet the waters.
RV II, 46, 3

iii) Utterly has he outshone both Heaven and Earth. This radiant one is greater than all the Gods.
He is full of compassion:
RV I, 165, 9

iv) Before you, O compassionate, all falter; among the Gods not one is found your equal.
He inspires ardent devotion:

RV III, 53, 2

v) O mighty Indra, with the sweetest songs I catch your garment's hem as a child his father's.
RV VIII, 1, 5-6

vi) For any price, O Indra, I'll not sell you, not for a thousand or ten thousand pieces!
O Indra, you are more to me than a father. I count a brother naught compared to you. You and a mother, O bountiful, vie with each other in generous giving and in bestowal of joy.

Indra

RV II, 12

1. He who from birth was chief of the Gods, the wise one,
protecting with his might the other Gods,
before whose energy and mighty exploits
the two worlds tremble: he, Men, is the Lord!
2. Who stilled the quaking of the mighty earth
and set at rest the agitated mountains,
who measured out the middle regions of space
and gave the sky support: he, Men, is the Lord!
3. Who slew the dragon and loosed the seven rivers,
who drove the cattle out of Vala's cavern,
who brought forth fire from between the rocks,
victorious ever: he, Men, is the Lord!
4. Who can, if he so choose, make reel this planet,
who humbled and drove off the inferior race,
who, like a gambler, rakes in all his winnings
from vanquished foeman; he, Men, is the Lord!
5. The Terrible, of whom they ask "Where is he?"
(though sometimes men dare say of him "He is not"),
who, as at dice, sweeps off opposing stakes
believe in him; for he, Men, is the Lord!
6. Who encourages all, the strong and feeble alike,
enheartening also the priest who sings his praise;
the handsome one, who helps the presser of juice
and him who adjusts the stones: he, Men, is the Lord!
7. In whose control are horses and all chariots,
all cattle and all habitations of men;
by whose power Sun and Daybreak come to birth,
who leads the Waters: he, Men, is the Lord!
8. Who is invoked by both sides in the battle,
the warriors close by and those far distant,
entreated differently even by two men mounted
in the selfsame chariot: he, Men, is the Lord!
9. Without whose aid men never win in battle,
whose succor they continually implore,
who proves himself for everyone a match,
who moves the immovable: he, Men, is the Lord!
10. Who, long before they know it, shoots his darts
to slay the unnumbered gang of guilty sinners,
who gives no pardon to the arrogant,
who slays the demons: he, Men, is the Lord!
11. Who once discovered in the fortieth autumn
Shambara lurking in the mountain hideouts,
who slew the demon, confident in his prowess,
as he lay on the waters: he, Men, is the Lord!
12. The powerful seven-reined bull who freed the seven
torrents to flow abundantly, the God
whose thunderbolt caused Rauhina to totter

as he scaled the heavens: he, Men, is the Lord!
 13. Before whom Earth and Heaven both bow down,
 before whose very breath the mountains tremble,
 famed drinker of the Soma juice, the wielder
 of flashing thunderbolt: he, Men, is the Lord!
 14. Who with his aid assists all those who press
 the Soma, boiling it, chanting or performing rituals,
 whose soul expands by prayer, by dint of Soma
 or through the gifts they offer: he, Men, is the Lord!
 15. You who grant booty seized from fearsome foeman
 to soma presser and cooker, you truly ARE.
 May we be ever well-beloved by you!
 May we with verve intone your ritual praises

1. He, Men, is the Lord sa jana sa indrah. This phrase is repeated at the end of each stanza. We translate Indra by the Lord. About the birth of Indra, cf. RV III, 48; IV 18. In RV X, 90, 13 (§ I 5), it is said that "Indra was born from the mouth of the purusha"

2. Cf. RV VI, 69, 5 where Indra and Vishnu are said to "stretch the spaces for us to live" and to "expand the universe." In several other hymns the great actions of Indra are extolled: RV II, 15, 2; III, 31, 15 III, 49, 4; VIII, 12, 30.

3. Reference to the legends of the release of the waters and of the cows by Indra.
 Vala: a mythical cave and a demon who holds back the waters.

4. The inferior race: dasam varnam the color of the dias, probably the darker color of the pre-Aryan clans. Varna, however, not only refers to color but also connotes a category of beings. Later it refers to the four classes (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) that form the backbone of the caste system.

5. Cf. RV VIII, 1, 7: "Where are you? Whither are you gone? For in many places is your mind."

10. Demons: dasyu, name of a class of demons. The name denotes enemy, barbarian impious man stranger, and is related to dasa, slave demon, infidel, somebody from a foreign land, and later those who are not twice-born (dvija). Cf. the name appearing in v. 4.

11. Sambara: name of a demon whom Indra evicts from the mountain where he is hiding himself and terrorizing men.

12. Rauhina: name of another demon, a drought demon.

13. Heaven and Earth: dyu and prthivi here regarded as two divine beings.

14. With his aid assists: avati . . . uti, favors.
 Whose soul expands by prayer: yasya brahma vardhanam.

15. You truly ARE: sa kilasi satyah, you are as such true, or you are truth, truthful, you are real, reality. This is the climax of the hymn.

The Breath of Life
 Prana

5 Wind, Breath, and Life form a triad which modern Man has broken asunder, but which Man some millennia ago still experienced as a whole, for he viewed these three not as identical but as deeply related and belonging together. Movement is a common feature to all three. Movement is not seen here as a metaphysical riddle for our minds, but as a physical datum of our world. The phenomenon of movement may confound our reason (for we may not find a rational explanation for it) but it quickens our being (for without it we would die). Movement is the soul, that is, the life-principle, of every phenomenon in the three worlds. Wind is not just air, but air in movement. Breath is this same movement of the air within living beings. Life is intrinsically movement; it is something that somehow moves without being moved. There is no need to connect this vision with a primitive cosmology or an undeveloped physiology, though the expressions used to describe it may be clothed in the language of the time. The experience takes place at a deeper level of reality, a level where that fatal dichotomy between matter and spirit has not yet occurred. The fear of one extreme should not precipitate us into the other.

Is it possible for contemporary Man to reenact that primordial experience without becoming archaic, primitive, regressive, or even pathological? No amount of intellectual indoctrination, even if it manages to inculcate conviction, will succeed. It is obviously not a question of reverting to an undifferentiated outlook and to an almost animistic level of experience, but rather of viewing things with an integrated and integrating insight which is something more than mere poetic feeling.

Life is an all-pervasive vector in the structure of reality. Something without life is dead, that is, it is nonbeing. The wind reveals to us how alive the earth is, and there was no need to wait until the discovery of the electronic spin to discover self-motion. Breath discloses to us the intimate connection between life and matter, and there was likewise no need to wait for psychosomatic medicine or "vital philosophy" in order to come to this conclusion. Life itself is a mere abstraction if there is no living being. But being too is nothing if it is not being, that is, alive. Hell, death, and nonbeing together compose a challenge which is certainly threatening, but which is also evocative of victory and joy as the unfailing concomitants of life.

The hymn given here combines in a masterly way all the different aspects of this world view. The wind gives life to plants and also brings comfort to the animal realm. The plants breathe in and out and perform an ecologically essential purifying function. This Breath of Life, however, is not the wind alone, nor simply the movement of masses of air in one direction or another owing to differences of pressure caused by changes of temperature. This Breath of Life is the symbol of life itself, that is, life as it manifests itself in living beings. For this very reason it is also death and fever, the rain, the sun and the moon, and is not separated from the Father of all beings. Does not life require death in order to assert itself?

Would there be Being if there were no Source witnessing its very being, its flow? A difficult line in the last stanza seems to suggest that the mystery of personal consciousness is bound up with the identification of the person with this same Breath of Life: I am that very Life. I pray that I may clasp to myself this very Breath of Life, so that I may live: "You are indeed I." The conquest of immortality is the realization both that Life is Life, thus that it does not die, and also that I am insofar as I realize my own identity with Life. We are here at the threshold of the Upanishadic vision.²⁷

Prana

AV XI, 4

1. Praise to the Breath of Life!
He rules this world,
master of all things,
on which all things are based.
2. Praise, Breath of Life, to your uproar!
Praise to your thunder!
Praise to your lightning!
Praise, Breath of Life, for your rain!
3. When Breath of Life with his thunder
roars o'er the plants,
then, pregnant with pollen,
the flowers burst forth in abundance.
4. When Breath of Life in due season
roars o'er the plants,
all things on earth
rejoice with great rejoicing.
5. When Breath of Life the broad earth
with rain bedews,
the cattle exult:
"We shall have plenty," they say.
6. The plants converse with this Breath,
drenched by his moisture:
"Our life is prolonged,
for you have made us all fragrant."
7. Praise to you, Breath, when you come
and praise when you go!
When you stand up
and when you sit still, to you praise!
8. Praise to you, Breath of Life, breathing
both in and out!

To your turning this side
 and that, to the whole of you, praise!
 9. Grant us, O Breath, your dear form
 and the one dearer still
 that we may live!
 Give us your healing power!
 10. Breath of Life clothes all beings with care
 as a father his son;
 master of all things,
 whether they breathe or breathe not.
 11. Breath of Life is death, is fever,
 revered by the Gods.
 In the highest world
 he sets the man who speaks truth.
 12. Breath of Life is Queen, is Guide,
 revered by all things;
 he is sun, he is moon;
 he is also the Father of all.
 13. The two breaths are rice and barley,
 Breath the ox that pulls.
 In barley resides i
 inbreath; out-breath is called rice.
 14. A man breathes in, he breathes out,
 within the womb.
 Quickened by you,
 to birth he comes once more.
 15. The mighty Wind they call him, or Breeze.
 The future and the past
 exist in him.
 On Breath of Life all things are based.
 16. When you, Breath of Life, quicken them,
 then the plants of the Atharvans and Angirases,
 of Gods and of Men, come to birth.
 17. When Breath has poured down with the rain
 upon the vast earth,
 then plants come forth
 and herbs of every sort.
 18. The one who knows you thus, O Breath,
 and that which forms your support,
 to him will all offer
 tribute in yonder highest heaven.
 19. Just as all creatures owe tribute
 to you, Breath of Life,
 so may they bring it
 to the one who hears you, O renowned!
 20. He moves among the Gods, an inner seed;
 becomes, is, is reborn.
 He has entered the son
 he, the father, who was, is, and shall be!
 21. If the sunbird, rising, extracted
 his foot from the sea,
 neither today nor tomorrow
 would exist, neither night, day, nor dawn.
 22. The eight--wheeled moves on one rim,
 to and fro, thousand-syllabled.
 With one half it engendered
 all creation. Of its other half what sign?
 23. Of all that is born is he Lord,
 of all that moves.
 Of swift bow like the rest,
 to you, O Breath of Life, homage!

24. Of all that is born is he Lord,
of all that moves.
Untiring he, steadfast;
may my prayer bring Breath to my aid!
25. Erect he keeps watch among the sleeping.
he falls not prone.
None ever heard
that he among the sleepers should slumber.
26. Breath of Life, do not forsake me.
You are, indeed, I.
Like the Embryo of the Waters
I bind you to me that I may live!

1. Breath of Life: prana, throughout.

12. Queen: viraj, the shining One. Cf. RV X, 90, 5 (§ 15) and the hymn dedicated to her in the AV VIII 9, d. also AV XIII, I, 33.
Guide: deshtri an epithet of a Vedic divinity. Lit. she who shows me direction thus the guide.
Father of all: Prajapati.

13. Even the products of agriculture are related to prana.

15. Mighty Wind: Matarishvan.
Breeze: vata.

16. Of the Atharvans and Angirases: i.e., the herbs used in rites of the AV.

20. Obscure verse. Prana appears as the life-principle of even the Gods, and it is he who is born again in every being. He is both the child (embryo, seed: garbha) and the father; i.e., he is immanent in all things.

21. Sunbird: hamsa, swan, here referring to the sun. What the sun is in the sky, so breath is in man: time depends upon it. (Translation shortened.)

22. This verse also refers to the sun. The question is about the invisible half of the sun's course.
Sign; ketu, banner, light, symbol.

23. Of swift bow: kshipradhanvan.

24. Prayer: brahman.

26. Allusion to hiranyagarbha; cf. RV X, 121, 1 (§ 14).
The Treasure of Life
Prano brahma

6 Prana, the Breath of Life of the preceding pages, has been translated in this section simply as Life, in order to indicate the interiorization and ontologization of the same experience. this universe is not a dead universe. Life is its most striking feature, while its deepest one is consciousness. The passage from the one to the other is realized in the Upanishads by a peculiar transmythization of the Vedic motifs.

From an ecstatic attitude of joy and thankfulness for the gift of life as expressed in the Vedas, the Upanishads lead us on to an enstatic discovery that this life is within us and that we not only enjoy it but also share in it as a treasure--even that we are this life. Fullness of life implies a knowledge that I am alive. Life in the four Vedas means the biological fact of movement, growth, and nonreflective consciousness; it is that cosmic life in which all beings, from God down to the particles of earth, share; it is the breath of the universe, breathed also by Men. Life in the Upanishads means something more. We enter with them into a new phase, that of self-conscious interiorization. Man ceases to be a mere spectator or even a part of the cosmic play; he becomes the focal point and the very center of operation of the whole of reality. Life is consciousness; consciousness is self-consciousness and self-consciousness is consciousness of the Self.

Two fragmentary examples of the Upanishadic adventure are given here. The Prashna Upanishad develops a theory of prana as the principle of life through six questions (prana) posed by six students to the great master Pippalada. To the first question, regarding the origin of life, how things in fact came to be, the master replies with some ancient wisdom presented in a new way. He invokes the old myth of Prajapati but goes on to say that the Father of all creatures brought into existence two principles, Matter and Life, so that they became the origin of all. Rayi, which is a common word for wealth in the Vedas,²⁸ becomes here the stuff, the food, the matter or material principle which enters into the composition of all beings; while prana, which is the word used for the vital breath of Men and animals, here possesses an ontological rather than a physiological function. The terms are given a cosmological symbolism: matter is the moon; life is the sun. Matter is the formed and unformed structure of reality. Life is not that which gives form, but that which gives existence.

To the second question, concerning the powers that support a creature and which of these is the foremost, the master replies that the foremost is life. He gives a proof based on the dependence of every other human faculty on the Breath of Life. If this withdraws, no other power can sustain the body.

To the third question, regarding the origin of this life, the master hesitates to reply. At last he reluctantly proffers his deepest doctrine, saying that life has its origin in the atman, the Self, and that life is as it were the shadow of the atman. It is not the atman, but at the same time it is inseparable from it. It is its first manifestation.²⁹ The discovery of Life leads to immortality. This sounds like a tautology, and it is precisely the qualification of this statement which is one of the fundamental intentions of the Upanishads. As long as we do not know who we are, as long as we walk in darkness or in ignorance, we shall not fulfill our humanness. Once we know it, we are it; or, as our text puts it: "Whatever is one's thinking (citta), therewith life comes."³⁰ If we discover Life, then, in a real way, we are Life, so long as this discovery is not merely an intellectual operation.

The three other questions, which we do not translate here, reveal once again the everlasting desire of Man to penetrate deeper and deeper into the mysteries of life. The fourth question concerns the subject, enjoyer of life in the state of dream and who is the deva, the master of the dreams.³¹ The fifth query regards the nature of the yonder world which one reaches meditating on om. ³² And the final problem deals with the mystery of the purusha, the complete person (of sixteen parts) which is immortal in spite of the fact that all the parts disappear "like running rivers rushing toward the sea."³³ The Kaushitaki Upanishad goes a step farther than Pippalada. Life is Brahman. This is again a statement that needs to be qualified if it is to be understood in its true meaning. Brahman is consciousness, according to one of the great utterances of the Upanishads.³⁴ The main message of the Kaushitaki Upanishad is the affirmation that life is the conscious atman.

These texts should provide a healthy corrective to some merely speculative comments of a certain type of popularized Vedanta. The experience of the Upanishads is not only intellectual; it is also vital and, one is tempted to say, primarily existential. Life is to be lived to the full.

Prano brahma

PRASN U I, 1; 3-5; 8

i) 1. Sukesha, son of Bharadvaja, Satyakama, Son of Sibi, Gargya, grandson of Surya, Kausalya, son of Ashvalayana, Bhargava of Vidarbha and Kabandhi, son of Katyayana, all of whom made Brahman their highest goal, were established in Brahman and searching for the supreme Brahman, approached the venerable Pippalada with fuel in their hands, thinking "He will explain to us everything."

3. Then Kabandhi, son of Katyayana, approached him and asked: "Tell me truly, Master, whence have been created all these creatures?"

4. The sage replied: "The creator, out of desire to procreate, devoted himself to concentrated ardor. Whilst thus devoted to concentrated ardor, he produced a couple, Matter and Life, saying to himself, 'these two will produce all manner of creatures for me.' "

5. Now Life is the Sun; Matter is the Moon. Matter, indeed, is all this, the formed and the formless. Hence, [whatever has form] is simply matter.

8. All forms has he, the golden one, the all-knowing. He blazes, final goal and single light. Emitting a thousand rays, in a hundred movements proceeding, the Sun arises, the Life of all creatures!

PRASN U II, 1-13

ii) 1. "Tell me, Master, how many powers support a creature? Which of them make him manifest and, again, which is the foremost?"

2. "These powers," he replied, "are space, wind, fire, water, and earth; also speech, mind, sight, and hearing. All these, having

made the creature manifest, say, 'It is we who prop up this body and support it!'

3. But the foremost of them, Life, said: 'Do not deceive yourselves. It is I who, dividing myself into five parts, prop up this body and support it..'

4. They did not believe him. So Life, his pride upset, made as if to leave the body, and when he rose up all the rest of them rose up, and when he settled down they all settled down with him. Just as bees rise up after their queen when she arises, and all of them settle when she settles again, even so do speech, mind, sight, and hearing behave with life. They, being now satisfied, offer him homage.

5. He is the Fire that burns, he is the Sun.

He is the plenteous Rain, he is the Wind.

He is the Earth and Matter and God,

Being and Nonbeing he the Immortal.

6. Just as spokes are affixed to the hub of a wheel,

so are all things established in Life,

the Rig-and Yajur-and Sama-Veda,

Sacrifice, the nobility, and also the priesthood.

7. Lord of creatures, you stir in the womb;

it is you yourself that are born again.

To you, Life, creatures bring their offerings,

to you, who dwell in their vital breaths.

8. Chief mediator between Gods and men

are you, and first offering to the Fathers.

You are the truthful Way of the sages,

the Atharvans and Angirasas.

9. You, O Life, by your splendor are Indra

You are Rudra, being a protector.

In the vault of heaven you move as the sun,

the Lord of all lights.

10. When you send rain upon the earth,

then the creatures breathe and live.

When there is food to their hearts' content,

they dwell in happiness.

11. You are primordial, O Life, the sole Seer,

Lord and consumer of all that is.

We are the givers of your food.

You are our Father, O mighty Wind!

12. That form of yours which resides in speech,

which resides in human hearing and seeing,

which constantly resides in the mind of men

make it benevolent! Do not depart!

13. This whole universe, whatever exists

in all three heavens, is subject to Life.

Protect us, O Life, as a mother her son,

and grant us happiness and understanding!

PRASN U III

iii) Then Kausalya, son of Ashvalayana, asked him:

1. "Tell me truly, Master, whence is this Life born?

How does it come into this body?

How does it distribute itself and how does it settle down?

By what means does it go away?

How does it relate to the external world?

How does it relate to the internal self?"

2. To him he replied: "You are asking very difficult and lofty questions. However, as you are firmly committed to Brahman, I will therefore tell you.

3. "This Life is born of the atman. As his shadow is to a person, so in this case is Life to the atman. By the action of the mind it comes into the body.

4. "As an earthly ruler commands his subordinates, saying: 'Supervise such and such villages,' even so Life assigns to the vital breaths different functions:

5. "The downward breath is in the organs of excretion and generation, while the life-breath itself is established in the eye, the ear, the mouth, and the nose; the distributive breath is in the middle, and it carries all the food offered in a balanced way.

From it arise the seven flames.

6. "In the heart is the atman. Here are the hundred and one arteries to each of which belong a hundred other arteries, and to each of these belong seventy-two thousand small branches: in those moves the diffused breath.
7. "The upward breath rises up through one of these arteries and leads [at the time of death] to the world of goodness in consequence of goodness, to the world of evil in consequence of evil, or to the world of men in consequence of both [good and evil].
8. "The sun rises as the external [manifestation of] Life, and it supports the life-breath of the eye. The power that is in the earth supports the downward breath of a person, and that which is in the atmosphere the distributive breath; wind is the diffused breath.
9. "Fire, in truth, is the upward breath. Therefore those whose fire of life is extinguished are reborn with their sense organs merged in their mind.
10. "According to one's thought one enters into life. Life united with fire and accompanied by the atman, leads a man to whatever world his thought has fashioned.
11. "If a man knows Life thus, his offspring will not fail and he will become immortal. On this there is the following verse:
12. When he knows the origin, the mode of entry,
the dwelling place, the fivefold lordship, the dependence
of Life on the atman whoso knows this,
attains immortality attains immortality!"
KAUS U II, 1

iv) "Life is Brahman," said Kaushitaki. "The messenger of Life, of Brahman, is the mind, its watchman is the eye, its herald is the ear, its servant is speech To this Life, to Brahman, all the powers bring tribute, even without being asked. So too all beings bring tribute to the one who knows this, even without being asked."
KAUS U III 2-3

v) 2. Indra said: "I am Life, the conscious Self. Reverence me as temporal life and also as immortality. Life is temporal life and temporal life is Life. Life is also immortality. For as long as Life remains in the body there is temporal life. By Life man attains immortality in this world and by consciousness true thinking. Whoever reveres me as temporal life and as immortality--Lives out in this world his full life span, and attains immortality and indestructibility in the world of heaven." On this point people say that the vital breaths merge into a unity, for otherwise nobody would be able to make known a name simply by speech, or a form by the eye, or a sound by the ear, or a thought by the mind, but because the vital breaths have become one, they make known all these [perceptions] one by one. When speech speaks, all the breaths speak along with it; when the eye sees, all the breaths see along with it; when the ear hears, all the breaths hear along with it; when the mind thinks, all the breaths think along with it; when breath breathes, all the breaths breathe along with it. This is how it is," said Indra. "Yet there are degrees of superiority among the vital breaths."

3. One may live without speech, for we sometimes see dumb people. One may live without sight, for we sometimes see blind people. One may live without hearing, for we sometimes see deaf people. One may live without mind, for we sometimes see witless people. One may live with arms or legs cut off, for we sometimes see people without limbs. But it is Life, the conscious Self, which takes hold of this body and makes it stand erect. Therefore one should meditate on this as a praise. By means of Life everything is obtained. Life is consciousness and consciousness is Life. For these two reside together in the body and together they quit

This is the theory and understanding thereof: when a person is asleep without seeing any dream, then he is absorbed into Life alone. Then speech together with all names is absorbed, the eye together with all forms, the ear together with all sounds, the mind together with all thoughts. Then, when he wakes up, just as sparks spring forth in all directions from a burning fire, similarly from this atman all the vital breaths proceed to their proper places and from there to the senses and from the senses to the sense objects. This Life consciousness, seizes the body and makes him rise. Therefore one should meditate on this as a praise. By means of Life everything is obtained. Life is consciousness and consciousness is Life. This is the proof and understanding thereof: when a sick person is about to die, having become very weak, he loses consciousness. People say of him: "His mind has departed, he neither hears nor sees nor speaks words nor thinks; then he is absorbed into Life. Then speech together with all names is absorbed, the eye together with all forms, the ear together with all sounds, the mind together with all thought. And when he departs from his body, he departs together with all these."

i) 1. Pippalada was a great master of the AV to which this U belongs.
With fuel in their hands: samitpanayah a sign of humility in approaching a guru, implying the disciple's readiness to serve him.

2. Cf. § I 37.

3. there is a pun here, kutah whence, prajah (these) creatures, prajayante, have been born.

4-5. The "couple" consists of Matter, rayi, which has also been interpreted as food and is connected with the Moon as its

symbol, and prana, energy, the Sun, translated throughout this passage as Life. Tradition has also speculated on the fact that rayi is feminine and prana masculine. For the description of the Sun, cf. MaitU VI, 8. There is a relation between prana (life-force), aditya (light-force), and agni (the force of the fire).

6-7. Cf. § III 6.

8. He: i.e., the sun.

He blazes: tapantam, giving heat, blazing.

ii) 1. Powers: devah, supporting divinities, or deities presiding over man's activities, i.e., his senses and organs The question is: which constituent parts or component forces make visible, bring to the light, make manifest, or illumine a creature? Cf. the root div-, to shine, from which comes deva, divinity power.

2. Mind: manas.

4. Queen (of the bees): lit. "king."

5. Plenteous Rain: Parjanya. The equations of the Upanishads are in triads: prana-agni-surya; prthivi-rayi-deva; sat-asat-amrta; Parjanya-Maghavan (Indra)-Vayu. There may also be a correlation between the corresponding member of each triad, viz. prthivi-sat; rayi-asat; deva-amrta.

6. The nobility the kshatriyas.

The priesthood: the brahmanas brahmins.

7. Lord of creatures: Prajapati Cf. a similar idea in AV XI, 4, 19 (§ II 15).

8. Chief mediator: vahnitama, superlative, "best carrying," "best vehicle." Cf. YV XXXI, 19-20.

Truthful Way: caritam satyam, moral conduct.

9. By your splendor: tejasa or sharpness.

Lord of all lights: jyotisham patih.

10. They dwell in happiness: anandarupas tishthanti.

11. Primordial: vratya, a noninitiated person; i.e., one who has not received the sacramental consecration, the samskaras which make him a full member of the community. Through a so-called nindastuti, a figure of speech in which a word of contrary meaning is used to express what is intended, vratya has been here interpreted as one who does not need ceremonial initiation because he is already totally pure and purified, thus "ever pure," primordial. Historically speaking the vratyas are thought to have been Aryans living outside the Brahmanical culture. Cf. the whole AV XV dedicated to them.

Lord: satpatih, lit. true Lord.

Consumer: lit. eater of all.

Mighty Wind: Matarishvan.

12 Benevolent: shiva, auspicious

13. Happiness and understanding shri (success prosperity) and prajna (intelligence and wisdom)

iii) 1. Internal self: adhyatma.

3. By the action of the mind: manokrtena, though Deussen reads mano'krtena and thus translates: "ohne Zutun des (bewussten) Willens."

5. Downward breath: apana.

Distributive breath: samana.

In a balanced way: i.e., the samana distributes the food in the body.

Seven flames: cf. the conception of food as a sacrifice, hence the allusion to the seven flames of Agni (cf. MundU I, 2, 4; § III 27) applied to the "fire of digestion."

6. Artery: nadi. Cf. CU VIII, 6, 6, and BU II, 1, 9 (§ VI 4).
Diffused breath: vyana.

7. Upward breath udana.
Goodness: punya.

Evil papa A reference to the new conception of transmigration (cf. also PrasnU I 9).

8. The anthropocosmic relations are: sun-eye-prana, earth-apanana, akasa-samana, vayu-vyana.

9. Fire: tejas, heat or energy.

10. Thought: citta, state of mind. Continuation of the idea in v. 8. Cf. CU VIII, 14 1.

12. Fivefold lordship: the fivefold division of the one breath of life.

iv). Cf. BU III, 9, 9 (§ VI 2), for prana as brahman and also TU III, 3 (§ II 11).
Powers: devatah.

5. Cf. § III 28.

v). 1. Cf. § IV 21.

2. Life: prana.

The conscious Self prajnatman over against prajna as mere consciousness Cf. KausU II, 14.

Temporal life: ayus, the accent being on fullness of temporal life.

Immortality: amrta. Ayus and amrta are often linked together in the B and U. Correlation: prana-prajnatman: ayus-amrta, on the one hand and prana -ayus; prajnatman-amrta on the other.

This world: the other world according to recension A.

True thinking: satya samkalpa true conception, true desire purpose, will, the totality of a persons thoughts and feelings in tune with truth. Satya samkalpa is prajna or rather, by prajna the samkalpa becomes satya. Cf. CU VII, 4, 3 (§ VI 3). vital breaths: prana. The plural here has undoubtedly this meaning.

3. Cf. BU VI, 1, 7-14; CU V, 1, 6-15 on the superiority of prana.

Makes it stand erect: utthapayati.

Praise: uktha; cf. KausU II, 6. Play of words with uttha(payati), cf. BU V, 13, 1. For an allegorical interpretation of uktha cf. AA II, 1. Cf. also SB X, 6, 2, 8.

Consciousness: prajna.

For these two: omitted in recension B.

Theory: drshti, seeing, vision

Senses: devah "gods."

Sense objects: "worlds."

This passage has some variants in the two standard recensions A and B.

Above Time Is Set a Brimful Vessel

Purnah kumbhah

7 The poet-sages of the Rig Veda do not mention the term "time"³⁵ nor do they try to elaborate on the nature of time; yet they are not only living in time, but also "living time" and speaking of a most temporal way of existence. They earnestly pray to "live a hundred years," to live "forever," and they are certainly conscious of the temporal nature of existence, that life is ever fleeting and always too short. They wish to halt the march of time by means of cultic acts, but they encourage Men to live in accordance with the rhythm of nature: day and night, the seasons, the year, the human cycle. Hardly ever can one detect an attitude of escapism from time into the timeless. All three worlds are temporal.

The Atharva Veda, which places so much stress on the cosmic rhythms,³⁶ contains, however, two speculative hymns on the subject of time. In these hymns there is an exaltation of time as that which cannot be transcended and thus must be glorified and divinized. Time is at the beginning and time will be at the end: nothing escapes time, for only in time can beings be.

Hymn XIX, 53, starts with an involved metaphor in which time is pulling a chariot, thought to represent the sun. This vast chariot, whose wheels are composed of all existent creatures, is drawn by time in the shape of a horse. We are thus introduced

straightway to an all-inclusive vision that is cosmic in range and metaphysical in tone. The next verses, under the cloak of ascribing honor to time, tend in fact to emphasize the absolute character of temporal relativity. Time created everything, even the Creator himself, not perhaps metaphysically in a timeless ontology, but certainly in our temporal reality, for lordship over temporal creatures can be meaningful only if it is temporal. Prajapati, insofar as he is the Father of temporal beings, is temporal in his fatherhood. Time is a concomitant dimension of everything under and above the sun.

There is one enigmatic verse of particular interest in this hymn of incomparable beauty and extraordinary suggestive force: "Above Time is set a brimful vessel." Time is said to replenish itself from a full vessel which, in spite of all efforts, can never be emptied. If from the full one draws away even the full, the full remains, says the famous invocation of the Isha Upanishad. Unlike the Upanishads, the Vedas seem to interpret this principle as the inexhaustible reality of time; the vessel set upon time is so full that, however much is drawn from it, time will never empty it. Every text can be twisted and interpreted according to what we read into it, but the clear impression given by the two following hymns is not that of a world-denying spirituality. It is not the timeless, but the "timefull," which wins Vedic approbation.

Purnah kumbhah

AV XIX, 53

1. Time drives like a horse with seven reins,
a thousand-eyed unaging Stallion.
Him the inspired poets mount.
All beings are his chariot wheels.
2. Time draws this chariot with seven wheels.
Seven are the hubs; its axle is nondeath.
At the head of all beings Time proceeds
unceasingly, the first among the Gods.
3. Above Time is set a brimful vessel.
Simultaneously we see Time here, there, everywhere.
Set face to face with all existences,
Time is throned, men say, in the loftiest realm.
4. Time has gathered together all beings that are;
he has passed through all the gathered beings.
He who was father has become their son.
There is no glory higher than his.
5. Time generated the Sky above
and this vast Earth. The passing moments
present and future, by him set swinging,
are reckoned out in due proportions.
6. Time brought forth fate-filled chance.
In Time the Sun shines and burns.
In Time the eye spies from afar.
In Time all existences are.
7. In Time is consciousness and life,
In Time is concentrated name
By Time, when he draws close at hand,
all creatures are with gladness filled.
8. In Time is energy, in Time the highest good.
In Time is the Holy Utterance.
Time is the Lord of all that is,
the Father, he, of the Creator.
9. Sent forth by him, from him all this
was born . On him is it established.
So soon as he has become Brahman,
Time supports the highest Deity.
10. Time created the creatures.
Time created in the beginning the Lord of creatures.
From Time comes the Self-Existent.
Energy likewise from Time derives.

1. The image of the horse and the seven reins is taken from the symbolism of the Sun in the RV. Cf. RV 1, 164, 2. Cf. AV XIII, 2, 38, where the Sun is homologized to Time. The seven reins may represent a perfect number, or the rainbow, or they may stand for the seven regions of space or, more probably the seven parts of the year, viz. six double months and one intercalary month. Cf. AV X, 8, 5 (§ VII 27)

Unaging Stallion: or, abundant seed (of which the stallion is the image).

3. A brimful vessel: purnah kumbhah, the full jar set upon time. Cf. AV X, 8, 14-15; 29 (§ VII 27).

We may relate v. 29 to the often repeated topic of fullness in BU V, I (§ VI A Antiphon) or the IsU.

Invocation (§ VII 6) Cf. also the "golden vessel" covering the face of truth; BU V, 15, 1; IsU 15 (§ VII 31);

Realm: vyoman, firmament.

5. Time is here regarded as the axis around which future and past revolve.

Set: vitishthate: vi-stha- (kale ha- stands for kalena) means spread (or diffused) over (or through), or inserted at different positions or proportions. In time are set the past and the future in rotation (in a recurrent series).

6. Several readings are put forward: Time created either bhuta, i.e., reality, what is, or bhumi, the earth, or bhuti prosperity, auspicious time chance, in the sense of the Greek word kairos which means propitious or appointed time and is perhaps etymologically connected with kala.

7. Consciousness: manas, mind.

Life: prana ,or life-breath.

The name, naman, seems to survive beyond the time of the individual. Cf. BU III, 2, 12 (§ V 12).

8. Energy: tapas , also in v. 10.

Highest good: jyeshtha, summum bonum.

Holy Utterance: brahman.

Lord: ishvara.

Creator: Prajapati.

Because of AV X, 7, 24; 32-34 (§ 13), and XI, 5, 5; 23, some relate jyeshtha to brahman and the text would then read: In Time is distilled the All-powerful brahman.

9. Sent forth by him: i.e., by Time.

All this: i.e., all that exists, the whole universe.

Brahman: holy word.

The highest Deity Parameshthin, the Highest the most exalted One, the Sovereign: a cosmic principle and a personified God, or another epithet for Prajapati. Cf AV IX, 3, 11 (§ II 32); IX, 7, 1; X, 2, 20.

10. Self-Existent: Kashyapa, a sage, sometimes said to be the husband of Aditi (the primordial Goddess) and also Identified at times with Prajapati; Kashyapa is svayambhu, self-existent.

Upon Time All the Worlds Repose

Kala

8 Hymn XIX, 54, which originally may have formed a unit with the preceding one, uses the same cosmic imagery and speaks of the sacrifice that time set in motion.³⁷ It is here that later speculations have seen the first signs of a nontemporal transcendence.³⁸ Through sacrifice Man overcomes his human condition in order to have access to the divine existence. Now, the problem is whether this superior form of existence is temporal or whether it transcends time. Our hymn seems unequivocally in favor of a rather secular not profane interpretation. By means of Brahman, the Holy Word, by means of sacrifice, time conquers this world--not another--and marches on.

A more powerful affirmation of the supremacy of Time would be hard to find. Everything is temporal and time stands at the beginning of everything. These two hymns are endeavoring to stress as emphatically as possible that even the "beginning," to which the more specifically metaphysical Vedic hymns allude, cannot escape the clutches of time, for agre, "in the beginning," becomes a temporal concept.³⁹

Kala

AV XIX, 54

1. From Time came into being the Waters,
from Time the Holy Word, Energy, and the regions.
By Time [each day] the Sun arises,
in Time he goes to rest again.
2. By Time blows the cleansing Wind,
through Time the vast Earth has her being.
The great Heaven has his post in Time.
3. Their son Time long ago engendered
the things that were and that shall be.
From Time came Scripture into being
and formulas for Sacrifice.
4. By Time was Sacrifice inaugurated,
inexhaustible oblation to the Gods.
In Time live the spirits and the nymphs.
Upon Time all the worlds repose.
5. In Time are set this Angiras
and Atharvan who came from Heaven,
both this world and the world above,
all holy worlds and holy interspaces.
6. Having conquered the worlds by Holy Word,
Time, the God supreme, goes on.

1. Holy Word: brahman also in v. 6.
Energy: tapas.

2. There are some variants in the Berlin and Bombay editions.
The cleansing Wind: vatah pavate lit. the Wind cleanses, purifies; this stresses the metaphor of movement.

3. Their son: i.e., Earth and Heaven's.
Scripture the rc verses.
Formulas for Sacrifice: yajus, sacred prayers.

4. Spirits and nymphs : Gandharvas and Apsarases. Cf. AV XII, 1, 23 (§I 19).
The Discovery of the Nontemporal
Akala

9 There is a kumbha, a jar, a vessel that is above time,⁴⁰ the Atharva Veda tells us. This pitcher is so full that it is the origin of time inexhaustible. The Upanishads attempt to peep into and take possession of the jar in its entirety. The Vedas themselves had suggested the method: breaking the jar by means of sacrifice.

The Upanishads now assert that this sacrifice must be an internal and spiritual one. Here is something new and different. Man now is curious; he is concerned to see the jar and not only to enjoy the flow of time that streams from the jar. The jar, that is to say, the container of time, the source of time, cannot also be temporal. We are here approaching one of the most momentous periods of human history: the breaking of "the brimful vessel above time." Perhaps failure will be the outcome of this effort and all that will remain will be the broken pieces of the broken jar, which Man will then have painfully to reconstruct. Maybe the ancient seers had seen our time also.

The adventure of living starts, according to the Upanishads, with a twofold discovery, namely, that interiorization is the means of grasping reality, and that nontemporal reality consists of pure transcendence. This epoch-making discovery, while it has led some people to the highest peaks of human experience, has also been the cause of a strange degeneracy when Man is not capable of living and breathing on such heights. The Upanishads begin with a criticism of time. Time is contingent, the earth dissolves, time is folded up. They follow with extolling the intemporal. God alone remains.

The Shvetashvatara affirms that which is above time, that in which everything begins and ends, is God. He is the Lord, indeed the very maker of time,⁴¹ for time is also a creature. Here it is, the lord of happiness, that Men should know.

The Maitri Upanishad endeavors to build a bridge and speaks of two kinds of Brahman, of two aspects of ultimate reality, one temporal and the other nontemporal. The former is cosmological, it is thus related to the sun and to the year and belongs to that famous one-fourth of reality which is manifest and graspable. The latter is that which remains when all else falls into

ruin, the Brahman without qualities, pure apophatic transcendence.

Later on the Bhagavad Gita put this into simpler words in the mouth of Lord Krishna: "Time am I, world destroying and mature."⁴² Yet Krishna had already identified himself with "imperishable time,"⁴³ so as to stress equally the transcendence and the immanence of the Lord. Never has there been a time, the Bhagavad Gita also declares, in which creator and creatures did not exist.⁴⁴

Between these two aspects of reality the temporal and the timeless, oscillate not only the whole of Vedic wisdom but also the universal thinking of mankind. Monodimensional Man, as also monodimensional reality means death and stagnation. Indeed, the balance is not easy to maintain and a dichotomy is no less harmful than a monistic vision. A subtle form of such a dichotomy, and perhaps one of the most harmful consists in confirming upon the nontemporal some of the characteristics of temporality, so as to imagine for instance that "eternal life" comes "after" this temporal one or that it is "beyond," "behind," or whatever other spatial or temporal word we may use to approach that which by very definition transcends both space and time.

The experience of movement is totally absent in the Upanishadic discovery of the nontemporal. Thus it is not an extrapolation in either a vertical or a horizontal direction which leads to eternity. You can always go deeper and always beyond; you can always postulate a "fore-beginning" and an "after-end." In this procedure you may be inclined to postulate other worlds, other times, births and rebirths, but you will never reach the nontemporal. The way to it is not the dynamic movement of our mind or the onward thrust of our will, but the static quiet, the acquired rest of our entire being in our inmost depths, the total extinction of desires, thoughts, and movements, both inside and out. Nothing could be more harmful than pretending that we have reached with our mind that which can only be "reached" without mind, or that we have discovered as "something" that which can be neither "attained" nor "desired" nor "thought." To the dialectical question as to how, then, we talk about this ineffable, the only correct answer is that in fact we do not talk about it.⁴⁵ Is not this also a blessing of the Lord? There is no dynamism leading to the timeless. Stasis here "stands" before dynamis. This is yoga in a single sutra.

Akala

SU VI, 1

i) 1. Some sages say that inherent nature, others that time is this world's cause. Both are mistaken. It is the grandeur of God within this world by which this wheel of Brahman is made to turn
 2. By whom the universe is ever encompassed, the Knower, the Author of time, possessor of all qualities, omniscient. Ruled by him, the world of creation unfolds-- that which is regarded as earth, water, fire, air, and space.
 3. When he has performed this work of creation he ceases, then enters into union with Being by means of his Being, by one, two, three or eight categories, by time or the subtle qualities that appertain to the atman.
 4. Having begun with works accomplished by the qualities, he assigns a destiny to all existent beings. So soon as these cease to be, the work done is destroyed. At the work's destruction he continues, essentially other.
 5. He is the beginning, the cause of this world's cohesion, to be viewed as transcending the three times--also as partless. Worship him first as the Adorable of many forms, the origin of all existence, in his own thought subsisting.
 6. Higher and other is he than all that this world-tree and time produce. From him this world evolves. Know him as the bringer of good, the remover of evil, the Lord of happiness, established within your own atman, the immortal whose abode is the universe.
 MAIT U VI, 116

ii) 14. It has been said elsewhere that food is the origin of this whole world, that the origin of food is time and, again, that the origin of time is the sun. The form of time is the year, which consists of twelve months and is composed of moments and other measurements of time. Of this one half belongs to Agni (when the sun moves northward) and the other half to Varuna (when the sun moves southward). The course from the sign of Magha to half of Shravishtha belongs to Agni while the course from the sign of Sarpa to half of Shravishtha belongs to the moon. Concerning the year, each of its (parts) consists of nine parts, according to the corresponding course of the sun. Because of the subtlety of time (this course of the) sun is a proof, for only by this is time proved to exist, and without proof there is no ascertaining of the thing to be proved. The thing to be proved, however, may be proved because it is distinct and because it reveals itself. About this it has been said: As many divisions of time as there are, in all of these moves yonder sun. From the one who reveres time as Brahman time recedes far away. For thus has it been said:

From time all beings emerge.

From time they advance and grow.

In time, too, they come to rest.

Time is embodied and also bodiless.

15. There are, we aver, two forms of Brahman: time and the timeless. That which is prior to the sun is the timeless; it has no parts. That which begins with the sun, however, is time and this has parts. Now the form of this latter which has parts is the year. From this year, to be sure, are creatures produced; through the year, to be sure, they grow and in the year they disappear. The year, therefore, is assuredly the Lord of creatures, is time is food, is the abode of Brahman, is the Self; for, as the saying goes:

It is time that cooks all created things

in (the vast cauldron of) his great Self.

In what, however, is this same time cooked?

He who knows this, knows the whole Veda.

16. This embodied time is the royal ocean of creatures. In it stands he who is called Savitri the impeller from , whom the moon stars, planets , the year, and everything else is begotten. And from them comes the whole world, as well as whatever is good or evil in this world. Therefore Brahman is the self of the sun. Indeed one should revere the sun under the name of time. Some, in fact, say: "Brahman is the sun." Moreover, it has been said:

The priest, the enjoyer, the offering, the sacred word,

the sacrifice itself Vishnu and Prajapati,

all these are the Lord, the Witness, the one

who shines up yonder in the orb of the sun.

i) 1. Inherent nature: svabhava.

2. Author of time: kalakara.

Ruled by him: teneshitam, of the beginning of KenU: Keneshitam . . . ("directed by whom . . . ?"), KenU I, 1 (VI 3), although the two verbs are from different roots.

The work of creation unfolds: karma vivartate . Cf. the later Vedantic theory of "creation" as vivarta.

3. Union: yoga. Only the part of reality which corresponds to the Reality of the Creator can be united with him.

Being: tattva "thatness," reality.

Categories: one, i.e., nature; two, i.e., the manifest and unmanifest; three i.e., the three qualities of nature (guna); eight, perhaps the five sense organs and three aspects of the "inner organ."

4. Karman, consisting of the gunas, shapes the destiny of all beings, yet it is controlled by the Lord. The work done is destroyed: krta-karma-nashah, liberation from karman is emancipation Cf. also MundU II, 2, 9 (§ VI 11).

Essentially other tattvato' nyah, the purusha who is "the other" by definition (in Sanmkhya).

5. Traditionally the three times have been interpreted as past, present, and future. The origin of all existence bhavabhuta having become all that has become.

In his own thought subsisting: sva citta stha, established in his own consciousness.

6. World-tree: cf. KathU VI, 1 (§ V 5).

Lord of happiness: bhagesha.

Whose abode is the universe: vishva dhama.

7-9. Cf. § I 28.

10-13. Cf. § VI-2.

ii) 10a-13. Cf § II 11.

14. Cf AV XIX,53 and 54 (§§ II 7,8).

Origin: yoni, womb, source.

Belongs to Agni: agneya, because of the heat of summer.

Varuna: because of the rainy season (Varuna is the God of the waters).

Concerning the year . . . :another translation of this sentence reads: "In this (reckoning) every single (month) of the (year) itself amounts to nine quarters after the fashion of (reckoning) by the progression of lunar mansions" (Van Buitenen). The nine parts are nine quarters, arrived at by the division of the twenty-seven constellations (nakshatra) through the twelve months. Time is embodied and also bodiless: *kalo murtir amurtiman* i.e., with and without form.

15. Lord of creatures: Prajapati.

Self: atman. Cf. the saying of the Mokshadharma: "time matures all beings by itself. But no one here on earth knows him in whom Time is matured" (MB XII, 231, 25; Edgerton's translation).

16. Cf. CU III, 19, 1 for the quotation "Brahman is the sun."

The Lord, the Witness: *prabhuh sakshi* a reference to the *purusha* in the sun.

17. Cf. § VI 2.

b) Food

Anna

Human life, in order to exist, to grow, to develop, depends upon food, Where there is no food there are hunger, famine, and death. Food, indeed, is the source of life. These are simple platitudes, but Vedic Man succeeded in elevating them into lofty intuitions without divorcing them from the elemental earthly realities to which they refer. Food is not only a condition for life, so that life must eat in order to live. Food is the very stuff of life. One type of life will require one type of food and another type another, but food will be indispensable for its support all along the way. Do not despise food, say our texts; reverence food, worship food, discover that food is sacrifice and that food is Brahman. Food is our life, says the Rig Veda.⁴⁶

The Soma spirituality, or the theology of Soma, if we prefer, is also a speculation about the mystery of food;⁴⁷ nor is there any reflection on the nature of sacrifice without mention of the essential part that food plays in it. The Shatapatha Brahmana recalls the primordial sacrifice of Prajapati and addresses Agni, the firstborn of the mouth of Prajapati, as a consumer of food.⁴⁸ It relates how Prajapati, because there was no other food than himself, had to reproduce himself.⁴⁹ "Sacrifice is the food of the Gods," says another text.⁵⁰ It is for this reason that food is the highest offering and that, when one offers food to the father, the husband, the family, the guests (whether friends or monks or mendicants), one performs not only a social but also a religious act, for man reenacts the primordial sacrifice and shares in that highest commerce through which the world subsists. This would also be the deeper explanation of a saying that is something more than an exhortation to hygiene: "If your food is pure, your whole nature will be pure."⁵¹ Your being will be pure because your being is made out of and comes from food, not only in a physical but also in an ontological sense: creation is a cosmic metabolic act.

The first text of the subsection is Hymn I, 187, of the Rig Veda in which we may be surprised to discover that, unlike later Indian traditions, the act of eating is not only sacred but also social, an expression of communion not only among Men but also between Men and the Gods. We may recall here that "he who eats alone is all sin,"⁵² or, as the Bhagavad Gita says: "Those who prepare food just for themselves are sinful: they eat sin."⁵³

Although Soma is mentioned in verse 9, it is not certain that this hymn is addressed to him. Food imparts both physical and spiritual vigor and is appropriate even for the Gods, to whom it is offered in ritual sacrifice (v. 11). Indeed, any real food, that is, any nourishment that strengthens soul and body, is sacrificial food. This hymn has a very elaborate structure with well-planned parallels intended to stress the unifying character of food. Food, it says, keeps the body together and, even more, it keeps Men together in the deep fellowship of a shared table (v. 3) This is not all; food is viewed also as a sacred banquet in which the Gods are brought together to partake with Men. Friendship, human and divine, implies a sharing in that which constitutes our basic and common ground, for through food we assimilate, make our own, what was until now on the periphery of our beings. There is no friendship without a common morsel of food.⁵⁴ Eating is a sacred act because food is in itself a holy reality, as is disclosed in the Vedas.

From this text we are led on to the Upanishads where there are deep and involved dissertations on the subject of food. The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad takes the student right back to Prajapati, the Father of creation, who produced for all their proper food, one food common to all beings, food for the Gods, namely the sacrificial fire and the offerings, food for Men and animals, namely milk, and a threefold form of food for himself: mind, life, and word. "For, my dear," says another

Upanishad, "the mind consists of food, life consists of water, and the word consists of glow."⁵⁵ We may remember that this trilogy is the basis of the Upanishadic anthropology. Man is a unit of mind, life, and word, or of food, water, and glow.

We could equally well call these seven forms of food the seven elements at the basis of everything; but these elements are not like static bricks out of which the building of creation is made.⁵⁶ They are, on the contrary, dynamic particles that have to be "eaten," assimilated, transformed, in order that the construction of the world be maintained.

Then an important question arises: since food is always being consumed, assimilated, how does it come about that it does not dwindle? The answer is given here only in a cryptic way. He who knows the imperishableness of food goes to the Gods, and there he shares in the dynamic process of a continuous creation. Food and life go together, affirms the following text. There is an interdependence between them, so that neither alone can be said to be Brahman, but only the two combined.

The Chandogya Upanishad, in a text given later, after reflecting upon the nature of sleep and of the breath of life, inquires into the origin of hunger and thirst. A man becomes hungry because what he consumes is forthwith digested. How then do we explain the fact that life continues? The conclusion is reached we are a sprout and there is no sprout without a root. "What else could the root be other than food?"⁵⁷ From food a connection is traced to water, from water to fire, from fire to being (sat), and from there the text introduces us to the knowledge of the atman by means of the famous formula *tat tvam asi*, "that you are."

A proper introduction to the remainder of the texts given here would require a whole treatise on Vedic cosmology and anthropology. We must therefore content ourselves with noting the stupendous crescendo of the texts and their theanthropocosmic connections. All is related and interdependent. The way to Brahman is not like a ladder whose earlier steps we may forget once we have reached a higher one. Brahman is not confined to the top but is in immediate contact with everything, and the mystery of food accompanies us all along the way. There is a process of assimilation, a cosmic metabolism which begins in the lowest strata of reality and continues up to the highest. The culmination is that extraordinary mystical song: "I am food, I am food, I, who am food, eat the eater of food!" There is no deeper unity than that produced by the eating of the other, just as there is no better love than that of being the food of the lover. The tension between *jnana* and *bhakti*, knowledge and love, is harmoniously solved in the symbol of food. Even more, in the eating and preparing of food, human action and divine action are both required; the *karma-marga*, the way of action, is also integrated into the mystery of food. Matter and spirit are united in the food by which they subsist.

He consists of mind, is the leader of body and life,
and reposes on food, directing the heart.⁵⁸

It is again the Bhagavad Gita which sums it all up with terse simplicity:

From food all creatures come to be:
from rain comes food;
from sacrifice is rain derived
and sacrifice from works.⁵⁹
A Sacred Meal for Gods and Men
Sadhamada

10

RV I, 187

1. My song shall be of Food, producer of strength,
through whom the Keeper of nectar smote the Demon.
2. O savory Food, Food of sweetness, you are our chosen
for whom we long. Come, be our strong defender!
3. Come to us, Food our delight, bringing pleasurable refreshment.
Be our friend, source of bliss and brotherhood.
4. Your flavors, O Food, are spread throughout space,
high like the breezes they are scattered.
5. Those who share your sweetness with others are truly your friends. Those who keep your fine taste to themselves are stiff-necked wretches!
6. On you, O Food, is fixed the great Gods' desire.
Great deeds were done under your sign, the Serpent slain.
7. If you have proceeded on high to the splendor of the mountain,

even from there, sweet Food, return for our enjoyment.

8. From waters and plants we imbibe the choicest portion.

Therefore, O Body, thrive; attain full stature.

9. We drink you, Soma, brew of milk and barley.

Therefore, O Body, thrive; attain full stature.

10. You herbs and wheaten cakes, be wholesome and strengthening

Therefore O Body, thrive; attain full stature.

11. We sing your praises O Food. From you we obtain

as butter from a cow ,our sacrificial offerings.

O you,convivial feast of Gods and Men.

1. Food, pitu, nurture,including both food and drink.

Keeper of the nectar.Trita,a water Deity conqueror of demons,in particular of Vrata(the demon).

Cf.RV I 52, 5; VIII 7 24.

3. Source of bliss and brotherhood :Lit. cause of joy, not of repugnance bringer of enjoyment, free from malevolence.

4. Flavor: rasa, juice essence.

The text has two significant parallel locatives : as in heaven (high) so on earth(spaces,regions).

6. On you is fixed, etc: or, in you resides the spirit of the great devah, the longing of great souls.

Sign: ketu, symbol, ensign.

The Serpent slain: reference either to Indra or to Trita as in v. 1.

7. Mountain: parvata which may also mean cloud.

8. O Body: vatape, vocative of vatapi: vata plus api,which may mean friend of Vata,or wind-swelled fermenting one (Soma) and ,according to Sayana,the body.

8-10. The triple invocation refers to the two constitutive elements of Soma,one liquid (water, milk, mixture of sap) and one solid(herbs, plants) and it refers also to the ritual, sacramental act of nutrition.

10. Convivial feast: sadhamada.

Food Of Eternal Life

Annam brahma

11

BU I, 5,1-3

i) 1. From the seven kinds of food
which the Father produced by intellect and ardor,
One of his foods was common to all beings,
two he assigned to the Gods,
three he made for his own use,
one he bestowed upon the animals.

On this everything is based:

both that breathes and that which does not.

How is then that these foods do not dwindle
when they are constantly eaten up?

He who knows this permanence

eats food with his mouth,

he goes to the Gods

he lives on power.

(Thus the verses)

2. "From the seven kinds of food

which the Father produced by intellect and ardor"

--that means that the Father produced it by intellect and ardor.

"One of his foods was common to all beings"

--that means that one of them, that which is eaten here, was common food. He who worships this food is not free from evil because it is mixed.

"Two he assigned to the Gods"

--that means the fire offerings and oblations. This is why one offers the fire offerings and the oblations to the Gods. Or else they say, they are the sacrifices of the new, and the full moon. Therefore one should not sacrifice in view of any gain.

"One he bestowed upon animals"

--that is milk, for on milk live men and animals in the beginning. This is why they first feed a newborn child with ghee or give him the breast. They call a newborn calf "One who does not eat grass"

"On this everything is based: both that which breathes and that which does not"

--this means that on milk everything is based, both that which breathes and that which does not. There is a saying that he who for a year makes oblations with milk will escape recurring death. One should not understand this to be the case. For he who knows this, on the very day he makes the oblations he overcomes recurring death, because he offers all food to the Gods.

"How is it then that these foods do not dwindle when they are constantly eaten up?"

--this means that the person is permanent, for it is he who again and again produces food.

"He who knows this permanence "

--this means that the person is permanent, for he produces food by constant meditation and sacred works. Food would be exhausted if he did not do this.

"Eats food with his mouth"

--this means that the mouth is the face, and he eats with his mouth.

"He goes to the Gods, he lives on power."

--this is a the praise.

3. "There he made for himself."

--this means mind, word, and vital breath, which he made for himself. There is a saying: "I had the mind elsewhere, I did not see; I had the mind elsewhere, I did not hear." It is indeed by the mind that one sees, by the mind that one hears. Desire, conception, doubt, faith, unbelief, endurance, weakness, shyness, meditation, fear--all these indeed belong to the mind. This is why even if one is patted from behind one knows it through one's mind. All that is sound is word. The word is by its intention, but is not in itself. The in-breath, the out-breath, the sustained breath, the up-breath, the middle-breath--all this is vital breath. Indeed the atman is made of word, mind, and vital breath.

BU V, 12, 1

ii) Some say that Brahman is food. This is not so, however, for food decays without the vital force. Others say that Brahman is the vital force. This is not so either, for the vital force fades away without food. Only when these Deities unite together do they reach the highest state.

CU I, 11, 8-9

iii) Which is that Deity?

"Food," he (Ushasti Cakrayana) said, "for all beings on earth live by absorbing food. That is the Deity referred to by your part of the recitation, and if you had chanted it without knowing this, despite my telling you, your head would have fallen off."

CU VII, 9, 1-2

iv) 1. Food, most certainly, is greater than energy. For if a man were to abstain from food for ten days, even though he might still be alive, he would not be able to see, hear, think, be aware of anything, act, or understand. Once he resumes eating, however, he will again be able to see, hear, think, be aware, act, and understand. Meditate then on food.

2. He who meditates on food as Brahman attains the worlds of food and drink. His freedom will extend to the limits of the realm of food, he who meditates on food as Brahman.

"Is there anything greater than food, sir?"

"Yes, there is something greater than food."

"Then please, sir, tell me about it!"

AU I, 3, 1-10

v) 1. He considered: "Here are the worlds and the guardians of the worlds. Let me create food for them."

2. He brooded over the waters and from the waters, thus brooded over, there emerged a form. That which was produced as that form is, indeed, food.

3. Having been so created, it wished to flee away. He sought to grasp it by speech. He could not grasp it by speech. If indeed he had laid hold of it by speech, merely by talking [about food] one would have been satisfied.

4. Next he sought to grasp it by breath. He could not do so. If indeed he had laid hold of in by breath, merely by breathing [over food] nor would have been satisfied.

5. Next he sought to grasp it by sight. He could not do so. If indeed he had laid hold of it by sight, merely by seeing food one

would have been satisfied.

6. Next he sought to grasp it by hearing. He could not do so. If indeed he laid hold of it by hearing, merely by hearing [about food] one would have been satisfied.

7. Next he sought to grasp it by the skin. He could not do so. If indeed he had laid hold of it by the skin, merely by touching food one would have been satisfied.

8. Next he sought to grasp it by the mind. He could not do so. If indeed he had laid hold of it by the mind, merely by thinking [about food] one would have been satisfied.

9. Next he sought to grasp it by the generative organ. He could not do so. If indeed he had laid hold of it by the generative organ, merely by emitting food one would have been satisfied.

10. Then he sought to grasp it by the out-breath. He grasped it. The grasper of food is what wind is. The one living on food is in truth what wind is.

TU II, 2

vi) From food, indeed, are creatures born.

All living things that dwell on the earth,

by food in truth do the live

and into it they finally pass.

For truly food is the first of all beings

and therefore it is called the universal remedy.

Those who worship Brahman as food

assuredly obtain all the food they need.

For truly food is the first of all beings

and therefore it is called the universal remedy.

From food are all things born,

by food, when born, do they grow and develop.

Food is eaten by beings and itself eats beings

Because of that its name is food.

TU III 1-2; 6-10

vii) 1. Bhrgu, the son of Varuna approached his father Varuna and said: "Sir, instruct me about Brahman." He explained to him, saying: "Food, breath, sight, hearing, mind, word."

He said further: "That from which truly all beings are born, by which when born they live and into which finally they all return, that seek to understand; that is Brahman."

He disciplined himself and, having disciplined himself,

2. he realized that Brahman is food; for from food assuredly all beings are born, by food when born do they live and into food finally they all return.

6. He realized that Brahman is joy, for from joy assuredly all beings are born, from joy when born do they live and into joy they finally return. This is the wisdom of Bhrgu, son of Varuna, which was firmly based in the highest heaven and he who knows this has himself this same firm basis [in Brahman]. He becomes a possessor of food, a consumer of food. He becomes great in offspring and cattle, in the splendor of sacred knowledge and in renown.

7. Do not disparage food. That is a sound precept. Breath, assuredly, is food; the body consumes food and is itself based on breath, while breath is likewise based on the body. So food is based on food. He who knows that food is based on food, has himself a firm basis [in Brahman]. He becomes a possessor of food, a consumer of food. He becomes great in offspring and cattle, in the splendor of sacred knowledge and in renown.

8. Do not despise food. That is a sound precept. The waters, assuredly, are food. Light consumes food and is itself based on the waters, while the waters are likewise based on light. So food is based on food. He who knows that food is based on food, has himself a firm basis [in Brahman]. He becomes a possessor of food, a consumer of food. He becomes great in offspring and cattle, in the splendor of sacred knowledge and in renown.

9. One should produce abundant food. That is a sound precept. The earth, assuredly, is food. Space consumes food and is itself based on the earth while the earth is likewise based on space. He who knows that food is based on food, has himself a firm basis [in Brahman]. He becomes a possessor of food, a consumer of food. He becomes great in offspring and cattle, in the splendor of sacred knowledge and in renown.

10, 1. Let a man not deny hospitality to anyone. That is a sound precept. Let him therefore lay in a large store of food in whatever way he can. Of such a man people will say: "Food just seems to accrue to him." If this food is prepared in an excellent way for others, it is prepared in an excellent way for him who gives. If it is prepared in a mediocre way, then it is prepared in a mediocre way for him. If it is prepared in a miserable way for others, then it is prepared in a miserable way for him.

10, 5. He who knows this,
having quit this world,

having come to the self that consists of food,
 having come to the self that consists of mind,
 having come to the self that consists of breath,
 having come to the self that consists of understanding,
 having come to the self that consists of pure joy,
 wanders through these worlds
 eating food to his fancy,
 assuming forms to his fancy;
 he stays still and sings the mystic chant:
 Oh marvel, Oh marvel, Oh marvel!
 10, 6. I am food, I am food, I am food!
 I am an eater, I am an eater, I am an eater!
 I am a poet, I am a poet, I am a poet!
 I am the First-born of Cosmic Order,
 before the Gods were, from the womb of eternity.
 He who gives me to another, he alone preserves me.
 I, who am food, eat the eater of food!
 I have overcome the whole wide world.
 He who knows this has golden radiance within.
 Such is the hidden doctrine!
 MUND U I, 1, 8-9

viii) 8. By the power of ascetic fervor Brahman
 expands and thence is food produced.
 From food comes life, from life mind, thence truth,
 the worlds and the immortality of works.
 9. The one who is all-knowing and all-wise,
 whose ascetic fervor is his wisdom,
 from him this Brahman comes to birth,
 composed of name and form and food.
 MAIT U VI, 10a-13

ix) 10a. Now there is still more to be known. There is a further modification of this sacrifice to the Self, namely, that which concerns food and the eater. This is the further explanation: the conscious Person is in the midst of matter. He is an enjoyer, for he enjoys the food of nature. Even this physical self is food for him, its agent being matter. Therefore that which is to be enjoyed has three qualities and the enjoyer is the person who resides within. The observation [of our senses] is a clear proof of this. Since animals spring from a seed and as seed is food, by this is explained the fact that matter is what is to be enjoyed. Residing within it, he enjoys. The food derived from matter by means of that transforming process owing to the distinction of the three qualities, from the intellect down to the separate elements, is the sign. By this, furthermore, the fourteen fold course is explained. This world called pleasure, pain, and delusion is made up of food. Now there is no apprehension of the type of a seed [cause] unless there is an offshoot [effect]. And even in its three states it [i.e., the seed] has the nature of food, that is, in childhood, youth, and old age. It has the nature of food owing to transformation. When matter becomes manifest, it can be perceived. In order to apprehend this manifestation, intelligence and other faculties such as determination, imagination, and ego sense develop, and in order to apprehend objects the five sense organs and the actions of the motor organs arise. Thus the manifest is food and the unmanifest is food. The enjoyer is free from qualities, but inasmuch as he is an enjoyer, it is evident that he possesses consciousness. Just as Fire is the eater of food among the Gods, and Soma is their food, so he who knows this eats food by fire. The physical self is called Soma. He who has the Unmanifest as his mouth is called Fire, because of the saying: "The person, indeed, with the Unmanifest as his mouth, enjoys the three qualities."

11. The highest form of Self is certainly this: namely food, for the breath of life is made of food. If a Man does not eat, he becomes a nonthinker, a nonhearer, a nonfeeler, a nonseer, a nonspeaker, a nonsmeller, a nontaster, and he loses his breath of life. If, on the contrary, he eats, he becomes full of life-breath, he becomes a thinker, a hearer, a feeler, a speaker, a taster, a smeller, a seer. Because of this it has been said:
 From food, indeed, are creatures produced,
 all living things that dwell on the earth.
 Moreover by food, in truth, do they live
 and into it they finally pass.

12. Now it has been said elsewhere: all creatures here set to busily every day out of eager desire for food. The sun absorbs food through his rays and thereby diffuses heat. When supplied with food, living creatures digest it and it is by consuming food that fire also burns. Out of a desire for food Brahman fashioned this universe. Therefore a Man should reverence food as the Self. For thus it has been said:
 From food created things are born;

by food, once born, do they grow and develop.
 Food is eaten by beings and itself eats beings.
 Because of that its name is Food.

13. Now it has elsewhere been said: that form of the blessed Lord which is called "the Supporter of all things" is nothing other than food. For the breath of life is the essence of food, mind of life, the understanding of mind, and bliss of the understanding. The Man who recognizes this will come to possess food, life, mind, understanding, and bliss. Recognizing this, he will eat the food of as many creatures here on earth as eat food, for he will abide in them.

For food, assuredly, prevents decay;
 food is worshipful, so they declare.
 Food is the life of animals, supreme;
 food is a healer, so they say.

i) 1. Father. pita.

Power: urjas, nourishment, strength, fullness. Cf. YV I, 1

2. Worships: upaste.

Is not freed from evil: because the sacrificial food is not the one eaten by all, for this latter is polluted, mixed. Only sacred food is a protection against evil and sin.

In view of any gain: ishta, an offering made with the desire of obtaining something.

Recurring death: punarmrtyu.

Person: purusha.

Permanent: a-kshiti, imperishable, undecaying.

Praise: prashamsa.

3. Mind, word, and vital breath: manas, vac, prana.

Intention: anta, end. The word differs from the sound by its intention or contents.

Not in it self: esha hi na, it (the word)is not. This is a cryptic sentence. Unlike a mere sound, the word cannot be separated from what it "words" or expresses.

ii) Vital force: prana, breath of life.

Deities: devate, super human powers.

iii) Note the play on words. Absorbing: pratiharamanani.

Recitation: pratihar, a part of the Sama recitation. A spiritual interpretation is generally given to the last part of this text, viz., that without knowledge the ritual is dead.

iv) For the rest of CU VII and all the ref., cf. § VI 3 (v) and notes.

v) 2. Form: murti.

3. Speech: vac.

4. Breath: prana.

10. Out-breath: apana, digestive breath.

Wind: vayu.

One living on food: annayu.

vi) Food is called anna, eatable, "eater," because beings both eat it and are eaten by it.

3-5. Cf. § VI 7.

6-7. Cf. § I 7.

8-9. Cf. § VI 7.

vii) 1. Cf. § VI A b Introduction.

2-5. The rest of 2 and following relate to tapas, manas, vijnana and ananda in a similar way.

6. Firmly based: pratishthita.
Sacred knowledge: brahman.

7 Sound precept: vrata.
Based on the body (and similar expressions): pratishthita.

10, 1. Excellent way, mediocre, and miserable: lit. beginning, middle, and end.

10,2-10,4. Omitted.

10, 6. Lit. 1, food, eat the eater of food.
Hidden doctrine: upanishad.

viii) 8. Ascetic fervor: tapas.
Life: prana.

9. Name-and-form: nama-rupa, i.e., individuals.

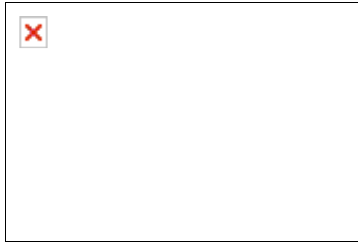
ix) 9. Cf. § III 28.

10a. This text is not only difficult, but is also corrupted (cf. van Buitenen's Vulgate).
Matter: pradhana, lit. that which is put forward, hence, important or chief thing, but also chaos, unevolved nature, matter in this sense.
Nature: prakrti.
The conscious Person: purusha.
Physical self: bhutatman.
Even this physical self is food for him: i.e., the body is the "material" for the spirit.
Three qualities: triguna, in Samkhya philosophy the constituents of prakrti (nature), namely sattva (purity), rajas (activity), tamas (inertness, darkness).
The enjoyer: again according to Samkhya, the purusha as the spiritual principle essentially different from nature.
Agent: kartr, maker.
Enjoyer is the eater and the enjoyed that which is eaten.
Sign: linga, here in the logical meaning of an effect that leads to a cause (cf. also KathU VI, 8; § VI 11).
Fourteenfold course: the five sense organs, the five motor organs, and the four aspects of the "inner organ."
Pleasure, pain, and delusion: sukha, dukkha, moha.
Ego sense: abhimana (here not ahamkara, which is the usual term).
Just as Fire . . . here the new (Samkhya) anthropology is related to Vedic theology, and the following correspondences arise: Gods (conscious enjoyers), Agni (mediator, consumer of the oblations), Soma (food of the Gods), and, on the other side: the enjoyer (i.e., the conscious purusha), fire (the medium of transformation from matter to spirit), and food (the enjoyed, nature, matter).
Unmanifest: avyakta, i.e., matter (pradhana).

10b. Cf. § III 28 11.
Highest form of Self: param va etad atmano rupam.
The lines quoted are from TU II, 2 (vi).

12. Digest it: lit. cook it.
The lines quoted are also from TU II, 2 (vi).

13. Blessed Lord: Vishnu.
Food, life, mind, understanding, and bliss: anna, prana, manas, vijnana, ananda.



B. AWAKENING AND COMING OF AGE

The divine Power who has bound this girdle round us, who tied us together and yoked us in one, the divine Power under whose direction we progress, may he lead us to the other shore and free us!

Daughter of Faith, born out of Fervor, sister of the sages who mold the world, grant to us, Girdle, powers of thought and wisdom, grant to us ardor and manly vigor.
AV VI, 133, 1; 460

The girdle extolled in this hymn is a powerful symbol of human maturity, power, and restraint, that is to say, of a disciplined freedom (for one is bound by one's own freedom); it possesses a material concreteness, but represents also a spiritual reality.⁶¹ The girdle is what the three highest varnas of tradition are accustomed to wear as a sign of their second birth, that is, of having undergone the initiation that makes them dvija, "born again." At the time of initiation the girdle is a symbol of chastity and obedience and thus it represents the condition of the brahmacarin, the student, who is bent on gaining wisdom and progressing on the spiritual path.

The rise of human consciousness is undoubtedly the most important phenomenon that has yet happened in the evolution of the whole universe. One of the most exhilarating features of the Vedic Revelation is that it bears witness to this Awakening, even daring to speculate on it with that same almost unique unselfconscious consciousness with which the problem of reality is investigated, a reality that is at once both objective and subjective, thought and thinking, known and knower.

The ecstatic moment prevalent in Part I has to come to an end, or at least it simply happens that it comes to an end, by the self-discovery of the subject that is having the experience. In the course of time, Life, the Sun, and the Gods become partners in a dialogue that is still cosmic but now includes also the human. Man stands at the other pole of this relationship, and the fact that he now looks at his own end blurs his vision of the other. Man begins to suspect that it may well be that his desire for the Gods in fact constitutes them, at least partly, and that his own sense of beauty may also belong to the Sun as it really is; in that event neither the Gods nor the Sun may be considered simply as something objectively given and totally independent of Man's consciousness.

From now on, the horizontal vision, the evaluation of "things" around Man, will contain a reflection on Man himself: he will discover himself and his own projection in the outside world. That was not true of the vertical vision, when Man was not looking around but up to the heavens. The road to humanness is now open, and the vision is presented to us of a realistic humanness in which every value has a countervalue and every concept is ambivalent. Vedic Man begins to be aware of his own involvement in the universe. We are present here at Man's discovery of himself after he has discovered the Gods. "Man is the nearest to Prajapati."⁶²

The discovery of Man, moreover, like Man's encounter with God, is not an abstract or merely a mental process. In this discovery Man discovers that he has to be really born into personhood, that he has to establish a relationship with the other and also admit him into manhood (initiation), while the other for his part has to assume. Man to his own self (marriage and children).⁶³ Furthermore, in this discovery Man recognizes that these two steps are finite and not ultimate. This is the threshold of real life.

Each day Dawn, Ushas, brings a renewal of hope; the Sun, Savitri, brings Earth to life with the warmth of his rays and she, the great Mother, bestows upon Men liberally the blessings of crops and herds. Upon this earth a child grows and develops, entrusted from birth to the care of the Gods, to Savitri, Indra, Sarasvati. Now the young man is on the threshold of manhood, startled at the discovery of himself and of his own special relation to the world around him. Knowledge and love burgeon. Both must be developed. Upanayana and vivaha, initiation and marriage, are the two starting points. Both are initiatory rites. You do not know your bride; you do not possess knowledge, just as you do not possess love. Both will come and grow, like a plant, if the right seed and a good soil are there, and if the field is properly watered and tended.

What does Vedic Man see when he comes of age? He sees the three worlds: the other shore, his own bank, and the river in between; the heavens, the earth, and the atmosphere (or sky, as the antariksha, the "in-between," is sometimes translated). It is obvious that the picture of these three worlds has evolved considerably through the ages and that mythical literature has described them in rather different terms from the more philosophical speculations, which speak of knowledge and ignorance and the crossing over from the one to the other.

We may sum up this process of awakening to full human life by saying that we have here the process by which the human being becomes a person.

The individual is biologically a single specimen of the human species . He is simply a part of the whole and, even when he acquires consciousness of the surrounding world and a certain awareness of himself as a different and peculiar element in the whole, he is not yet a person. He can perhaps function as a human being if society takes care of him and he conform to the given pattern. In other words, the individual can act and behave as a human being as long as there is a superior instance, a higher "person," of which he is a part and on behalf of which he performs the acts he is required to do. This superior person can be the family, the tribe, the sect, the religious community, the region, the nation, or any other group that encompasses the whole of human existence. The individual becomes a person when he discovers that he is an unrepeatable complex of relations, a unique knot in a net of relationships; he becomes a person when his individual consciousness becomes aware of being neither a subject looking out upon an objective world nor an object being looked upon, and also looked after, by a superior authority (God, father, chief, husband, etc.), but when he discovers that he himself is subject and object at the same time, that he himself is the whole insofar as the whole is mirrored in him and passes through him.⁶⁴

The Upanishads, as the end and crown of the Vedas, complement and refine the merely karmakandic or ritualistic view of human growth . They do so by developing the idea of that internal growth into truly mature human life which takes place only with the discovery of the atman. Man reaches manhood when he discovers the existence of himself and of the world as two distinct but inseparable entities. Human maturity is reached the very moment we make the threefold discovery of ourselves, of others, and of the mysterious link that binds us together: (a) Initiation, (b) Love, and (c) Union.

a) Initiation into Human Life Manushyaprapiti

Unlike many other traditions, the Vedic Revelation does not stress human initiation as a particular act that Men have to perform. Initiation certainly belongs to human growth and development; it takes place alike in the body and mind of the human being, just as it takes place also in the whole evolutionary process of the cosmos. When the right time comes, maturity appears. You do not kill yourself in order to be born anew, and yet a new birth occurs when the previous one is no longer sufficient, no longer "living."

In congruity with this spirit the transition from an undeveloped human life to full manhood is recognized and heralded, but it is not produced or brought about by a particular rite. The Vedic rite witnesses and sanctions rather than produces and effects. No Man, and much less Vedic Man, can live totally without rites. From olden times rites de passage have developed and some of them are given here. Initiation, however, would have no meaning or would have to be interpreted in an almost magical way, if Man had not already awakened to the mystery of human life, that is, to the personal discovery of love, though still without an object. This accounts for the two groups of texts of this subsection.

In fact, the first sign of coming of age is not a biological change but a psychological realization: the discovery of the other as a mysterious part of oneself; the realization that he or she is neither oneself nor an "other" and much less another self. The first initiation is not accomplished by a rite, but by a growth, by a personal discovery; the discovery that makes a human being a person. It is the discovery of the relationship of love, in which the other is not an instrument (to be manipulated according to one's own wishes) or a "thing," an obstacle or an enemy, but the beloved, the thou, and--ultimately--the I. The other is still one's own projection. Innocence has not yet been lost.

Loftier Than the Gods Kama

¹² Later speculations within the Indian tradition, as is true of other cultures also, have somewhat blurred the powerful, sober, and transparent conception of kama, love, desire, which appears in the Vedic Revelation. It would be of little avail and merely retrograde to revert to a cosmic conception of love or to the unearthing of old myths; but, equally, we would be falsifying and impoverishing human experience if we were to ignore that area of human existence which is powerfully indicated in the texts of the Vedic Revelation. Here we have perhaps some of the deepest sayings regarding that fundamental human archetype.

Kama, as we have already seen,⁶⁵ is considered to be the first principle of activity,⁶⁶ the creative and procreative force leading the supreme Being out of the closed circle of its own existence. It is a cosmic force, but not to be understood as a kind of blind energy or impersonal urge. On the contrary, the personal is so much included in the transpersonal element that kama is said to be the first seed of mind, the firstborn of the Absolute and thereafter the loftiest characteristic of all created beings, and more particularly of human beings. Kama is the driving force in any enterprise, the highest of all human qualities. There is one and the same urge stimulating the entire range of reality, one and the same energy pushing the universe to expand--and it is kama. Without it there would be only death; time would shrink and reality would collapse. Kama is not a hankering after what is lacking in the individual; it is not an imperfection and thus a cause of suffering. Kama is not the proof that we have not yet arrived, that we are imperfect and enmeshed in unfulfilled longings and unsatisfied urges. Kama is, on the contrary, the perfection of expansion, the quality of creativity, the positive dynamism to be more, to reach higher, to overcome what still stands in front of us, because the adventure of existence is not yet finished, although this unfinished character is just the opposite of the imperfect. A "finished" universe would be in fact finished, limited, finite, deadly, and not divine. Kama proves not that we are poor pilgrims, still on the way, displaced persons in search of a paradise lost, but that we are divine sparks full of creative energy with our own part to play in the structuring of the world. Sharing in this power is indeed the first sign of awakening and coming of age. The adolescent is afraid to love to the extent that he is afraid to be.

Our hymn starts by addressing kama as a powerful ally whose aid a man seeks to secure in his struggle against enemies of all sorts (w. 1-19). This part consists of a long series of imprecations. Some have seen only magic practices in them, though their interpretation would appear somewhat more complex.

The last part of the hymn is devoted to an address to kama, extolling him above all else. He has the primacy over all things, people, and Gods. He who has kama has all; all goods come with him. Where kama is, there no thoughts of evil intrude.

Kama

AV IX, 2, 19-21; 23-25

19. Love is the firstborn, loftier than the Gods,
the Fathers and men.
You, O Love, are the eldest of all,
altogether mighty.
To you we pay homage!

20. Greater than the breadth of Earth and Heaven
or of Waters and Fire,
you, O Love, are the eldest of all,
altogether mighty.
To you we pay homage!

21. Greater than the quarters and directions, the expanses
and vistas of the sky,
you, O Love, are the eldest of all,
altogether mighty.
To you we pay homage!

23. Greater than all things moving and inert,
than the Ocean, O Passion,
you, O Love, are the eldest of all,
altogether mighty.
To you we pay homage!

24. Beyond the reach of Wind or Fire,
the Sun or the Moon,
you, O Love, are the eldest of all,
altogether mighty.
To you we pay homage!

25. In many a form of goodness, O Love,
you show your face.
Grant that these forms may penetrate
within our hearts.
Send elsewhere all malice!

19. Cf RV X, 129, 4 (§ I 1), from which the idea and its expression are borrowed, though they are developed here in a more

prominent way. We here use "we," instead of "I," "Fathers" for "ancestors," and "eldest" for "superior" (because born first).

20. The cosmic waters and Agni are meant here.

22. This verse (omitted) contains obscure names of insects and reptiles.

23. Moving and inert: lit. all that blinks and stands erect (tishthati), i.e., what moves and what does not, the animate and the inanimate.

Passion: kama manyo, O Love (and) fury. Manyu, zeal, anger, wrath.

25. Malice stands for evil thoughts or prayers or other devices.

The First Seed of Mind

Manaso retah

13 Kama is not here seen, as in later speculation, as a psychological desire, much less as a mere desire for individual pleasure; desire has here no pejorative connotation. Desire is the dynamism inherent in the whole creation, in whatever way we may like to explain it. If it were not for this striving that we call love, the whole universe would be not only cold, but dead, and would not exist at all.

This hymn recalls that kama existed from the beginning and was the first seed of mind. It then proceeds to express a rather subtle identification of and differentiation between the cosmic and primeval kama and that of the individual. Sacrifice is here again the clue. There is an internal and almost inaudible dialogue going on in this hymn, from Love to love, from Desire to desire, from Heart to heart. Without kama it is not possible to achieve anything whatsoever; but kama, unlike other values, is the most universal gift bestowed upon the whole of creation.

Manaso retah

AV XIX, 52

1. In the beginning was Desire,
the first seed of mind.

O desire, twin of Desire,
grant wealth to me!

2. Powerful, unshakable,
shining, companionable,
formidable victor,
grant power to me!

3. He who longed from afar
to furnish a pledge
in response to the eternal
was heeded by the regions.

By means of Desire
they generated light.

4. From Desire springs desire,
leaps from Heart to heart.

The mind of my people,
let that mind be mine!

5. Now prosper, Desire,
the desires of our hearts,
that we may succeed.

Accept this oblation!

1. Desire: kama, translated as Love in the preceding hymn. Cf. also RV X, 129, 4 (§ I 1) for the source of this idea and also its expression in words.

Twin: as being of one origin.

Grant wealth: i.e., wealth and power for the sacrificer; cf. v. 2.

2. Companionable: i.e., a friend or companion to the person who seeks one.

3. Obscure verse. Cf. TA III 15, I.

To furnish a pledge: pratipanaya, lit. for the counterpledge, counterstake (meaning not clear).
Light: svar, heaven. It is longing desire and ardent prayer that create light and life.

4. The capital and small letters are intended to stress the anthropocosmic meaning of the verse.

5. Accept: lit. eat.

The Ritual
Upanayana

14 Human life, like cosmic existence and divine reality, implies a decision, a taking in charge, the following of a direction, the shaping of events, and later the acceptance of what has been so shaped. In the human cycle the process means a coming-of-age so as to take one's life into one's own hands except that the "one" is not necessarily always the individual. There is a period in human life, however, in which living implies more than sheer passivity. Both biologically and also intellectually and spiritually, creative force appears at a certain age. Man enters into life by living, that is, by overcoming death, setting limits for himself, and following his own path. Initiation is the relatively modern technical word for the rite de passage implied in reaching human maturity.⁶⁷

We are not going to enter here into the peculiarities of the dvija or twice-born and the philosophy of the Hindu samskaras or sacraments. It is enough to remark that initiation in one way or another is a natural and universal phenomenon and that the elaborate texts we are giving belong to a post-Upanishadic period, though their roots are Vedic.

Since one feature of our times is the loss of proper and meaningful rites, the following rituals, though from another epoch, may well be a source of inspiration. We summarize and simplify by reducing to its essentials a ceremony that is still performed today in various ways. It may be divided into the following stages:

The presentation by the acarya (teacher) to the boy of a new garment, symbolizing the new period of his life. Prayer is offered to the Goddess who wove the piece of cloth.

The presentation of the girdle, which represents the Goddess of the spirit of austerity (tapas) and both physical and mental vigor.

The presentation of the sacred thread (or sacrificial cord), which henceforth gives the initiate the right, or rather the power, to take part in the offering of the ritual sacrifice.

The presentation of the deerskin, followed by prayers beseeching the Gods to aid the student in his knowledge of the wisdom embodied in the Vedas.

The presentation of the staff, accompanied by a prayer in which the student is entrusted to the divine hierarchy.

Having entrusted the student to the vigilant protection of the Gods, the acarya accepts him as a disciple. The unity that has to exist between master and pupil is expressed in prayer and in the touching of the heart.⁶⁸

The Savitri mantra, by which the dvitiya janman or second birth is achieved, is now taught to the student.

Next follows the ceremony of the Fire, which sets a seal upon the unity of life which is to exist within the student.

The second section, the ceremony of the departure, consists of a ritual bath taken by the student at the end of his stay (which is generally of several years) with his master.

Before the bath the young man lights the ritual fire. The prayers during the bath, unlike those of the initiation ceremony which contain a note of austerity and renunciation, are full of joy and rejoicing in the good things of life. Then, putting to one side his ascetic garb, the young man arrays himself in fine new clothing, bedecks himself with flowers, puts on a turban, earrings and new footwear. He takes an umbrella in his hand and a bamboo staff.

He is now ready to live to the full his adult life, a life that will take its inspiration from the wisdom of the Scriptures.

Upanayana

New Garment

HGS I, 1, 4, 2

i) After the boy has removed his old attire the teacher clothes him in a new garment that has not yet been washed, saying:
 "May the Goddess who spun, who wove, who measured and fashioned this garment, clothe you with long life! Put on this garment, endowed with life and strength
 Clothe him! By this garment may he attain a life span of a hundred years. Lengthen his days. Brhaspati gave this garment to King Soma to put on
 May you live to old age! Put on this garment. Be a protector of mankind against menacing speeches. Live a hundred years, full of vigor. Clothe yourself in ever increasing wealth."
 PGS II, 2, 7

ii) "As Brhaspati clothed Indra in the garment of immortality, even so I clothe you, with prayer for long life, a good old age, strength, and splendor."
 HGS I, 1, 4, 3

iii) Thus clothed [the boy], the following prayers [are said by the teacher]:
 "For your own well-being you have put on this garment. You have become a protector of your friends against the curses of men. Live a hundred long years. May you be noble, blessed with fullness of life, sharing generously your wealth."

The Girdle

SGS II 1, 28-29

iv) 28. After the teacher has offered sacrifice, they both stand behind the fire, the teacher facing East, the other facing West.
 29. He should initiate him standing.
 II, 2, 1

He ties the girdle from left to right [around the waist of the boy] three times, saying:
 "Here has come to us this blessed girdle, friendly Goddess for our defense against evil words and for the purification of our family, investing us with strength by inhalation and exhalation."

The Sacred Thread

SGS II, 2, 3-12

v) 3. He fixes the sacred thread (saying):
 "You are the sacred thread. With the sacred thread of sacrifice I initiate you."
 4. He takes water in the hollow of his joined hands, the student also joining his hands, and says:
 "What is your name?"
 5. "I am so-and-so, Sir," replies the student.
 6. "Descending from the same patriarchal sages?" asks the teacher.
 7. "Descending from the same patriarchal sages," says the student.
 8. "Declare yourself as a student."
 9. "I am a student, Sir."
 10. Then he sprinkles water three times with his joined hands on the joined hands of the student, saying: "bhur, bhuvah, svah!"
 11. Then, grasping the student's hands, with right hand uppermost, he says:
 12. "By the vivifying power of God Savitri, with the strength of the two Ashvins and with Pushan's aid, I initiate you, so-and-so."

The Deerskin

HGS I, 1, 4, 6

vi) He then puts on him a deerskin as an outer covering and says:

"Put on this skin, noble so-and-so; may the firm strong eye of Mitra, his glorious splendor, powerful and shining, be a token of swiftness and self-control. Let Aditi gird your loins that you may know the Vedas, that you may acquire insight and faith, and, keeping what you have learned, that you may be endowed with goodness and shining purity."

The Staff

PGS II, 2, 11-12

vii) 11. The teacher hands him the staff.

12. The student accepts it saying:

"This staff which is falling from the sky upon the earth I now take up again, with prayer for life, fullness of spirit, and the splendor of Brahman."

The Dedication

SGS II 3, 1-5

viii) 1. The teacher then says:

"Bhaga has grasped your hand,
Savitri has grasped your hand,
Pushan has grasped your hand,
Aryaman has grasped your hand,
Mitra are you now by law,
Agni has become now your master,
along with myself, so-and-so.
Agni, I entrust this student to you,
Indra, I entrust this student to you,
Aditya, I entrust this student to you,
All Gods, I entrust this student to you,
that he may have long life, a blessed posterity,
strength, frequent increase of riches, authority
in all the Vedas, high renown, and happiness."

3. The teacher touches the student's heart saying: "May your pure heart ever hold me dear."

4. He then turns, silently, from right to left.

5. And then, putting his hand with the palm up on the student's heart, he prays in a low voice.

SGS II, 4, 1; 5

ix) 1. "Under my direction I place your heart.

Your mind will follow my mind.

In my word you will rejoice with all your spirit.

May Brhaspati unite you with me.

5. "You are a student. Tend the fire. Drink only water.

Perform your service. Do not sleep in the daytime.

Keep silence till the lighting of the fire."

The Savitri Mantra

SGS II, 5, 1-3; 8-12

x) 1. After a year the teacher recites the Savitri mantra (to the student),

2. or, after three nights,

3. or, immediately.

8. They sit to the north side of the fire.

9. the teacher turning towards the East, the student toward the West.

10. Then the student says: "Recite, Sir!"

11. The teacher, after uttering the syllable OM, invites the student to say the mantra: "Recite the Savitri, Sir."

12. Then he recites for him the Savitri, that verse, "That glorious Savitri," at first verse by verse, then line by line, and finally the whole at one stretch.

The sacred fire

PGS II, 4, 2-3; 8

xi) 2. The student heaps up the fire with his hand, speaking these words:

"O Lord, the glorious one, make me glorious,
as you, glorious Lord, yourself are glorious.

As you, Lord, are custodian of sacrifice for the Gods,
even so may I be custodian of Sacred Knowledge for men."

3. Having sprinkled water around the fire from left to right, he places some wood on the fire and says, standing:

"To the Lord, the great Seer, I have brought some wood.

As you, O Lord, are set ablaze by wood,
so may I be set ablaze by life, intelligence, and vigor,

by means of offspring, cattle, and divine glory.

May my teacher be one whose sons are living.

May I be capable of insight, not obstructive.

May I increase in honor and divine glory.

May I integrate everything into the cosmic dynamism of the sacrifice. Svaha!"

8. He warms his hands at the fire and puts them to his mouth and says:

"You, Lord, are the protector of bodies, Protect my body.

You, Lord, are the giver of life. Grant life to me.

You, Lord, are the giver of vigor. Impart vigor to me.

What is imperfect, Lord, in my body, that restore to fullness.

May the God Savitri give me wisdom,

may the Goddess Sarasvati give me wisdom,

may the two divine Asvins, wreathed with lotus,

give me wisdom."

The End of Student Life

PGS II, 6, 25-26; 29-31

xii) 25. He puts a turban on his head, reciting:

"A young man, well-dressed."

26. He puts on the two earrings, saying:

"An ornament are you. May I have more!"

29. He takes an umbrella in his hand and says:

"You are the protection of Brhaspati;

protect me, then, from evil,

but do not protect me from splendor and renown!"

30. Next he puts on the pair of sandals:

"You are my defense. Defend me from every side."

31. He takes, finally, a bamboo staff, reciting

"From all destructive powers preserve me on all sides."

i) Brhaspati is here a house priest, a priest of Soma. Cf. SB IV, I, 2, 4. The new garment is the kaupina to cover the private parts of the boy who is shortly going to become an adult.

ii) Long life and a good old age: (vitality) ayus and ayutva: dyushe dirghayutvaya balaya varcasa iti. An expression recurrent throughout.

iv) Girdle: mekhala, to hold in position the kaupina made of different fabric according to the family or varna. On the girdle cf. AV VI, 133 (§ II B Antiphon). Cf. also RV III, 8, 4 (§ III 19).

Friendly Goddess: sakha devi.
Inhalation and exhalation: prana and apana.

v) 3. Sacred thread: yajnopavita.
I initiate you: upanayami.

6. Patriarchal sages: rishis.

12. Vivifying power: prasava, inspiration, impulse. Cf. also the word of the acarya (teacher) in PGS II, 2, 21.

iv) Deerskin: ajina, generally an antelope skin, though it denotes the skin of any animal. Cf. SB III, 9, 1, 12 for the clothing with skins. Probably used first as an upper garment and afterward to sit on. It may symbolize the putting on of the virtues of a rishi and the taking of a vow to strive toward that ideal. The Veda here could meaningfully be rendered by "wisdom."

vii) 12. This mantra concerning the staff represents the reintegration of the newly initiated young man into the cosmic order. The danda, the staff, descending from the air upon the ground, symbolizes the axis mundi, the pivot on which the earth revolves (perhaps also lightning).

viii) 1. The last concepts are traditional and have more than a mere moral meaning: dirghayutvaya, suprajastvaya, suvirya, rayasposaya, sarvesham vedanam adhipatyaya, sushlokyaya, svastaye.

3-5. The acarya takes the student in charge, but he dedicates him to the different Gods so as to integrate him into the world of the spirit.

ix) 1. The touching of the heart symbolizes the dedication of the student to the sacred world of learning. There is a crescendo in the words of the master: heart (hrdaya), mind (citta), spirit (manas), you (tva):

mama vrata hrdayam te dadhami
mama cittam anu cittam te astu
mama vacam ekamana jushasva
brhaspatish tva niyunaktu mahyam (iti).

Direction: vrata, lit. that which is chosen, from the root vr-, to choose, meaning generally a vow, i.e., a firm purpose, the following of a vocation, and thus will and also law, rule, obedience, manner of life, direction. Cf. SB XI, 5, 4.

x) 1. For the Savitri mantra, called also Gayatri, cf. RV III, 62, 10 at the beginning of this anthology

12. Verse: pada is the fourth part of a stanza. Two verses form a line or hemistich and four verses the stanza.

xi) Lord: Agni throughout.

3. The great Seer: jatavedas, he who knows beings.

May I be set ablaze: samindhe, may I be inflamed, as you are, O Agni, by ayus (life, vital power, vitality duration of life), medha (wisdom, mental power, intelligence), varcas (vigor, energy, activity) Cf. the illuminating power of fire: splendor, dynamic force.

May I . . . : in the Sanskrit the verb is in the imperative form indicating a firm resolve.

Not obstructive: anirakarishnu, not hindering, not warding off anyone or, as the Commentary adds, not forgetful of what has been taught.

May I integrate everything . . . : annada, lit, eater or enjoyer of food, implying the vital assimilation, i.e., the integration of everything into a new body, which is only possible thanks to the Fire of the divine sacrifice. Therefore the prayer ends with svaha!

xii) 25. Turban: ushnisha.

All this is done after the student has taken the ritual bath with me permission of the guru at whose feet he has been seated for a number of years. Asceticism is never an end in itself. The preceding texts of the same GS speak of his putting on new garments and of placing flowers on his head.

b) Growing into One

Ekibhava

The awakening of human consciousness, like the awakening into life, is a process of sifting and discrimination. Growth

implies and requires differentiation, separation, a self-affirmation by a negation of the other, a looking into oneself, and a concern with what is happening within one's self, all concentrated in the internal process of finding the self that exists precisely because it has been set apart from other selves and thus from the totality.

Initiation has triggered off the process of growth and development. But the very moment one comes of age, the very moment one gets perspective by differentiation and self-identity by separation, the opposite process starts: that of unification, of integration, of reacquiring that unity of which one begins to be aware only when one has lost it. The uphill movement of adult human life begins.

The basic experience here is double: the discovery on the one hand that one is separated from the Ground of Existence, which we can still call God, and, on the other hand the discovery that one is separated from the rest of the world, especially from other human beings. In this latter part of the experience a factor of primary importance is the awareness of sex, through which one is aware that in oneself one is not the totality of the human species, or even a complete specimen, for there is another half which has somehow to be integrated.⁶⁹ Love is born in this moment--the first seed of mind, as the text has said, or the first 'sprout' of mind discovering its own incompleteness and tending toward the integration of its being by uniting itself with a representative of the other half of mankind.

The young man may begin by having a vague and indiscriminated love, but very soon this same love takes shape and form and is even given a name, the name of the partner in life. No initiation is complete until marriage is performed. In a way marriage is the initiation into absolute life, as has been remarked. Individualization was a necessary process, but he who stays there is dead and will not reach human maturity. Human life is relationship, but there is no real relationship unless the related parts have really become parts of a whole, that is, unless the relationship has been somehow fused into a fuller integrated human being.

May All the Divine Powers
Join Our Two Hearts in One
Surya-vivaha

15 This famous hymn describes the marriage of Surya, daughter of the Sun (Surya), with Soma, who here personifies the Moon. This cosmic event is the model and image of every human marriage. The text has two clear-cut parts. The first introduces us to Soma and the second describes practically all the ceremonies of the marriage.

After the stanzas (1-19) describing the marriage of Soma the Moon with Surya the Sun-maiden they are proclaimed an inseparable couple, and the second part of the hymn celebrates the human part of the wedding ceremony. The verses that follow are put into the mouths of the different persons taking part: the priest, the bride, the bridegroom, and so on. The bride is taken solemnly from her father's house to the dwelling of her future husband. The Gandharva is sent away, while those who have arranged the marriage are given a blessing for their journey and enterprises. Then the bride is brought into her new home, where, on her arrival, the marriage is performed. The ceremony of the bridal robe, that of the taking of her hand, the circumambulation of the sacred fire, and the settling into the new home are among the rites described in the second part of this hymn.

Surya-vivaha

RV X, 85, 20-47

20. Mount, O Surya, this gold-hued chariot
fashioned from many-shaped planks of Kimshuka
and Shalmali wood, strong-wheeled, smooth-rolling.
Forth to the world immortal! Prepare
for your husband a happy bridal journey!
21. "This woman has a husband. Go, seek another
a girl in her father's home ripe for marriage"
--I thus addressed Vishvasu in song--
"and thus fulfill the task assigned you."
22. Get up from here, Vishvasu!
We entreat you now with due respect.
Seek another willing girl
and leave the wife alone with her husband.

23. Straight be the paths and thornless on which
our friends will travel to present our suit!
May Aryaman and Bhaga lead us together!
May heaven grant us a stable marriage!

24. I free you now from the fetter of Varuna
with which the kindly Savitri secured you.
Unharm'd within the bosom of Order I set you,
along with your husband, in the world of goodness.

25. I free her from this knot, not from that other
in which I have now well and truly bound her,
in such a way that, mothering fine sons,
she may dwell in happiness, O generous Indra!

26. May the Provident One lead you, holding your hand!
May the two Ashvins transport you on their chariot!
Enter your house as that household's mistress.
May authority in speech ever be yours!

27. May happiness await you with your children!
Watch o'er this house as mistress of the home.
Unite yourself wholly with your husband. Thus
authority in speech till old age will be yours.

28. Dark blue and red is the magic sign
which clings so closely. The kinsmen of the bride
prosper; the husband is bound with bonds.

29. Cast away the dirty robe!
Distribute the treasure among the priests!
This magic sign, assuming feet,
approaches the husband in guise of a wife!

30. Ugly his body, of lurid hue,
if with evil intent the husband
covers his member with the robe of his bride.

31. The diseases that belong to her own people
and follow in the wake of the bridal procession--
these may the worshipful Gods despatch
hence to the place from which they came!

32. May those who lurk to bar the pathway
not find the bridal couple as they go!
May they escape by pleasant paths all harm!
Let all the ill-wishers flee away!

33. Signs of good fortune attend the bride.
Congregate, one and all, to see her!
Wish her joy and return to your homes!

34. It is pungent in odor, sharp, full of barbs.
It resembles poison unfit for eating.
Only he who knows the Surya hymn
is worthy to take the bridal robe.

35. Now it is cut, severed, and divided!
See the beautiful colors of Surya!
Only the priest can purify these.

36. I take your hand in mine for happiness,
that you may reach old age with me as husband.
Bhaga, Savitri, Aryaman, Purandhi,
have given you to be my household's mistress.

37. Rouse her, O Provident One, this bride of many charms,
in whom as in a field men sow the seed.
Let her, desirous, open her thighs,
that we, desirous, may insert the member.

38. To you they bring, first, in bridal procession
this Surya, guiding her steps in circles.
Return her now, O Agni, to her husband
as rightful wife, and grant to her children.

39. Agni has now returned the bride

endowed with splendors and length of life.
 May she live a lengthy span of days
 and may her husband live a hundred autumns!
 40. This woman was first acquired by Soma.
 Next the Gandharva was her guardian.
 To Agni, third, was she presented in marriage.
 Her fourth husband is born of a woman.
 41. Thus Soma passed her on to the Gandarva
 and he in turn presented her to Agni.
 Agni has given to me wealth and sons;
 it is he who has given me this my wife.
 42. Dwell in this home; never be parted!
 Enjoy the full duration of your days,
 with sons and grandsons playing to the end,
 rejoicing in your home to your heart's content.
 43. May Prajapati grant to us an issue,
 Aryaman keep us till death in holy marriage!
 Free from ill omens, enter the home
 of your husband. Bring blessing to both humans and cattle.
 44. Not evil-eyed nor harmful to your husband,
 kind to dumb beasts, radiant, gentle-hearted;
 pleasing, beloved by the Gods, bring forth heroes.
 To menfolk and beasts alike bring blessing.
 45. Bless now this bride, O bounteous Lord,
 cheering her heart with the gift of brave sons.
 Grant her ten sons; her husband make the eleventh!
 46. Act like a queen to your husband's father,
 to your husband's mother likewise, and his sister.
 To all your husband's brothers be queen.
 47. May all the divine Powers together with the Waters
 join our two hearts in one! May the Messenger,
 the Creator, and Holy Obedience unite us!

1. Cf. § II 16 Introduction.

2-19. Independent part of the hymn describing the relations between Surya and Soma, generally taken as a cosmic marriage.

20. Cf. AV XIV, 1 and XIV, 2, wedding hymns where several verses of RV X, 85 have been incorporated with some variations.

Kimshuka and Shalmali: two kinds of wood.

21. Vishvasu, a Gandharva, is the spirit who "possesses" the girl before her marriage and who has to be sent away in order to give place to the husband.

24. Within the bosom of Order: *rtasya yonau*.
 In the world of goodness: *sukrtasya loke*, world of noble conduct.

26. The Provident One: Pushan, nourisher of all beings, protector, from push-, to nourish. cf. v. 37.

Ashvins: one could render: may the two Angels . . .

May authority in speech, etc.: *vashini tvam vidatham a vadasi*: *vidatha*, knowledge given to others, instruction. Power to address the assembly, freedom of speech, right to "take the floor." Cf. the same expression in v. 27 *vidatham a vad-*: to impart knowledge, give instruction (in a community or congregation, especially during the observance of festival or religious rites).

27. Lit. closely unite your body.

28. Dark blue and red: a reference to the blood of menstruation (see also v. 29).
 The husband is bound . . . : *patir bandheshu badhyate*. This may mean that the "spell" of the bride's "impurity" is now transferred from her parents to her husband, or else it is a general reference to the marital bond (see also v. 29).

29. Distribute . . . : the gifts for the priests performing the ceremony.
30. The last stanzas seem to refer to different magical practices.
31. All the dangers are prayed away.
33. Signs of good fortune: sumangali. to see a bride is auspicious (just as, even today, it is "inauspicious" to see a widow).
Joy: saubhagya, good luck.
- 34 & 35. Again refer to the bridal robe. which has some magical property.
35. Surya: i.e., the bride. The colors may again refer to the dirty robe of v. 28 which is to be ritually purified .
37. The metaphor is interesting: the bride is likened to the field (kshetra), and the act of placing the seed is thus generalized.
40. Born of a woman: one of human birth. As the marriage between Surya and Soma is the archetype of any marriage, Soma is the first husband of every bride. The Gandharva is the guardian of virginity and is connected with female fertility, and Agni is the presiding deity of every marriage ceremony. The human bridegroom receives his bride therefore from these Gods.
43. Prajapati is invoked for offspring. Aryaman is the God of friendship whose task is to take constant care of the unity of the married couple.
45. Lord: Indra.
47. Divine Powers: vishvedevah.
Messenger: Matarishvan.
Creator: Dhatr, supporter, establisher (sometimes an epithet of Indra).
Holy Obedience: Deshtri. Cf. Sayana on PGS 1, 4, I4 who calls Deshtri: datri phalanam (giver of fruits).
I Am He, You Are She
Amo 'ham asmi sa tvam

16 It is significant that two long and very important hymns on the subject of human marriage should both begin with a stanza that uses cosmic and metaphysical terms to indicate the central place in the entire economy of the universe accorded to the man-woman union:

By Truth is the Earth supported,
by the Sun is the Heaven supported;
by Cosmic Order the Adityas stand
and Soma is set upon the Sky.⁷⁰

Man and woman are the symbol of all cosmic polarities and an example of the same polarity. Man and woman do not belong to only one of the two poles; they represent cosmic polarity in toto.

Marriage is here not seen as a more or less free legal contract between two adults. Marriage is the human counterpart of or, more precisely, one of the ways of human participation in the creative tension of dualities (and also the overcoming of them) which constitutes the pattern of the whole of reality. Marriage is a sacrifice.⁷¹ Thus a happy marriage will presumably not be one that takes into account two perhaps unpredictable psychological characters and studies their possible matching together, but one that is in accordance with the cosmic harmony of the universe. What is done in the darkness of night is witnessed by the stars as onlookers and guardians of universal order. Heaven and Earth can meet only at the horizon, light and darkness only in the twilight of morning or of evening; there is no song without its corresponding verse and no verse without its proper tune. Man alone, or woman alone, is not yet a person; nor, however, are man and woman mere individuals. They are halves only, each of them representative of the existential split in the existing order of the world and of the desire to overcome that split by a confidence not so much in the individual goodwill of the partner as in the unvarying well-structured pattern of the universe. Cosmic faith is required for the leap into married life. It is all a question of discovering It by tuning into that cosmic harmony, though there is no reason, of course, why psychological laws should not be taken into consideration also. There is more joy among the stars because of a well-performed human wedding than for a thousand other harmonies of the heavenly spheres. The selection that follows is taken from the actual performance of the rite.

Amo 'ham asmi sa tvam

AV VII, 36-37

i) 36. Sweet be the glances we exchange,
our faces showing true concord.
Enshrine me in your heart and let
one spirit dwell within us.
37. I wrap around you this my robe
which came to me from Manu,
so that you may be wholly mine
and never seek another.
AV XIV, 1, 17; 42

ii) 17. We offer praise to the Friend,
the kindly marriage arranger.
Like one who plucks a cucumber
I release you from here, not from yonder.
42. Love, children, happiness, and wealth
will come to answer your hopes.
Devoted to your husband's needs,
be girded for immortality!
AV XIV 2, 64; 71

iii) 64. Unite, O Lord, this couple
like a pair of Cakravakas.
May they surrounded by children be,
living both long and happily.
71. I am He, you are She,
I am Song, you are Verse,
I am Heaven, you are Earth.
We two shall here together dwell,
becoming parents of children.

i) 36. Lit our eyes be of honey-aspect.

37. The garment given by Manu may be the brides hair. according to some interpreters. Cf. RV X, 85, 30 (§ II 1S).

ii) 17. The Friend: Aryaman, a minor Vedic divinity (one of the eight sons of Adib according to TB I, 1, 9, 1), though he is mentioned about a hundred times, sometimes in the sense of comrade, groomsman, friend.

42. Devoted to: anuvrata, adapting yourself or following (your husband's) vocation, vows; obedient or faithful to . . . vrata, vow.

iii) 64. Cakravakas: birds famous for their faithful love; they are a symbol for an ideal married life (cf. also later Sanskrit literature).

71. I am He, you are She: amo 'ham asmi sa tvam. Lit. This I am, that you are. This text is also given in BU VI, 4, 20. Cf. for the same idea similarly expressed, AB VIII, 27 (XL, 4); SB, XIV, 1, 4, 16; TB III, 7, 1, 9; HGS I, 6, 20, 2; PGS I, 6, 3; AGS I, 7, 6; SGS I, 13, 4; etc.

The Rite
Vivaha

17 Among the samskaras or sacraments of Vedic origin marriage is undoubtedly the most fully elaborated and also the most important. We give here only a selection from the Grhya Sutras. The Grhya Sutras continue and elaborate the Vedic tradition, following perhaps the earlier Mantra Brahmana which gives a marriage rite in its entirety.

The young man, after finishing his period of formation, returns to his family. Now is the time when, with the concurrence of

his parents and relatives, guided by their common sense as well as by ritualistic tradition, he will marry a wife, settle down, and hope for a long life and many stalwart sons.

Our first short texts begin by describing the ceremony of the holding of the hand of the bride by the bridegroom as a symbol of protection. The bridegroom next requests the bride to tread upon a stone, which symbolizes steadfastness, stability, strength of character--all virtues that the bride as well as the bridegroom should show. Then, generally, comes the lighting of Agni, the sacred Fire, when the appropriate offerings are made to him, accompanied by prayers.

Then the bride scatters parched grain with a prayer for the long life of her husband and her family, while after further prayers the bridegroom in his turn pours the grain into the hands of the girl and then offers it to the fire. After the offering of parched grain the couple goes around the fire while the husband prays to Agni; the rite of the fried grain is repeated and husband and wife go around the fire three times.

An impressive part of the ceremony, though found first only in the Mahabharata, is the seven steps taken by the bride, each of them representing a virtue and a blessing. The bridegroom now touches the heart of the bride, saying: "Let your heart become my heart and your mind my mind."⁷² Then after still more prayers the wedded couple, followed by parents and guests, set out for the new home, the nuptial fire being carried in a receptacle and not allowed to go out. Once arrived at their new abode, the couple fulfill certain rites and then keep silence until nightfall. When night has fallen they go out under the open sky to gaze upon the polestar which they proceed to worship. The husband extols the polestar, pointing it out to the wife as a model of stability.

As to the social status of women in Vedic times, we may remark that, although the present-day form of theoretical equality between men and women was inconceivable, woman's position was by no means one of slavish submission to masculine tyranny. A deterioration took place later through an exaggeration of the Vedic view that to serve the husband was to serve God according to the custom of the patideva, that is, of considering pati, the husband, as the God, deva, for his wife.

Vivaha

The Grasping of the Hand

HGS I, 6, 20, 1

i) Himself facing the East while she faces the West [or vice versa], the bridegroom takes the bride's hand. . .
 "O Sarasvati, gracious one, rich in offspring,
 you whom we hymn first of all the Gods,
 may you prosper this marriage."
 "I seize your hand."

The Treading on the Stone

SGS I, 13, 11-12

ii) 11. The bridegroom says the words while she stands up:
 "Come, beautiful one!"
 12. And lets her put the tip of the right foot on the stone, saying:
 "Come, step on the stone; be strong like a stone.
 Resist the enemies; overcome those who attack you."

The Oblation of Parched Grain

HGS I, 6, 20, 3-4

iii) 3. The bridegroom pours some parched grain into the bride's joined palms:
 "This grain I spill.
 May it bring to me well-being
 and unite you to me.

May Agni hear us."

4. He then causes the bride to spill the grain into the fire, saying:
 "This woman, scattering grain into the fire, prays:
 Blessings on my husband.
 May my relatives be prosperous. Svaha!"

The Circumambulation of the Fire

PGS I, 7, 3-6.

iv) 3. Then they walk around [the fire], the bridegroom repeating:

"First now they bring to you in bridal procession
 this Surya, guiding her steps in circular motion.
 Return her now, O Agni, to her husband
 as rightful wife, with hope of children to come."

4. Then [the entire rite is repeated] twice more, beginning with [the rite of] the fried grain.

5. At the fourth round she pours [into the fire] all the fried grain from the mouth of the winnowing basket saying:
 "To Bhaga svaha!"

6. After the three rounds are performed, and having sacrificed the oblation
 to Prajapati [follows the next rite].

The Seven Steps

SGS I, 14, 5-6

v) While the bride takes seven steps to the Northeast [the bridegroom sings the following verses]:

"One Step for Vigor,
 Two Steps for Vitality,
 Three Steps for Prosperity,
 Four Steps for Happiness,
 Five Steps for Cattle,
 Six Steps for Seasons,
 Seven Steps for Friendship.
 To me be devoted."
 HGS I, 6, 21, 2

vi) After the seventh step he makes her remain where she is and says:

"With seven steps we become friends.
 Let me reach your friendship.
 Let me not be severed from your friendship.
 Let your friendship not be severed from me."

Touching the Heart

PGS I, 8, 8

vii) He then over her right shoulder touches her heart saying:

"I hold your heart in serving fellowship,
 your mind follows my mind.
 In my word you rejoice with all your heart.
 You are joined to me by the Lord of all creatures."

The Departure

HGS I, 7, 22, 1-3; 6; 10

viii) 1. She then abandons her father's house; they let her depart or be taken away from it.

2. They carry behind [the couple] the sacred fire, having put it [into a vessel].

3. They should keep the fire constantly alight.
 6. When [she] reaches his house, he says:
 "Enter with your right foot.
 Do not remain outside."
 10. They sit in silence until the stars are visible.

Looking at the Polestar

PGS I, 8, 19

ix) After sunset he lets her look at the polar star, [saying]:
 "You are firm and I see you.
 Be firm with me, O flourishing one!
 Brhaspati has given you to me,
 so live with me a hundred years
 bearing children by me, your husband."

i) The grasping of the hand: pani-grahana. The ceremony generally commences after the lighting of the sacrificial fire. The so-called promise of marriage follows and the recitation of RV X, 85 (cf. v. 36 § II, 15). Cf. also RV X, 18, 8 (§ V 15) for the grasping of the hand. The husband is sometimes called a hastagrabha, the one who holds the hand.

ii) The treading on the stone: ashmarohana. Cf. HGS I, 6, 19, 8: etc.

iii) The oblation of parched grain: lajahoma. Cf. SGS I, 14, 1; etc.

iv) Walk around: parikram-, the circumambulation of the Fire: agni-pradakshina. Cf. HGS I, 6, 20, 5, etc.; SGS I, 13, 13.

3. The verse is taken from RV X, 85, 38 (§ II 15).

5 Mouth of the winnowing basket: shurpa-kushtaya.

6 After. . . :now follow the seven steps, saptapadi.

v) The seven steps: saptapadi. The last line is to be found only in PGS I, 8, 1, which is the same as the given text plus this last line. The root of "friendship," sac-, implies equality rather than submission. The last line undoubtedly reflects male preeminence. The literal words for the seven steps are: sap, juice, wealth, comfort, cattle, seasons, friend. HGS I, 6, 21, 1 has a little more elaborated version, adding after each step: "May Visnu go after you." The seven steps rite is followed by the murdhabhisheka or the sprinkling of water on the heads of the bridegroom and the bride (AGS I, 7, 20; SGS I, 14, 9) or on the head of the bride only (PGS I, 8, 5).

vii) Touching the heart: hrdayasparsha.

Serving fellowship: vrata, service, obedience, will, in this context, whereas in the RV it means ordinance, law, rule. It has later the meaning of vow (promise, resolution).

Your mind . . . :cittam anucittam.

Lord of all creatures: Prajapati. Cf. BGS I, 4, 1, given in the Introduction.

ix) Looking at the polestar: dhruvadarshana.

Husband and Wife

Dampati

18 Marriage is a cosmic act that involves the whole universe and reflects the mode of operation of the entire world. Yet the Cosmic Revelation does not forget to stress time and again that it is also the daily common life of a couple within the simple framework of a village household.

Many hymns scattered here and there, as we shall have an opportunity to observe, describe the household life of a married couple, where a rather striking equality between husband and wife is emphasized. To complete our picture of marriage, we adduce a simple, brief example. The very title of this hymn by its use of the dual form of dampati (householder, lord of the

house) suggests a certain equality between husband and wife.

Dampati

RV VIII 31, 5-9

5. Husband and wife in sweet accord
give milk oblations to the Gods
and press and strain the Soma.
6. They acquire a plenteous store of food.
they come united to the altar.
Their rewards never lessen.
7. They do not wander from the Gods
or seek to hide their favors granted.
Thus they acquire great glory.
8. With sons and daughters at their side
they live a good long span of years,
both decked with precious gold.
9. Devoted to sacrifice, gathering wealth,
they serve the Immortal and honor the Gods,
united in mutual love.

1-4. Speak about the effect of the sacrifice.

5. Husband and wife in sweet accord: ya dampah samanasa, lit. these lords of the household as with one mind.
Gods: devah.

6. Altar: lit. sacred grass.
The last line could also be rendered, "Their strength never fails." There is a sacrificial tone in the whole stanza.

10-18. Invoke various deities but are not related to married life.



C. THE WORLD OF MAN

Manushyaloka

The seers in the beginning, desiring the excellent and searching
the heavens, embarked upon fervor and consecration.
Thence were born energy, force, and kingship.
Let the Gods bestow them upon this man!

AV XIX, 41, 1

Man is not an individual but a person; in other words, he is not an isolated being but a constitutive relationship. This relatedness exists not only between Man and God but also between Man and his fellowman. To manushyata, humanity, manushyaloka, the human world, is both a complement and often a supplement. There is no human life, no true humanness, in disjunction from the world of Man. Man is Man in and with his environment, and this environment is composed not only

of the world of humans. It is also the world of things, the universe that surrounds him and in and with which he toils. Man is not reduced to nakedness in his dealings with his fellowmen. He is "clothed" with a whole world of utensils and instruments, for human relationships involve an exchange of human worlds. There is no man without a house, no woman without a dowry, and no citizen without weapons or utensils, be they ploughs, needles, or pen and parchment. All this, however, is not "given"; it is made, fabricated, conquered, and even created. The tissue of Man's life is no longer nature but culture.

Our antiphon gives magnificent expression to the integrated human experience. The first two lines affirm that this ideal of perfect bliss and human well-being has haunted Man since the beginning, though only the poet-sages whose minds and hearts were directed heavenward toward the light have been able to articulate it. The two key words for this aspiration are tapas, concentration, fervor, ardor, austerity, penance, and diksha, consecration, initiation, religious preparation, dedication. Freedom and sovereignty, that is, mastery over nature, are reached primarily by means of these two activities: tapas and diksha. We are encountering here a fundamental human attitude toward the world. Man is here on earth not to "work" on nature, to conquer it, and thus to reign over it, but to consecrate it, to "concentrate" it, and thus to attain strength and sovereignty.

Tapas and diksha often appear together in the shruti.⁷³ and the latter is even said to be the womb of the former.⁷⁴ In the womb of consecration, that is, in the act of offering and sanctifying, takes place the transformation of reality, which is the function of tapas. The activity of tapas effects an increase in ontic reality, a concentration in the density of the real. By means of Man's integral effort reality is changed; it is no longer diluted and amorphous, but it acquires shape, weight, and relevance. Moreover, by this act "things" become, are incorporated into, Man's world. The attitude of Vedic Man toward the universe is a fundamentally religious attitude, or rather an attitude of communion and consecration. In fact, diksha does not refer only to the ceremony of consecrating an altar or a temple, or to the preparatory rite for a sacrifice; it means primarily that act by which the "thing" is converted into a bit of "world," or rather into "human world," into a living relationship with, and indeed part and parcel of, Man. Consecration transforms a thing into "person;" it personifies. A consecrated thing is no longer an excommunicated lifeless "object" but it is incorporated; that is, it is made one body together with the rest of the living community of real persons. It is by tapas and diksha that Man enters into relationship with, or rather constructs, his world. The religious ceremonies connected with all human activities by no means distract Man from dedicating himself to these activities; on the contrary, they allow him to assimilate them in such a way as to build a higher unity, which integrates "individual" and "thing" into a living person.

The whole congregation of Gods, say the two last lines of our verse, will readily yield to the man practicing tapas after his diksha. He dominates nature not by sheer power but by harmonious collaboration with the lords of nature, who, having witnessed within him this process of dedication and concentration, incline themselves favorably toward him.

This is the prevailing mood of the following text, and other similar texts. The attention they give to the particular subjects of human activity does not detract from their general attitude, which regards human activities as being undertaken with only one ultimate aim, namely, that of making Man's world the habitat of the Gods, also of converting the three worlds into one.

a) Knowing the Earth Bhumi matr

Food is given by God and possesses deep symbolic meaning, as we have seen in an earlier section. Food comes, certainly, from nature, and the trees seem almost to drop their fruits into our laps, but Man's relation both with the Divine and with the Earth is not one of pure passivity. Man has a very concrete and terrestrial way of collaborating both with God and with the world, and this is his involvement in the process of producing food. Man is learning to work with nature, to till the earth, and to grow his own food: he is learning to know the Earth as well as to know God.

The relationship between Man and nature is not a technical one, in either a technocratic or a scientific sense; it is not a relationship of dominion or of exploitation, as if nature were itself devoid of anything human and were there only to furnish Man with the possibility of increasing his standard and quality of life. It is rather a relationship of partnership and collaboration. Just as a cow is thankful if human hands relieve her of the burden of her extra milk, so the earth is happy to be worked by Man. To give a more complete picture of the situation, we should broaden this simile so as to include the gratitude of the bull for the "work" done on the cow. To till the earth is not only to help her to produce more and to reach her own plenitude; it is also to collaborate with the Gods in the overall action of sacrifice, to help promote the dynamism of the world and the continuance of life. It is to participate actively in that "commerce," that cosmic and divine exchange, of which the mystery of food has already provided us with an insight.⁷⁵

Every knowledge has its sacred aspect, but the knowledge of the earth--because of its integral character--has a special sacredness of its own, perhaps because in regard to the earth the different dimensions of knowledge cannot be separated one

from another, nor can there exist a merely theoretical knowledge divorced from the practical and existential one. There is no need to elaborate here on fertility cults or on religious practices connected with the relationship of Man with nature, such as found expression mainly in the agricultural golden age of human civilization.

Our first hymn is addressed to the Lord of the field, kshetrapati. Kshetra is a word that later acquires a long history in a more philosophical and moral sense, as for example in the very beginning of the Gita.⁷⁶ This hymn begs the Lord of the field to watch over the ploughman's toil and to cause the earth to produce bountifully. It concludes with an invocation to the God of rain: "May Parjanya bedew the earth with honey and water!" Here the whole of human life is seen placed under divine protection. The text from the Atharva Veda (AV III, 17) which follows is no less explicit, and shows man's relation with the riches of nature. It is a prayer that the ploughing and the sowing of seed may be blessed with an ample harvest. Mention is made of corn (the crop most cultivated at that time) and of the horse, the symbol of wealth.

When the tilling of the soil is over, then comes the Harvest Song and the prayer for a bountiful Harvest (AV III, 24; AV VI, 142). Men pray for an abundance, even for a superfluity, of corn which is compared with a spring gushing forth in a thousand streams and yet remaining inexhaustible. The last verse of Atharva Veda III, 24 mentions Reaping and Garnering as the two distributors or attendants of Prajapati, the Lord of creation, while the second verse powerfully personifies the Deity of Reaping.

A rather intriguing symbolism of numbers is apparent in this hymn. Verse 1 mentions one thousand as signifying infinity, verse 3 plays on the number five, whereas verses 4 and 5 use again one hundred and one thousand. Verse 6 speaks of three and four, which perhaps could mean 3/12 and 4/12 (or smaller portions) so as to allow for the "amplest" part of the corn to be given, probably, to the owner of the field.

To pray for a good harvest and corn in plenty would be meaningless if there was not a place, a home, or granary, where the product of the harvest could be kept and from which Man could obtain his daily bread. But even in a well-kept home the corn may be damaged by a violent storm. Therefore, the prayer for security and prosperity (AV VI, 79) is addressed to the Lord of the clouds; he is asked, with utter confidence, not only to protect the stores of the house but also to grant abundance to the family.

The hymn addressed to Rain (RV V, 83) has a beauty of its own and expresses most forcefully the type of relationship we try to describe at the beginning of this introduction. Once Man has done everything in order that the earth may yield its fruit, what is still lacking? The blessings of God, says almost every agricultural civilization. Thus it is Parjanya, the personification of rain, the God of the waters from heaven, who is here invoked. This divinity is likened to a bull whose vitalizing activity will fertilize the earth and its plants.

The marvelous descriptions of the rain contain a wealth of human-cosmic warmth which we today may call poetic imagery: banked-up clouds, rumblings of thunder, the overcast sky, the roaring wind, lightning flashes, Oh joy! the welcome rain, which spills over from the chariot of Parjanya on the earth wide open to receive it, into the pools where the cattle come to quench their thirst. Parjanya, the bringer of fertility, life, and growth is often called "Father." The rain, however, must not be too heavy and too prolonged or there will be risk of flooding. So when the earth has drunk her fill, Parjanya is begged to hold back the rain and earn Men's gratitude once more.

It is not from utilitarian motives that Men praise and glorify the forest (RV X, 146) as the reservoir for earth and Men or as the ecological redresser of Men's excessive activism. The forest, which may simultaneously both frighten and allure Man, is regarded by him as an intimate part of his life and experience. The hymn portrays in a striking fashion the nightlife of the earth's densely wooded areas, when insects are humming, and that teeming wildlife is active which the poet describes as "creaking like a cart;" it depicts the lonely forest from which one can hear the sounds of Man in the distance, and the hospitable forest which is always scented and generous in its provision of food and restful hiding places. The hymn is dedicated to Aranyani, the Sprite of the Forest.

Lord of the Field
Kshetrapati

19

RV IV 57

1. We, with the Lord of the Field as our friend

and helper, obtain for our cattle and horses
 food in plenty, that they may be sleek and well-fed.
 May he graciously grant us his favor!
 2. O Lord of the Field, like a cow yielding milk,
 pour forth for us copious rivers of sweetness,
 dripping honey like nectar and pure as pure ghee.
 May the Lords of the Law grant us mercy!
 3. Sweet be the plants for us, sweet be the heavens,
 sweet be the waters and the air of the sky!
 May the Lord of the Field show us honey like sweetness,
 May we follow his furrow unharmed!
 4. In contentment may men and oxen both plough,
 in contentment the plough cleave the furrow,
 in contentment the yoke be securely attached
 and the ploughman urge on his oxen!
 5. Ploughshare and Plough, to our chant be propitious!
 Take of the milk you have made in heaven
 and let it fall here on this earth!
 6. Auspicious Furrow, we venerate you.
 We pray you, come near us to prosper and bless
 and bring us abundant harvests.
 7. May Indra draw the Furrow, may Pushan
 guide well its course! May she yield us milk
 in each succeeding year!
 8. In contentment may the ploughshare turn up the sod,
 in contentment the ploughman follow the oxen,
 celestial Rain pour down honey and water.
 Ploughshare and Plough, grant us joy!

1. Lord of the Field: kshetrapati, God of the ploughshare and of happiness. Cf. AV III, 17, 5 (§ II 20) and Sayana's commentary.

2. Lords of the Law: rtasya patayah.

3. Sweet: lit. rich in honey.

4. In contentment: lit. for (man's) happiness.

5. Ploughshare: shuna.
 Plough: sira.

6. Auspicious Furrow: sita. Sita is compared with the milk cow and is called Indrapatni. In the Ramayana Sita is said to have sprung from a furrow made by Janaka while he was ploughing the ground in preparation for a sacrifice for obtaining progeny. Cf. AV, III, 17, 4 (§ II 20) which repeats this verse.

7. Perhaps shuna and sira are Indra (Rama) and Pushan guiding and guarding sita from every side. Cf. also TB II,5,9,2.

8. Celestial Rain: Parjanya, the God of rain.
 A Harvest Blessing
 Krshi

20

AV III,17, 1-4; 8-9

1. Skillful men make ready the ploughs
 and the yokes for the oxen; those who are wise
 offer a prayer to the Gods for favor.

2. Harness the plough, then, yoke the stout oxen;
 here in the furrow prepared sow the seed.
 O Gods, may our ears of corn be abundant!
 May the grain in due season fall before our sickles!

3. May the blade of the plough, the smooth-handled plough,
 cleaving well the furrow, produce for our joy
 much cattle and sheep, a horse for a chariot, a handsome girl!

4. May Indra guide the Furrow, may Pushan guard it
 on every side; may the Furrow, like a milch cow,
 yield to us copiously year after year!

8. O blessed Furrow, we bring you our homage.
 Turn your face to us; grant us your favor
 and bear fruits for us abundantly.

9. The Furrow is steeped in ghee and honey.
 She is blessed by all Gods. Channel hither, O Furrow,
 your milky streams, rich in vigor and oil.

1. Skillful men: kavayah, skillful artists. "Skilled artistry" is applicable to the practice of agriculture also.

4. Cf. RV IV, 57, 7 (§ II 19).

Furrow: sita. There is a tendency to divinize the furrow in this hymn (w. 8-9). All the action of the farmer have a symbolic meaning. Cf notes on preceding hymn.

5-8. Belong to RV IV, 57.

5. Cf. § II 19(v.8).

6. Cf. ibid. (v. 4).

7. Cf. ibid. (v. 5).

8. Cf. ibid.(v. 6), the same text in a different translation.

As a Spring Gushes Forth
 in a Thousand Streams
 Samrddhiprapti

21

AV III, 24

1. Brimful of sweetness is the grain,
 brimful of sweetness are my words;
 when everything is a thousand times sweet,
 how can I not prosper?

2. I know one who is brimful of sweetness,
 the one who has given abundant corn,
 the God whose name is Reaper-God;
 him we invoke with our song.
 He dwells in the home of even the lowly
 who are debarred from sacrifice.
 The God whose name is Reaper-God,
 him we invoke with our song.

3. Let the five directions and races of men
 bring to our doors prosperity,
 as after the rains (in a swollen flood)
 a river carries down driftwood.

4. As a spring gushes forth in a hundred, a thousand,
 streams, and yet stays inexhaustible,
 so in a thousand streams may our corn

flow inexhaustibly!

5. Reap, you workers, one hundred hands,
garner, you workers, one thousand hands!
Gather in the bounteous corn that is cut
or still waits on the stalk.

6. Three measures I apportion to the Spirits,
four measures to the mistress of the house,
while you I touch with the amplest measure
(of all that the field has yielded).

7. Reaper and Garnerer are your two
distributors, O Lord of creation.
May they convey hither an ample store
of riches never decreasing!

1. Brimful of sweetness: lit. rich in milk.

2. The God whose name is Reaper-God: sambhrtva nama yo devah, the "collector."
Debarred from sacrifice: lit. who do not sacrifice: referring to the non-Brahmins, the working people.

5. Lit. hundred-handed and thousand-handed, as if referring :o groups of fifty and five hundred workers.

6. Spirits: Gandharvas. Some have interpreted the mistress of the house as referring to the Apsarases, the female counterparts of the male Gandharvas.

7. Lord of creation: Prajapati
For a Bountiful Harvest
Bahur bhava, yava

22

AV VI, 142

1. Spring up, become fair, be distended, O barley,
with your own increase!

Burst all vessels designed to contain you!
May lightning not smite you
in that place where we make our appeal to you.

2. In response, divine barley, to our invocation,
rise up there tall as the sky, inexhaustible
as the boundless sea!

3. May those who tend you prove inexhaustible,
inexhaustible their barns,
inexhaustible those who offer you in sacrifice
and those who consume you!

3. Inexhaustible: akshita, undecaying, imperishable.
For Prosperity at Home
Samsphana

23

AV VI, 79

1. May the Lord of the clouds protect our stores,
piled high in our homes!

2. May the Lord of the clouds give us vitality in our homes,
granting goods and riches!

3. O generous God, Lord of thousandfold Abundance

impart to us now a share of Abundance;
may we have a share in prosperity!

1. Lord of the clouds: nabhaspati.

Stores: samsphana, nourishment, bread.

2. Vitality: urjas, vigor, sap, fatness, invigorating drink.

3. Abundance: samsphana, growing fat, prosperity.

You Have Poured Down the Rain

Parjanya

24

RV V, 83

1. Invoke with this song the powerful God,
renowned Parjanya; win him by your worship.

Like a bellowing bull with quickening streams
he deposits a seed of life in the plants.

2. He flattens the trees and smites the demons;
the whole world fears his powerful stroke.
Even the innocent flee from this God's strength,
when Parjanya thundering strikes the wicked.

3. Like a driver urging with a whip his horses
we see him driving his heralds of storm.
From afar is heard the roaring of the lion
when Parjanya makes the heavy rain clouds.

4. The winds burst forth, the lightnings flash,
the plants shoot up, the heavens stream,
the sap surges up in every stem,
when Parjanya quickens the earth with his seed.

5. You at whose bidding the earth bows low,
you at whose bidding the hooved creatures scamper,
you at whose bidding flowers don various colors
and shapes, O Parjanya, grant us protection!

6. Gladden us, O Storm-Gods, with rain from heaven;
may the Stallion emit his life-producing flow!
Bring here your thundering, pour forth your rain floods.
You are Divine, our heavenly Father!

7. Thunder and roar! Release the seed.
Circle in your chariot heavy-laden with rain.
Tip downward your waterskin duly loosened.
Level the high places, fill in the hollows!

8. Draw the great vessel up, let it spill over,
let the floodwaters burst forth and flow far.
Saturate both heaven and earth with fatness;
give to the cattle fair thirst-quenching pools.

9. When, O Parjanya, roaring in fury
and thundering loudly you smite the wicked,
then the whole universe shouts for joy
and everything that is on earth rejoices.

10. You have poured down the rain; now withhold it, we pray you!
You have made the deserts fit for travel.
To serve as food you have made the plants flourish.
Receive from us in return grateful praise!

4. Cf. AV XII, 1, 12(§ I 19).

5. At whose bidding: yasya vrata.

6. Storm-Gods: Maruts.
Stallion: ie., Parjanya, the rain.
Divine: Asura.

8. Vessel: kosha, i.e., for the storage of rain.
Fatness: ghrta, symbol of fertility.

10. From us: lit. mom the creatures.
Praise: manisha, thought, prayer.
Sprite of the Forest
Aranyani

25

RV X, 146

1. Sprite of the Forest, Sprite of the Forest,
slipping so quietly away,
how is it that you avoid people's dwellings?
Have you no fear all alone?
2. When the cicada emits his shrill notes
and the grasshopper is his accompanist,
it's the Sprite of the Forest they hail with their praises,
as with cymbals clashing in profession.
3. Cows seem to loom up yonder at pasture,
what looks like a dwelling appears.
Is that a cart with creaking wheels?
The Sprite of the Forest passes!
4. Hark! there a man is calling a cow,
another is felling a tree.
At evening the guest of the Sprite of the woods
fancies he hears someone scream!
5. The Sprite of the Forest never slays,
unless one approaches in fury.
One may eat at will of her luscious fruits
and rest in her shade at one's pleasure.
6. Adorned with fragrant perfumes and balms,
she needs not to toil for her food.
Mother of untamed forest beasts,
Sprite of the wood, I salute you!

1. Sprite of the Forest: aranyani, the "wife" of aranya (the forest), overseer of the woods.

4. Guest of the Sprite of the woods: i.e., the forest dweller.
b) Human Work
Karman

A refreshing feature of the Vedic way of life, as we have already seen, is its healthy combination of the sacred and the secular. The intuitions underlying the concept of sacrifice demonstrate this to the full. Sacrifice is sacred, for it effects a breakthrough from the human plane to the divine and leads us to a new dimension of human existence; but it is also secular, for it requires human collaboration and engages the whole world in its performance. The three hymns we present in this subsection emphasize this idea and, though coming from differing backgrounds, all refer to sacrifice. The first one, RV X, 101, is a hymn addressed to the priests who offer the Soma-juice. It does not devote itself, as one might expect, to praise of the sacred office of the priest and to a detailed account of the various rites he must piously perform, but to a vivid and realistic description of the sacrifice in full swing with its atmosphere of busy activity, the various ritual acts being coordinated with careful precision.

At daybreak the sacred fire is lit and then, to use the accustomed phrase, the sacrifice is "set out," "stretched," just as threads may be set out on a loom. Sacrifice is next compared to a boat that transports the sacrificer to the opposite, that is, the heavenly, shore. Verses 3 and 4 compare sacrifice to ploughing. It is the priests who, being knowledgeable in the art of winning divine favor, yoke the ploughs. Verse 5 alludes in some detail to Soma, the "fount unfailing." Verse 7 goes on to compare sacrifice to a chariot and its ritual performance to a race course, while further mention is also made of the pressing stones which, under this new symbolism, become the chariot wheels. Verse 9 is a prayer that the divinity may be pleased to lend his ear, show himself favorable to the one who offers sacrifice, and shower abundant blessings upon him, "like milk from a bountiful cow."

The second hymn, which we have entitled "The Diverse Callings of Men," is dedicated to Soma and seems to be in a humorous vein. The third refers to the controversial purushamedha or human sacrifice, whether performed actually or symbolically. All three give a vivid picture of the highly organized Vedic society and the performance within it of a wide range of human activities.

There is no question here of presenting any human age of the past as a model for the present, nor of extolling the past to the detriment of the present. The importance lies in our observing how past ages have managed to deal with the human condition in the most variegated situations and to what extent a certain degree of specialization has enhanced or harmed human harmony and wholeness.

Work is not regarded in the Vedas as unworthy of Man or as the occupation of slaves alone; nor, on the other hand, is it the highest human activity. Of this these hymns are a proof. In the first everything is concentrated upon a higher action; in the second the poet is sufficiently far removed from the scene to view it with a humorous eye. In the third text the seer seems to be so convinced that the highest values lie on another level as to suggest that Man's proper course consists in the sacrifice of his activities, at least as a sincere token of total surrender.

In the third hymn, which is concerned with human sacrifice, we have inserted some explanations in square brackets, so as to make more specific the range of human activities under consideration. The rite of human sacrifice consists in binding representatives of all classes, professions, and types of men and women to the sacrificial stake and offering them symbolically to Prajapati (v. 22). Collective humanity thus represents the one purusha and his primordial sacrifice. This rite was considered to be even more efficacious than the famous ashvamedha, horse sacrifice, Man being the most noble of all victims.⁷⁷ "The irony, the relation among the different human trades, and the value each represents are obvious and require no commentary. It goes without saying that we are taking this hymn out of its context. We simply give it as an example of the many human activities of Vedic Man.⁷⁸

Priestly Task
Rtvijah

26

RV X, 101

1. Awake, my friends, united in heart.
Kindle the fire, my numerous comrades.
I call to your aid the attendants of God,
the Fire, the Sun-Horse, the Goddess Dawn.
2. May your thoughts be harmonious; spin them out properly.
Construct a rowboat to cross the broad waters.
Do all things in order; make ready the implements.
My friends, let the sacrifice now proceed.
3. Fix well the ploughshares, fasten the yokes.
The furrows are ready, sow then the seed!
If your word is received by attentive hearers,
the richer the harvest will be for our sickles.
4. The Seers prepare the ploughshares for ploughing;
they lay the yokes on either side.
These are they who, possessed of wisdom,
know how to win the favor of the Gods.
5. Arrange the buckets in their proper places
with ropes securely adjusted beneath.

We desire to draw from a copious fountain
where water flows freely, inexhaustible.

6. From the fountain whose bucket is well-prepared
with good strong ropes, where water flows freely--
from this copious fountain we draw, inexhaustible.

7. Refresh the horses and win the prize!

May your chariot become a vehicle of good fortune,
with press stones as wheels, its armor the sacred
vessels, its chassis the soma-vat!

From this I will draw the beverage of heroes.

8. Prepare a cowshed where your lords will drink.

Stitch a coat of armor strong and broad.

Make castles of iron unassailable.

Fix well your vessel. Let it not leak!

9. I bend to our cause at this solemn moment,

O Gods, your divine and holy attention.

May a thousand streams gush forth from this offering
like milk from a bountiful pasture-fed cow.

1. God: Indra.

Fire: Agni.

The Sun-Horse: dadhikra, a divine figure of a horse, representing the rising sun.

Dawn: Ushas.

2. A reference to spinning as the symbol of sacrifice, which "spins" the whole world.

Implements: lit. weapons, all the instruments for the ritual

4. Seers: kavayah, the skillful (or wise) sages, poets, the priest-poets. Cf. RV I, 76, 5; X, 63, 7, the sacrifice instituted by the first man and first poet.

5. Fountain: probably an allusion to Soma.

8. Cowshed: vraja, the place where soma is prepared (the idea common to both being the flowing of an invigorating drink).
Soma also has the function of invigorating and protecting; hence the similes of the armor and the castle.

10-12. Omitted.

The Diverse Callings of Men

Vi vratani jananam

27

RV IX, 112

1. We all have various thoughts and plans
and diverse are the callings of men.

The carpenter seeks out that which is cracked,
the physician the ailing, the priest the soma-press.
Flow, Soma-juice, for the sake of the Lord!

2. The smith with his store of seasoned plants,
with his feathers of birds and stones for the tips,
enkindles the flame to make arrows and then
seeks out a client bulging with gold.

Flow, Soma-juice, for the sake of the Lord!

3. I am a singer, my Dad's a physician,
my Mummy's task is to grind the corn.

Diverse are our callings but we all aim at wealth;
we run in its wake like a cowherd trailing cows.

Flow, Soma-juice, for the sake of the Lord!

4. A horse desires to draw a light cart,

gay hosts to evoke a laugh and a jest,
 a male desires his mate's approach,
 a frog a flood to plunge within.
 Flow, Soma-juice, for the sake of the Lord!

The worshiper pours out the Soma-juice (indu) to the words of the refrain invoking Indra, the lord.

4. The literal translation of line 3 is much more realistic the phallus desires a hairy fissure.
 The sacrifice of Secular Man
 Purushamedha

28

YV XXX

1. Inspire, O Vivifier God, the sacrifice, inspire
 the lord of the sacrifice to take his share!
 May the heavenly Angel, the purifier of the will, purify our wills!
 May the Lord of the Word make pleasant our word!

4. We call upon the Lord, distributor of wonderful bounty,
 the One who looks upon men.
 [I bind to the stake in form of a token:]
 [The Establishment]

5. for the priesthood a priest
 [The Guild of Entertainers]

6. for Song a public dancer
 for Duty a courtier
 for Laughter a comedian
 [The Guild of Construction Workers]
 for Dexterity a wainwright
 for Firmness a carpenter
 [The Guild of Artificers]

7. for Trouble a potter's son
 for Invention a craftsman
 for Beauty a jeweler
 [Guild of Instrument Makers]
 for Injury a bowmaker
 for Fate a ropemaker
 [Food Producers]
 for Death a hunter

8. for Rivers a fisherman
 [The under and overemployed]

9. for Garrulity an unemployed man

10. for Purification a physician
 [Professional inquirers]
 for Insight an astrologer
 for Thirst of Knowledge an inquisitive man
 for Moral Law a judge
 [Animal Tenders]

11. for Eye Disease a mahout
 for Speed a groom
 for Nourishment a cowherd
 [Rural workers]
 for Manliness a shepherd
 for Keenness a goatherd
 for Refreshment a ploughman
 [Business promoters]
 for Sweet Beverage a distiller
 for Welfare a watchman
 for Ease a wealthy man

[Workers skilled in transforming things]
 12. for the Gods in heaven a wood-carver
 for Sacrifice a laundress
 for Delight a woman skilled in dyeing
 [Domestic employees]
 13. for Strength a servant
 for Plenty a courier
 14. for Passion an ironworker
 [Miscellaneous workers]
 for Form a snob
 for Virtue a pharmacist
 15. for Lakes a fisherman
 [Handlers of gold]
 17. for Color a goldsmith
 for Balance a shopkeeper
 18. for the Dice King a gambler
 [The endowed or less endowed by Nature]
 20. for Pastime a prostitute
 for Lust a woman with a spotty skin
 for Pleasure a musician
 22. Now he binds to the stake the following eight types of men:
 one too tall one too short
 one too stout one too thin
 one too pale one too dark
 one too bald one too hairy
 --all to be offered to Prajapati.

1. Vivifier God: deva savitah.
 Lord of the sacrifice: yajnapati, the one who organizes a sacrifice.
 Heavenly Angel: divyo gandharvah.
 Lord of the Word: vacaspati.

2. The Gayatri mantra (RV III, 62, 10).

3. The same as RV V, 82, 5 (§ IV 8).

4. Lord: Savitri.

5. sq. The list is not complete: we have restricted it to the professions.

c) The Happy Life
 Sukha

Desire for a good life has always and everywhere been a human aspiration. Many forms of religiousness, however, perhaps over-zealous in defending the rights of the Gods, have tended to consider the human condition as essentially fallen and thus to accept suffering and dissatisfaction as the normal condition of mankind; they have expected thus to foster a desire for the other (eternal) life and also to exempt God from responsibility for the existence of suffering and evil in this world. Not so the Vedic Revelation. It does not ignore evil or minimize suffering, but it stands unequivocally for the opposite viewpoint: happiness and joy are not abnormal situations nor is Man always under stress nor is he a constantly unsatisfied being. He is indeed frail and sometimes wretched, but not corrupt or evil. He asks the Gods for protection and blessings and knows that the Gods are free to bestow or withhold their graces, but he knows also that the order of the world and Man's role within it tend toward happiness and satisfaction as the normal accompaniments of the functioning of the universe. The human condition is not one of bondage or entanglement or of patient waiting for another really worthwhile form of existence. There is, certainly, another life; there is a fuller form of existence, but this temporal life is not a shadow, nor is it something so provisional as to be devoid of authenticity.

Vedic optimism is not anthropological but, on the whole, cosmological, or rather it is based on the cosmotheandric view of reality. It does not say that Man is good or bad, nor does it consider the world as good or bad, as provisional or definitive. It starts from a more holistic perspective which views Man and cosmos as a dynamic unity in which both are engaged in maintaining the very existence of the universe.⁷⁹ In other words, reality is as it is, and Vedic Man has no Platonic paradigm

before his eyes telling him how the world should or could be. In later periods this does in fact occur, but the Shruti is relatively free from such an ideal noetic world. The world of the Gods is as real, bountiful, and imperfect as that of Men.

The texts we select here are simple examples of a spirit pervading the whole of the Vedic Revelation. We have one almost enstatic hymn as the poet contemplates the beauty of the sun, the symbol of life and light, and also the more ecstatic songs directed toward Man's desire for long life and freedom from all fears. We also have hymns directing our attention to the potentialities of different human activities for filling Man's life with joy and peace.

We close Part II with two hymns from the Atharva Veda and the Yajur Veda. They express for us within the compass of a few lines the deep desire for peace found in the Vedic era, for tranquility and serenity, both in the world at large and in the hearts of Men. The Upanishads also make mention of peace but it is an internal and personal peace, the peace that characterizes the patient search for the One.⁸⁰ We may ponder without further comment the deep insight into the nature of happiness that the Chandogya Upanishad reveals to us:

When one obtains happiness then one proceeds to act.
No one acts without first obtaining happiness.
Only by obtaining happiness does one act.⁸¹
May I Attain the Span of a Hundred Winters
Rudra

²⁹ The optimism of Vedic Man is so deeply rooted in his world view that even when he is obliged to face the terrible aspect of the divinity, represented here in Rudra, the destroyer, the thunderer, the father of the Maruts or Storm-Gods, he is not taken aback and asks from this same God what his mercy can do. He approaches him with wily prudence, entreating him with due care so as to avoid arousing his anger. He enters boldly into his presence to request from him all the boons that, precisely, the terrible aspect of the divine can grant. The destructive and punishing God is always and also the benevolent and merciful one. This hymn in praise of Rudra is an expression of the varied emotions that this God simultaneously inspires.

It is difficult to decide whether or not there is a certain conscious diplomacy or strategy in this Vedic prayer. It gives the impression of being the sincere and genuine approach of a Man who does not question, though he cannot always understand, the power and whims of the divine. In any event, this masterpiece of entreaty requests happiness and converts the fear of God into another way of approaching the divine. It is Rudra to whom Man prays, whose destructive energy he desires to quiet. He begs him to be merciful, for he desires to escape his destructive might and to benefit from his healing power.

Rudra

RV II, 33

1. O Father of Storms, may your favor flash upon us!
Do not deprive us of the sight of the sun.
May the hero mounted on his charger spare us!
Grant us, O God, to live forth in our children.
2. Thanks to your wholesome remedies, O God,
may I attain the span of a hundred winters!
Drive far from us all hatreds and troubles;
scatter to the four winds every sort of sickness.
3. O thunder-wielding God, you of all beings
are most renowned and mightiest of the mighty.
Conduct us to the further shore of sorrows
in peace and frustrate all assaults of evil.
4. May we not anger you, O God, in our worship
by praise that is unworthy or by scanty tribute.
Restore our warriors with your medicaments.
I know, O mightiest, you are the best of healers.
5. With invocation and offering I approach him,
eager to appease this God with my praises.
May the God of mercy, of dark, handsome looks,
who is easy of entreaty, spare us his anger!
6. His Mightiness, escorted by the Storms, has brought me

strong comfort in distress. May I unharmed
 find shelter with him as from glaring heat!
 May I secure the goodwill of God!
 7. How I long, O God, for the gracious touch
 of your hand which heals and brings refreshment,
 which softens all chastisements of the Gods.
 Regard me, O Mighty One, with an indulgent eye.
 8. To the great one, the brown and whitish Bull,
 I offer a powerful hymn of praise.
 Adore his splendor with adorations!
 We glorify the mighty name of God.
 9. This God of firm limbs, of many forms, the brown one,
 the mighty, has decked himself with golden ornaments.
 The power divine of this sovereign God,
 the ruler of the universe, never dwindles.
 10. Worthy are you of the bow and arrows,
 worthy of the many-colored, noble insignia;
 worthy are you to combat every horror,
 for none, O God, is more powerful than you.
 11. Praise to the youthful, far-famed God,
 enthroned on high, who slays like a wild beast!
 Have mercy on your singer when he sings your praises!
 May your hosts spare us and cast down some other!
 12. As a son salutes with reverence his father,
 so I bow down, O God, at your approach.
 I praise you, mighty Lord, giver of treasures.
 Grant us your medicines when we extol you.
 13. Your remedies so pure, O powerful Storms,
 afford us relief and bring us joy.
 Those which our father Manu chose
 I beg from the Lord for my own well-being.
 14. May God's missile be deflected from us,
 may the anger of the blazing God overshoot us!
 Relax your bow of wrath toward our well-wishers.
 Have pity on our sons and on their children!
 15. O mighty Power, the God who never slumbers,
 be here attentive, O Lord; hear our cry.
 Not for you, O God, to be angry or destroy!
 May we speak, as men of valor, a strong word!

1. Storms: Maruts, the Storm-Gods.
 Flash upon: a . . . etu, come upon (us), erupt.
 The word "God" is used for Rudra throughout this hymn. Cf. SU III, 1-6 (§§ V 18; I 28).

4. Mightiest: lit. bull.

6. His Mightiness, escorted by the Storms: lit. this bull, escorted by the Maruts.

7. Lit. where is your gracious hand which heals and refreshes?
 Mighty One: lit. bull.

9. Power divine: asurya.

10. Many-colored: vishva-rupa, or of all forms (cf. the same word in BG XI, 16, etc.).
 Every horror: vishvam abhvam (about abahva, cf. IV Introduction).

11. Have mercy: mr-a, cf. § IV B Introduction.

12. Lord: satpati, true master.

13. Powerful Storms: Maruts.

Manu: probably an allusion to the legend according to which Manu selected and saved certain herbs during the great flood (for the deluge cf. § V 17).

15. O mighty Power: lit. O brown-hued Bull.

Lord: Rudra.

A strong word: lit. in the assembly (vidathe).

The Cows Have Come

A gavo agman

30 This hymn was later used as a blessing upon the cows returning to the stall; it expresses in a beautiful way the joy of the Man who lives in positive symbiosis with the animal world.

Whatever origin or value we may ascribe to the sanctity and worship of the cow in India, the fact remains that for a predominantly agricultural civilization the worth of the cow cannot easily be over estimated. Cows are not only the source of almost inexhaustible riches; they also symbolize dignity, strength, and endurance as well as work, maternity, and service.

The Vedic world often utilizes the cow as a symbol. Cows draw the car of Dawn and are also called its beams; reference is made to the rain cloud as a cow and even the Gods are sometimes said to be born of cows. For Men, cows represent riches and all the blessings of a happy earthly existence. In their honor the Rig Veda has a special blessing⁸² and the Atharva Veda several magnificent hymns.⁸³

A gavo agman

RV VI 28

1. The Cows have come and have brought us good fortune.

In our stalls, contented, may they stay!

May they bring forth calves for us, many-colored,
giving milk for Indra each day.

2. Indra seeks to help him who offers and gives,
augmenting, not diminishing, his possessions.

Evermore increasing his treasure, he places
the pious in a realm inviolate.

3. These Cows shall not be lost, no robber shall harm them,
no enemy dare to mislead them.

With the man who sacrifices and offers to the Gods
the lord of the Cows will long tarry.

4. The swift horse, raising the dust, does not catch them.
Never do they go to the shambles.

The Cows of the man who sacrifices roam
on wide-extending pastures of fearlessness.

5. The Cows are Bhaga, the Cows are Indra,
or a first-poured draught of Soma.

Truly these Cows are Indra, my brothers,
Indra for whom my soul yearns!

6. You make, O Cows, the thin man sleek;
to the unlovely you bring beauty.

Rejoice our homestead with pleasant lowing.
In our assemblies we laud your vigor.

7. Abound in calves, graze on good pastures,
drinking pure water at the springs.

Owned neither by thief nor by wicked man,
may you be spared the darts of Rudra!

8. May this potion, enhanced by the seed of the bull
and by your power, O Indra,
bring to these Cows fertility!

1. The same hymn is also found in AV IV, 21 (except that there is an eighth stanza in the RV).

2. Treasure: rayi.

The pious: devayu, the one who worships, reveres the Gods, the God-loving.

Realm inviolate: abhinna khilya, lit. undivided realm. It may also refer simply to a field.

5. The cows are the embodiment of all human and divine virtues. Bhaga is the one who gives, the bestower (cf. RV III, 36, 5: Bhaga is Indra). Indra symbolizes power and Soma the strengthening factor.

8. This stanza seems to be a charm for fertility. It is not clear what kind of potion or mixture is referred to.

The Blessing of a House

Salapratishtha

31 Man is an inhabitant of the earth, but his dwelling place is not simply what the earth offers; it is also the product of his hands and his skill. A happy human life is hardly understandable without a home, and a home has no meaning for man without its mistress, the woman of the house. Here is no "bourgeois" utopianism but an embodiment of man's desire for self-identity through recognition of his stable connection with the earth and all earthly values. A man without a house is like a man without a name, and in fact the name of a person is very often the name of his house. The house is to a man what roots are to a tree; the house is the first attribute of a free man, for even a slave has wife and children but has no house of his own. To evaluate a man by his status is a sign of a decadent culture, but to consider that there is such a thing as a man without status is a sign of a culture that is not yet mature.

The blessing of a house does not constitute the sanctioning of the principle of ownership in our modern sense. The house of the Vedic period does not "belong" to its "proprietor;" the house is part of the Man, just as his body is. One can have plenty of cattle but one cannot have many houses, in the same way as one cannot have two bodies.

Another point, the stress laid on stability and firmness, is also noteworthy. Not only the language, but also the whole atmosphere of this hymn, praises the condition of being established and settled in life. The house is firmly rooted and stands firm as a rock against all assaults from outside. It is a symbol of man's strength and stability. To be a householder is a sacred duty for all those who aspire to be full citizens of the world. The others are either as yet too young or have already left the dimensions of geography and history.

Salapratishtha

AV III, 12

1. Here do I fix my dwelling. May it stand firm,
flowing with melted butter!

May we approach you, O House, with all our people,
sound in heart and limb.

2. Here do you stand, firm dwelling, rich in horses
and cattle, pleasantly resounding,
wealthy in food abundant, ghee, and milk.
Stand erect for great good fortune!

3. A refuge are you, O House, with broad roof
and stores of good clean grain.
At evening may the calf and the young son enter
your gates with a stream of cattle.

4. May Savitri and Vayu, Indra and Brhaspati,
protect this dwelling, the Maruts
besprinkle it with water and with ghee.
May King Bhaga enrich its cornfields.

5. O Goddess made by the Gods in the beginning,
the mistress of this dwelling, our shelter and joy,
be robed in grass. May you ever treat us graciously,
giving us sons and wealth.

6. Stay firm on your post, O Pillar. May your righteousness shine far,
driving away all foes!

Let your inmates not suffer any harm, may we
and all men live a hundred autumns!

7. To this house, together with the calf and other beasts,
has come the newborn boy;
to this house a jug filled full of foaming drink,
together with bowls of curds.

8. Bring forward, woman, this full jar, a stream of ghee
mingled with life's elixir.

Anoint those who drink with immortality. May our votive offerings
ever protect this dwelling!

9. I bring this water free from all impurity.
I bring this immortal Fire.

With these I set my foot within this dwelling
and take possession of it.

1. Melted butter (ghee): ghrta, always the symbol of abundance and an important ingredient of the sacrifice.

2. Pleasantly resounding: sunrtavati, full of exultation.

4. Bhaga: the God of fortune.
Cornfields: krshi, agriculture.

5. Goddess: devi, the personification of the house; cf. AV IX, 3, 7 (§ II 32).
Shelter: sharana. refuge.
The robe of grass of the Goddess of the house refers to the thatched roof.
Sons: sahavirah lit strong men.

6. Stay firm: rtena; lit. in the right order, which may also mean "according to the laws of stability"

7. Beasts: jagat living creatures.
Foaming drink: parisrut; it may refer to Soma.

8. The lady of the House is requested to bring forward certain objects which are symbols of fullness and immortality (jar: kumbha; elixir: amrta).
Votive offerings: ishtapurta, wish-fulfilling sacrifices.

9. Immortal Fire: amrtena saha gmina, lit. "along with the immortal Agni." The first things to be brought into the new house are Water and Fire, i.e., the fundamental human and divine elements, necessary for life and sacrifice.
This House is Built by Worship
Brahmana shalam nimitam

32 The building of a house, or even any transaction concerning it, is not just a matter of masonry or of business. It is in both instances a liturgical act, in which human lives as well as the powers above and below are involved. A house is not real estate, but a human dwelling place, the prolongation, in a sense, of a Man's body; it is the first extension of Man's real world. To take leave of one's house is to take leave of the world. The ascetic leaves the house and by the fact of so doing he leaves the world.

It is no wonder that even up to our own times the human habitat has been the last bastion to succumb to the desacralizing process. In almost all human traditions there have been innumerable blessings and spells, enchantments, and magic practices concerned with houses. The Atharva Veda is full of this kind of thing and special attention is paid to the purification of a house from all evil forces. A house is not only shelter for the body; it is shelter for the whole world also, for in the house sacrifice will often be performed. In fact the word shala meant, first of all, the sacrificial building, and then came to signify a home, once sacrifice began to be performed regularly in people's homes. Because sacrifice is the center of the house and of Man's family life, the house is said to be built by brahman, liturgical action and sacred word, to be designed by the kavi, the poet or wise man, and to be the abode of rta, cosmic order.

Brahmana shalam nimitam

AV IX, 3

1. O Pillars of this House of countless treasures,
O buttresses and crossbeams,
we loosen your bonds!
2. What is bound in you, who contain all riches,
those fetters and knots,
with a powerful word I unloose, like Brhaspati
breaking open the cavern.
3. [The sorcerer] stretched out the rope and tied it,
fixing firmly the knots.
Like a skillful butcher cleaving the joints,
with Indra's help we loosen them.
4. We unite the bonds of your beams and clasps,
of your thatch and your sides,
O House of all riches.
5. We loosen the bonds of the clamps and bundles,
of all that encircles
and binds the Lady of the House.
6. These hanging loops, which are tied for enjoyment
within you, we loosen.
May the Lady of the House, when established within her,
be gracious toward us!
7. Receptacle of oblation and hall of Agni,
abode and domain of the wives are you.
You, Goddess House, are the seat of the Gods.
8. By Holy Word we unfasten the extended
thousand-eyed net
which rests upon the central beam,
well-placed and well-fastened.
9. May the one who receives you as a gift,
O House, queen among dwellings,
and the one who built you both enjoy long life
and reach ripe old age!
10. Here let her come to meet her owner.
Firmly fastened
and adorned are you, whose limbs and joints
we proceed to loosen!
11. The one who collected the trees, O House,
and built your walls,
the Highest Lord of creatures, has made you
for the increase of children.
12. To him be homage! Homage to the donor
and to the master of the House! Homage
to Agni and homage to the one
who performs his rites!
13. Homage to the cows and the horses,
to all that is born in this House!
O future scene of births and young life,
we loosen your bonds!
14. In your innermost heart, with both creatures and men,
you cherish God Agni.
O future scene of births and young life,
we loosen your bonds!
15. The expanse that lies between heaven and earth
I accept together with this your House.
The air it encloses I make a container
for wealth. I receive thus this House for her owner.
16. Abounding in food, abounding in milk,
with firm foundation set on the earth,
receptacle of every nourishing thing,

do no harm, O House, to those who receive you.

17. Covered with thatch and clothed in straw,
the House, like night, gives rest for her inmates,
she stands firm-fixed, her broad feet planted
on the earth like an elephant cow's.

18. I untie, remove, your covering of reed.

That which Varuna has tightly closed,
let Mitra open again in the morning!

19. This House is founded on Worship, designed
and built by the wise.

May Indra and Agni, the immortals, protect this House,
the abode of Soma.

20. One nest is placed upon a second, one container
laid upon another.

Within is born a mortal. From here
all things originate.

21. This House is constructed with two sides, with four,
with six, eight, or ten. In this Mistress dwelling
lies Agni like an unborn babe in the womb.

22. Facing you, O House, who are facing me,
I approach you peacefully:

sacred Fire and Water are within,
the main doors to Cosmic Order.

23. I bring here these waters free from disease,
destroyers of disease.

In this House, together with Fire immortal,
I take up my abode!

24. Do not bind us with fetters. May we find you a light,
not a weighty, burden!

Whithersoever we will, O House,
we lead you, like a bride.

25. From the eastern direction I summon a blessing
to the glory of this House.

Praise to the Gods, the praiseworthy,
forever and ever!

26-31. From the southern direction,
from the western direction,
from the northern direction,
from the depths below,
from the heights above,
I summon a blessings
to the glory of this House.

Praise to the Gods, the praiseworthy,
forever and ever!

1. Loosen your bonds: the spells that are "binding" the house are removed by this prayer.

2. Powerful word: vac, spell.

Cavern: bala (vala?) Reference to the myth relating how Brhaspati broke open by a spell the rock that was retaining the waters.

5. Lady of the House: the personification of the house (cf. v. 7.)

7. Goddess House: cf. AV III, 12, 5 (§ II 31).

8. Holy Word: brahman.

Net: akshu referring perhaps to a cloth covering the ceiling.

11. Highest Lord of creatures: parameshthi prajapatih. He is the Lord of the House as far as progeny is concerned.

14. Lit. Agni is hidden in the center of the house.

15. This verse recited for the acceptance of the house by the (new) owner. The house does not consist of walls but mainly of the space contained within it and above it.

18. Varuna is the night, Mitra the day.

19. Founded on Worship: brahmana shalam nihitam. Brahman (prayer, sacred word, the sacred) is the true foundation of the house, and the wise, the inspired poets (kavi), are the real architects, i.e., those who know rita, cosmic order, and cosmic connections.

Indra and Agni: Indra protects from outside, Agni from within (possible interpretation).

20. Birth always takes place in an enclosed place and from there life is spread throughout the universe (vishva).

21. The image is that of the house as a woman (patni) who bears in her womb Agni, who is as yet

22. Peacefully: ahimsatim. This verse underlines the importance of a peaceful intention in the one who is about to occupy the house by using the ahimsa to signify the resolve of the householder to keep all forms of violence far from his house.

Sacred Fire and Water: Agni and apas.

Main doors prathama dvah, lit. the first (and foremost) entrance. Here again the house is regarded as the abode of sacrifice, which maintains rta, holy order.

Cosmic Order: rita.

23. Disease: yakshma, evil.

24. A house is often a burden. This prayer asks that the house may be of service to man (as a woman follows her husband) and not an encumbrance.

A Merchants Prayer

Panyakamah vanijah

33 We have already on several occasions warned against catastrophic interpretations, that is, against interpreting with our present-day categories situations that have emerged from and are understandable only within the framework of altogether different assumptions. We may remember that our previous text does not extol the principle of property, as a superficial glance might suggest, nor does it uphold a model of bourgeois existence; similarly this present hymn is not advocating sheer egoism and antisocial attitudes. The fresh innocence and naivete of this Merchant's Prayer bear witness not only to its authenticity but also to a world view altogether different from the modern one, in the context of which such a prayer would be less pure (though it is possible that more than one modern merchant might regret his inability to pray in these terms!).

However that may be, we have here a fine example of what could be called the way of familiarity with God, which is common in many religions and which gives rise to so many abuses. Nevertheless it is at its best another way of "religio," that is, of bridging the gap between an unapproachable Godhead and an abandoned Man. If God is to have any practical value (which idea one can contest, obviously--but then we have another problem altogether) he must be not only "available" but also approachable in our own "human" (and all too human) fashion. The following hymn is a fine specimen of this form of religiousness.

Another remark may be not inappropriate, especially for those who, imbued with the idea of Man's sinfulness, may find such a prayer strange. Vedic Man does not consider that creation or the human order is basically wrong or radically sinful. There are certainly suffering and sin, but human life is not suffused with tears. It is not thought to be wrong to ask for one's own success and material wealth, and one does not feel the need of justifying such a prayer by adding that one will thus be enabled to help one's neighbor better or to perform a more valuable social task. Vedic Man is simpler than all this and most certainly no hypocrite.

Panyakamah vanijah

AV III, 15

1. First, now, I call upon the Lord,

as merchant upon Merchant.
 May he come and be our example!
 May he drive away those that would harm us,
 the robber and the wild beast!
 May he, all-powerful, grant me riches!
 2. Many are the paths of the Gods,
 winding heavenward.
 May they stream for me with favors,
 bringing me milk and butter!
 Thus in my business
 may I succeed and accumulate treasure!
 3. I offer this wood and this butter
 in your honor, O Lord,
 with a prayer for energy and strength.
 These sacred words I now chant
 with all my devotion,
 to win by this hymn a hundredfold.
 4. Please pardon, O Lord, our hardness,
 our long travels for gain.
 May we purchase and sell with profit!
 May the barter of goods make us prosperous!
 Good luck to our journeys!
 Have regard, both Gods, to our offering.
 5. My pile of gold for my trading,
 seeking wealth through wealth,
 may it ever increase and not dwindle!
 By this offering to the Gods, O Lord,
 check and frustrate
 those who would spoil our profit.
 6. The wealth which I use for trading,
 seeking, O Gods,
 wealth to accrue to my wealth--
 in this may Indra, Prajapati,
 Savitri, Soma,
 and Agni grant me renown!
 7. To you, O Lord, the Priest
 Beloved of all men,
 we bring our praise with reverence.
 Keep watch over our children
 and ourselves, we pray.
 Guard both our lives and our cattle.
 8. Thus, steadfast and firm as a horse,
 we shall offer you praises,
 Omniscient Lord, forever.
 Replete with food and with riches,
 being close to you always,
 may we never suffer reverses!

1. The dialogue and prayer are based on the idea of a certain give-and-take between kindred person. Cf. RV III, 18, 1 (§ VII 37), "as friend to friend."
 Lord: Indra.

3. Cf. RV III, 18, 3, which is identical, although given in VII 37 in a different version.
 Lord: Agni, also in vv. 4; 5; 7.

4. Cf. RV I, 31, 16, from which the beginning of this verse is taken.
 The two Gods are Indra and Agni. The merchant asks Agni's forgiveness for failing to perform the agnihotra in foreign lands.

6. Renown: ruci, splendor, etc.

7. Beloved of all men: vaishvanara, invocation to Agni.

8. Omniscient Lord: jatavedas, Agni.

Increase of Wealth

Rayisamvardhana

34 After the merchant's prayer comes, quite naturally, the prayer for increase of wealth. This prayer is for everyone, both those who are engaged in trade and business and those who cultivate their fields. It is a morning prayer, appropriate for a time when men are looking forward to the new day, full of hope and confidence. When the first rays of the Sun appear and the hour of sacrifice approaches, what will men request from the Gods, if not the treasures of health, wealth and, offspring?⁸⁴ We should remember, however, that the word rayi, used several times in this hymn, does not refer exclusively to material wealth.⁸⁵ The innocence and candor that are found here, as well as in many other hymns of this type, derive precisely from the fact that human perfection and happiness are always viewed from an integrated perspective, which embraces both material and spiritual values in one indivisible and harmonious unity.

In this hymn all the Gods are addressed; all are considered to be present and accessible to the worshiper's petitions: Agni, Indra, Soma, Varuna, Surya, Savitri, Brhaspati, Tvashtr, Vayu, Vata, Vishnu, Aryaman, Bhaga, even Sarasvati and the Goddesses, are invoked in turn. The prayer starts with an address to Agni, the most friendly of the Gods, and concludes with an invocation to the Sun, the giver of life, who graciously grants the new day.

Not only are the Gods besought to give abundantly so that there may be a sufficiency, but they are also requested to give "over and above" so that the worshiper may share and pass on wealth in his turn (v. 5). The miser is not spared. He is urged not to resist the contagion of this liberal spirit, appropriate to both Gods and Men (v. 8) and exemplified even in the magnitude of the expanses of heaven (v. 9), but rather to give with a generous hand. In its simple and realistic way this prayer expresses Man's search for plenitude and the infinite.

Rayisamvardhana

AV III, 20

1. This is your appointed origin.
From here once born, you shine.
Knowing this, O Agni, arise
and cause our wealth to increase!
2. Be present, O Agni. Speak!
Turn hither, benevolent.
Enrich us, Lord of peoples.
You are the source of our treasure.
3. May Aryaman enrich us,
Bhaga and Brhaspati!
May Grace and all the Goddesses
confer upon me riches!
4. With our songs we worship king Soma
and Agni. May they assist us!
Aditya, Vishnu, Surya
and the Brahman-priest Brhaspati.
5. With your fires, O Agni,
you make strong our sacrifice and prayer.
Inspire us, O God, to share
and grant us wealth to give.
6. We call here on Indra and Vayu,
both of them easy of entreaty!
May the assembled people be friendly,
disposed to offer us gifts!
7. Indra, Aryaman, Brhaspati--
impel them to grant us gifts,
Vata, Vishnu, Sarasvati
and Savitri the powerful!

8. Now, by an access of that vigor
that dwells in all beings of this universe,
we have come truly to BE!
May the wise urge the stingy to give,
and may he bestow on us riches
and numerous men of valor!
9. May the five directions of space,
those wide realms, yield to capacity!
May I obtain all the desires
and hopes of my mind and heart!
10. May I speak a word that wins cows!
Soar above me in splendor.
May Vayu surround us on all sides,
may Tvashtr grant me abundance!

1. Origin: yoni, womb.
Wealth: rayi.

2. Treasure: dhana.

3. Grace: sunrta
Riches: rayi again.

4. Aditya: Varuna.

5. Prayer: Brahman.
Share: datave, to give.

6. Assembled people: lit. all people in the gathering; samgati, assembly, meeting.

8. By an access of that vigor: vajasya prasave, in the stirring of power.
The stingy: lit. the one who does not want to give.

9. Desires and hopes: akutih, intentions. Cf. AV XIX, 4, 2 (§ VII B f, Antiphon).

10. Word that wins cows: gosanim vacam, i.e., a fruitful prayer, not a sterile utterance.
Splendor: varcas. The sun is addressed.
The Joy of Fearlessness
Abhaya

35 Religion has often produced the fear of God as a kind of trump card to help Man overcome his fear of nature or his fear of his fellowman. Fear is nevertheless one of the congenital diseases of mankind. When the crude and primitive dread of nature is overcome, other forms of fear creep into the human mind and heart and, in spite of theological distinctions, the fear of God is still fear. Modern Man may no longer fear nature or God, but he is not easily rid of the fear of his fellows nor of that most insidious of all fears the fear that is a mixture of fear of oneself and fear of nothingness.

Over against this background the following hymn may be considered a marvelous testimony as to how Man, being conscious of his human condition, tries to overcome all types of fear and even the very dread of fear which so often paralyzes the best intentions of mortal creatures. There is no happiness in fear, but there is no fearlessness without the courage to pray to be rid of any fear. In this hymn of the Atharva Veda there is already present an assurance that the prayer has been answered.

Abhaya

AV VI, 40

1. Breathe on us fearlessness, Heaven and Earth!
By the Strength of God,

by the Light of God,
 may we be free from fear!
 May the boundless atmosphere set us in fearlessness!
 May the offering of the seven Seers set us in fearlessness!
 2. From the North and the South, the East and the West,
 let the Light of God
 direct on this village
 sustenance, welfare, and ease.
 May the Power of God grant us freedom from foes,
 removing all fear, deflecting all wrath.
 3. Below and above,
 behind and before,
 grant us freedom from enemies, O Power of God.

1. Strength of God Soma.
 Light of God: Savitri.

2. Light of God: Savitri.
 Power of God: Indra.
 Light, Fearlessness, and Blessing
 Jyotirabhayam svasti

36 This hymn brings to a climax the prayer of the preceding one. There is fear of things, of the unknown, of nothingness, and there is also the fear of fear, about which modern psychology has much to say.

This prayer expresses the confidence that there is a wide world of light and grace where all the shadows of fear are banned, and that external obstacles in the way to happiness can be overcome by taking refuge in the strength of the Lord (v. 4). It is, further, by making friends with the world at large that fear is overcome, for, if all beings become our friends, fear simply cannot arise.

This stress upon fearlessness as a human value of capital importance and a sign of personal self-realization is maintained not only in the field of martial courage but also, and mainly, in the realm of human perfection. We read, for instance, in one Upanishad:

"Certainly, Janaka, you have achieved fearlessness"

--said Yajnavalkya.

"May fearlessness be with you, Sir!"

--replied Janaka of Videha,⁸⁶

while in another we find the vivid metaphor: "the further shore of fearlessness."⁸⁷ That shore is heaven which we only attain when we practice and are surrounded by universal friendship. "In the heavenly world there is no fear."⁸⁸

Jyotirabhayam svasti

AV XIX, 15

1. From that which we fear, O Lord, make us fearless.
 O bounteous One, assist us with your aid.
 Drive far the malevolent, the foeman.
 2. Indra, the generous giver, we invoke.
 May we please all creatures, both two-legged and four-legged!
 Let not the armies of our foes overwhelm us!
 Destroy all evil spirits!
 3. Indra is the Savior who kills the Demon,
 our longed-for protector, coming from afar.
 May he defend us from the farthest point,
 from the middle, from behind, and from before!
 4. Lead us to a wide world, O wise one, to
 o heavenly light, fearlessness, and blessing.

Strong are your arms, O powerful Lord.

We resort to your infinite refuge.

5. May the atmosphere we breathe

breathe fearlessness into us:

fearlessness on earth

and fearlessness in heaven!

May fearlessness guard us

behind and before!

May fearlessness surround us

above and below!

6. May we be without fear

of friend and foe!

May we be without fear

of the known and the unknown!

May we be without fear

by night and by day!

Let all the world be my friend!

1. From that which we fear. . . :yata Indra bhayamahe tato no abhayam krdhi.

Lord: Indra, also in v. 4.

2. Evil spirits: druh.

3. Demon: Vrtra.

4. Blessing: svasti, grace, well-being

Infinite refuge: sharana brhanta, vast shelter.

6. Let all the world . . . : lit. may all the regions become my friends.

Prayer for Happiness

Svastyayana

37 Here is a selection, taken from three of the Vedas, of certain short texts that articulate well in different ways the intense desire of Man for happiness, long life, wealth, prosperity, offspring, and good health. One is struck in all these prayers by their underlying confidence and overall conviction that happiness is the normal human condition and the duty and right of every Man. The normal human situation is here portrayed as one of peace and happiness, and the abnormal as one of war and suffering. Man is not weary and yet he knows that without the favor of the Gods he cannot accomplish his task or overcome the many obstacles and perils of human existence. One of the texts (AV VII, 69) links up the entire universe with human happiness, requesting each element of the cosmos, wind, sun, and so on, to be a conveyor of happiness. Human joy is not the well-being of the "highest" part of our being, not "peace of the soul," but human "wholeness" which includes bodily health as well as psychic poise. The next prayer from the Atharva Veda (AV XIX, 60) expresses this feeling in the most concrete manner: physical wholeness is linked with spiritual beauty. The last passage, from the Yajur Veda, expresses the deep conviction that the source of every value lies originally not in Men, but in the divine world; and that the Gods are not jealous of their treasures, but are on the contrary ready to transmit to Men all that they possess. After all, they are devas and not asuras precisely because they are friends of Men and not their enemies.

Svastyayana

RV I, 89, 2; 5

i) 2. May the righteous Gods gladden our hearts

with the warmth of their love.

May the grace of the Gods encompass us;

their friendship we seek.

May the Gods grant us life that we may live!

5. We invoke him, the Lord of what moves and what moves not,
the inspirer of our thoughts. May he come to our aid!

May this our divine Protector and Guard,

the unfailing one, cause our wealth to increase,
that we may long flourish!
RV VI 47, 11

ii) God the Rescuer,
God the Savior,
almighty, whom always we joyfully adore,
powerful God,
invoked by all men,
may he, the bounteous, grant us his blessings!
RV VII, 100, 4

iii) God bestrode the earth, being desirous
to give it to man for a home to dwell in.
In him the landless find their safety.
This great God has bequeathed them this whole wide world.
RV X, 4, 1

iv) For you is my offering, to you I will pray,
to you who are worthy of homage and worship.
You, O God, are a spring in the desert
for the man who is thirsty for you, O everliving.
RV X, 25, 1

v) Instill in us a wholesome, happy mind
with goodwill and understanding. Then shall we ever
delight in your friendship like cows who gladly rejoice
in meadows green. This is my joyful message.
AV I, 31, 4

vi) Blessing and joy to our mother and father!
Joy to cattle, to beasts, and to men!
May all well-being and graces be ours!
Long may we see the sun!
AV VII, 69

vii) May the wind blow us joy,
may the sun shine down joy on us,
may our days pass with joy,
may the night be a gift of joyful peace!
May the dawn bring us joy at its coming!
AV XIX, 60, 1-2

viii) May my voice remain strong,
my breath unfaltering,
my sight and my hearing acute!
May my hair not turn gray
nor my teeth become blackened,
may my arms not grow feeble and slack!
May my thighs remain sturdy,
my legs swift to go,
my feet neither stumble nor flag!
May my limbs remain whole,
each performing its function,
may my soul remain ever unconquered!
AV XIX, 67

ix) For a hundred autumns may we see,
for a hundred autumns may we live,

for a hundred autumns may we know,
 for a hundred autumns may we rise,
 for a hundred autumns may we flourish,
 for a hundred autumns may we be,
 for a hundred autumns may we become,
 --and even more than a hundred autumns!
 YV XIX, 9

x) You are Energy, give me energy;
 you are Courage, give me courage;
 you are Strength, give me strength;
 you are Vigor, give me vigor;
 you are Zeal, give me zeal;
 you are Victory, give me victory.
 YV XXI, 5

xi) Aditi, mighty Mother of just rulers
 and queen of those who follow Eternal Order,
 great ruler with a far-extending sway,
 untouched by time, protectress, gracious guide,
 to you we cry.

Texts i) - v) contain references to different Gods as follows:

i) 2. Vishvedevah (All-Gods).

5. Pushan .

ii) Indra.

iii) Vishnu.

iv) Agni.

v) Soma (cf. RV X, 20,1).

vi) Blessing and joy: svasti, happiness, prosperity
 Graces: suvidatra, good gifts.

vii) May the night be a gift: lit. may the night bring us joy, joyful peace, blessing (sham).

x) The concepts are: tejas, virya, bala, urjas, manyu, and sahas.
 May Peace Bring Peace!
 Shanti

38 Man may possess everything: health, wealth, wife and children, knowledge and skill, power and glory; but still he can be the most miserable creature if he is lacking that gift of the Gods which does not depend on any other gift, and on which all other gifts depend if they are to be real blessings for Man: peace. Human fullness is incomplete without peace, whereas even the one who lacks everything else can still have peace within himself and peace with all beings, which in fact constitutes happiness. The Vedas were deeply aware of this and thus of the constant necessity to invoke peace with all the power of the mantra.

The shanti mantra or invocation of peace is an essential utterance at any beginning, and especially at the end of a sacred action or of the recitation of a sacred text. How can a holy word be uttered or heard unless there is peace in heaven, on earth, and in the human heart? The discord and dissonances in the universe and among Men have first to be pacified before any real, that is, sacred, act can take place. Here again we find a process of the anthropocosmic interaction. There can be no peace in the human heart if there is no peace on earth, but, conversely, there can be no earthly peace if there is discord in Man's inner being. The one affects the other and, at the same time, both interact with the world of the Gods in the same kind of

double relationship.

Man is the powerful mediator, because he alone is capable of uttering this prayer for peace. He even dares (in our second short text) to wish peace to Brahman! God is not only in and through prayer--He is Prayer.

Peace and the shanti mantra--must be at the beginning and end of everything. Nothing is achieved by external discord or internal unrest, and nothing is accomplished in the world or in human life unless it is grounded in peace. For this Man needs the collaboration of all the Gods: to establish peace in heaven, in the atmosphere and on earth. This is the meaning of the threefold wish: shantih shantih shantih!

Shanti

AV XIX, 9

- i) 1. Peaceful be heaven, peaceful the earth,
peaceful the broad space between.
Peaceful for us be the running waters,
peaceful the plants and herbs!
2. Peaceful to us be the signs of the future,
peaceful what is done and undone,
peaceful to us be what is and what will be.
May all to us be gracious!
3. This supreme Goddess, Word, inspired by Brahman,
by which the awe-inspiring is created,
through her to us be peace!
4. This supreme Spirit, inspired by Brahman,
by which the awe-inspiring is created,
through it to us be peace!
5. These five sense organs, with the mind as the sixth,
within my heart, inspired by Brahman,
by which the awe-inspiring is created,
through them to us be peace!
6. Gracious be Mitra. gracious Varuna,
gracious Vishnu and Prajapati,
gracious to us be Indra and Brhaspati,
gracious to us Aryaman.
7. Gracious be Mitra, gracious Varuna,
gracious be Vivasvant and Death,
gracious the calamities of earth and atmosphere,
gracious the wandering planets.
8. Gracious to us be the trembling earth,
when struck by the fiery meteor.
Gracious be the cows yielding red milk,
gracious be the earth receding.
9. Gracious be the constellations struck by the meteor,
gracious incantations and all magic!
Gracious to us be buried charms,
the meteors and plagues that afflict us.
10. Gracious to us be the stars and the moon,
gracious the sun and Rahu,
gracious be Death with his banner of smoke,
gracious the powerful Rudras.
11. Gracious be the Rudras, gracious the Vasus,
gracious the Adityas and Agnis,
gracious to us be the god-like sages,
gracious all the Gods and Brhaspati.
12. Brahman, Prajapati, Dhatri, the worlds,
the Vedas, the Seven Sages, and the fires,
prepare for me a blessed path!

May Indra be my refuge,
 may Brahman be my refuge,
 may all the Gods be my refuge!
 May the Gods united be my refuge!
 13. May whatever appeasements there are in the world,
 known by the Seven Sages,
 may they all be gracious to me!
 May peace be with me!
 May fearlessness be with me
 14. Peace be to earth and to airy spaces!
 Peace be to heaven, peace to the waters,
 peace to the plants and peace to the trees!
 May all the Gods grant to me peace!
 By this invocation of peace may peace be diffused!
 By this invocation of peace may peace bring peace!
 With this peace the dreadful I now appease,
 with this peace the cruel I now appease.
 with this peace all evil I now appease,
 so that peace may prevail, happiness prevail!
 May everything for us be peaceful!
 YV XXXVI, 17

ii) To the heavens be peace, to the sky and the earth,
 to the waters be peace, to plants and all trees,
 to the Gods be peace, to Brahman be peace,
 to all men be peace, again and again
 --peace also to me!

i) 1. Peaceful: shanta.

2. Signs of the future: purvarupani. tokens of things to come
 Gracious: sham (throughout).

3. Supreme Goddess, Word: parameshthini vagdevi.
 The awe-inspiring: ghora, the terrible

4. Supreme Spirit: parameshthi nam mano, the highest mind

5. Here manas is one of the indriyas.

7. Vivasvant is the father of Yama (death); cf § V I Introduction.
 Death: antaka, lit, the ender.
 Calamities: utpatah, events. All the dangers of the universe are being appeased.

8. Red milk: lohita kshirah, probably blood, referring to sick cows.

10. Rahu is the demon who swallows the moon.
 Rudras: the sons of Rudra, the Maruts(Storm--Gods).

12. Blessed path: svastyayana, happy way.
 Refuge: sharma, protection.

13. Appeasements: shantani.
 Happiness: shiva, grace, benevolence. The "dreadful" yields to peace (shanta), the "cruel" to shiva.

ii) Most of this same hymn YV XXXVI is given in § III 10.

Part III - Blossoming and Fullness



PART III BLOSSOMING AND FULLNESS

The awakening of human consciousness is not only the chief marvel of creation; it is also the most formidable adventure of Man and, as far as Man himself is capable of gathering, of God also, for the Lord is not a solitary Lord. Whatever Upanishadic or esoteric theology we may propound about Him, it is only within this cosmic adventure that God appears and acts as God.

Part III unfolds a panorama of a marvelously broad horizon. In relation to the total Vedic world view it culminates in the lofty conception of sacrifice and finally presents, in the third section, the concept of renunciation, that most striking anticlimax of the human condition. The first section constitutes from start to finish an extraordinary hymn to Light, here no longer viewed as an exclusive possession of God or as something purely external which is the source of reflected light in Man, but as an all-embracing and all-penetrating quality that illumines the whole of reality from within and without. This Light is first and foremost a feature of the heavenly world, but this same cosmic splendor is to be found also, in an immediate fashion, in Man. In a word, Man discovers his own personal, divine, and, of course, human dignity.

Now, dignity involves responsibility and awareness. This is at the heart of Part III and it finds expression in the central section on sacrifice. Man discovers himself as Man, or rather as fully Man, as a center of the cosmos, fellow with the Gods, and partner of God himself. Between the two poles of reality Man discovers a link, an unbreakable relation, and the burden of this consciousness leads him to discover not only the laws of sacrifice, but also its nature. Man is going to lose his own life in the experiment, for the discovery that he too is God, that he may enter into the mystery of reality, not by an epistemic act of his mind, but by an existential and total involvement of his being, is going to consume him in the very fire of the sacrifice that he himself discovers and prepares. All he can do is to throw himself fully into this adventure and, heedless of all else, trust that the experiment will succeed. The one who emerges will not, of course, be the innocent individual of the beginning, but the risen person, the purusottama, a new being. This fullness is a plenitude that cannot be encompassed by human nature or by any individualistic embrace.

The third section brings us again to the realization of the exigencies and difficulties of the path. Many have not even tried, so difficult is any full experience of humanness; others have gone mad or gone astray and divinized themselves, ensnaring themselves inextricably in a net of their own ideas and falling ultimately and irretrievably into their own trap. Yet others have advanced a long way, and they beckon to us and to the whole human race. "The path is dark," in the words of the Rig Veda, but it leads to the goal.

Part III gives us a balanced and mature picture of the world view disclosed in the Vedic Revelation. It is certainly optimistic and life-embracing. It is, without doubt, centered on Man and is thus, in a sense, humanistic; but this is only one facet of the whole. This sense of life and fullness is the complement and the result of the other facet, that of effort and asceticism. Moreover, the dynamism of the world does not proceed by way of uncritical progress or deterministic improvement. Freedom acquires a new seriousness, and liberation a dramatic aspect. Rita, the cosmic order that inspires the energy of the sacrificial act, is at the root of everything. This cosmic order, however, is not established once and for all. It grows by means of the very energy it accumulates; it formulates its own plan, as it were. Man, becoming aware of this, is then bound to create by his own freedom a more perfect freedom in the world.

A. RADIANCE AND COSMIC

REFULGENCE

Tejas

Diffusing glory with your rays,
 you have scaled the shining realm of heaven.
 By you are supported all things that are,
 O God All-Creator, essence all-divine.
 RV X, 170, 4

The texts of this section illustrate a basic insight of the whole Vedic Revelation: the "lightsome" character of reality, in all the meanings of that adjective--a concept that later speculations have developed by stressing here one point, there another. Reality is suffused with light; it is in fact light crystallized from the actual luminous source of light. It is for this reason that the light within recognizes and "sees" the light without, and vice versa. The light without is as it is because it comes from a luminous core which spills over, as it were, into certain beings.

Reality is lightsome, that is, radiant and beautiful. The world is not a mistake of the Gods or an error of the Creator. Nature is beautiful and human life is glorious. Its concrete details are stupendous in scope and the overall view is simply too enormous to be encompassed by Man. He stands in awe and admiration, infused with love and joy as he sees that the universe is so marvelous a reality, surpassing all dreams. Yet, even dreams are marvelous, though they portray only a pale image of reality. Dreams do not invent reality; they just mirror it, in a way that is fainter, obviously, than the original. It is understandable that the thirst to see the original is so vivid and lively throughout all the Vedas.

Reality is lightsome, that is, light and graceful. The earth, if truly viewed, is not a place for tragedy. Tragedy is only an invention of human pride when the individual takes himself and his position in the world too seriously. On the other hand, life might degenerate into comedy were it not for the fact that the suffering of Man is too intense to permit us to belittle it. The Vedic Revelation here brings us a message of poise and gracefulness. It tells us that reality is not ponderous, that it is lila, a play, an adventure with no ulterior aims or goals outside the range of the game itself. Indeed, this game has many rules and not everybody knows them. In this game there are evil, suffering, and error, but all are part of the play. Moreover, the play, the lightsome character of reality, would be misunderstood if this dimension were to be severed from what really makes a play a play, namely, its feature of gratuity, of grace. Nothing is done from either obligation or necessity. There is this one advantage in the experience of contingency: the knowledge that all is contingent, including the rules of behavior of the contingent beings. To speak of contingency and then to shackle contingent beings with laws of necessity is disastrous, according to the Vedic Revelation. The world is lightsome, because it is grace, a product of grace and not of necessity.

Reality is lightsome, that is, lighthearted, gay, and nimble. Joy is not an exotic foreign plant. Colorfulness belongs to the very nature of things. Once we pierce the darkness of the surface we discover, as one text says, a sparkling like a wheel of fire, the color of the sun, full of vigor and power.² Light pervades everything and makes everything light and joyful. One has only to see.

Whatever one may say regarding the love of the mysterious shown by the Gods³ or the attraction of the obscure to later Indian tradition, this section bears witness to the all-pervading luminosity of the Vedic Revelation. The metaphor of the eye and the symbol of light are here to the fore. Even subsequent elaborations will retain throughout metaphors of vision, and speak of drishti darshana, and the like. The Mediterranean luminosity of Greece and of the best of Western tradition is a luminosity of the sea; it is blue and green. The luminosity of the Vedic tradition is both an earthly luminosity of the mountains and plains with their colors of white and yellow, and a heavenly luminosity of the sky with its colors of light blue and gold.

Reality is lightsome; that is, it is like light, it contains light, but to the discerning eye it is not simply light, but also lightsome. Indeed, once suffused with light, one may no longer be able to distinguish whether the light that illumines the whole comes from without or from within. The effects are the same. A body is equally full of light whether the light is "received," like that of the moon, or whether the light is self-derived, like that of the sun. If the moon were to come sufficiently near to the sun, would it not become as bright as the sun? If the creature reaches the source of light, will it not become not only illumined, but light itself? If the whole cosmos returns to its source, it will not merely be like the moon but like a meteorite falling into the sun: it will no longer be distinguishable from the sun, but will be a part of it.

a) Divine Splendor
 Shri

Reality, as we have been saying, is wholly composed of light, and this statement should not be taken merely figuratively.

Light shines everywhere, because everything that is is made of light. Light is being. Where there is darkness there is no light and there is no being. Furthermore, to make a distinction between light and things that are composed of light is an abstraction of the mind somewhat foreign to the Vedas. The modern cosmological concept of a light as being a physical body emitting beams that are radiant but do not themselves actually constitute "light" weakens the symbol of light as visualized by the Vedas. For the Vedas, wherever there is the light of the sun, there is the sun. The sun is not only in the sky "up there" nor is it only on the earth "down here." In other words, pure transcendence is a contradiction in terms, as also is pure immanence. Immanence and transcendence are intrinsically correlated and are possible only when held together in mutual tension. God is as little "up there" as he is just "down here."

The importance of light may be appreciated better when we reflect upon the fact that Shri has usually been translated as beauty when it really means brilliance, the implication being that anything radiant is beautiful. Shri, in fact, may also be rendered as "prominent" or "important," inasmuch as it indicates the eye-catching quality of radiance. Shri is glory and glory is the reciprocal exchange between Men and Gods.

When it is said that light is "the power of procreation"⁴ or that Surya, the Sun, is "the living principle [atman] of everything,"⁵ the former statement should not be understood in a causal sense or the latter in a pantheistic sense. Both suggest that Light cannot be located or pinpointed as a "thing" but that it is rather the internal structure of reality itself.

The Vedas express these insights by simply extolling the splendor of the Gods, the glory of the divine. This is observable in all seven texts of this subsection: both in the hymns to Surya, Savitri, and Agni, who together constitute "the light of the Gods,"⁶ and also in the less personified theology of Light as the inner Self and the power of Brahman. "The formless is the real; it is Brahman; it is Light," says one Upanishad,⁷ and another affirms that it is the same that shines within the person."⁸ Furthermore, this light has no need of the cosmic luminaries in order to shine:⁹

That splendor which is from the sun, which illumines
this whole world,
which is in the moon and in fire--know that splendor
as also mine. 10

This universal symbol of Light is surely one of the best symbols Man has found to express the delicate balance that almost all cultures have tried to maintain, with varying success, between a merely this-worldly or atheistic attitude and a totally otherworldly or transcendent attitude. There must be some link between the world of Men and the world of the Gods, between the material and the spiritual, the immanent and the transcendent. If this link is of a substantial nature, pantheism is unavoidable. If the link is exclusively epistemic, as Indian and many other scholasticisms tend to affirm, the reality of this world will ultimately vanish. The symbol of Light avoids these two pitfalls by allowing for a specific sharing in its nature by both worlds or even by the "three worlds."

This is the supreme light spoken of in the Rig Veda¹¹ and in the Brahmanas;¹² it is mentioned also in the Chandogya Upanishad¹³ and in the well-known prayer of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad: "Lead me from darkness to light!"¹⁴ It is also the refulgent light of the golden vessel stationed in the dwelling place of the Divine: "The impregnable stronghold of the Gods has eight circles and nine gates. It contains a golden vessel, turned toward heaven and suffused with light."¹⁵ This light is neither exclusively divine nor exclusively human, neither merely material nor merely spiritual, neither from this side only nor from the other. It is precisely this fact that "links the two shores." This light is cosmic as well as transcosmic.

The Joy of Every Single Eye
Sham no bhava cakshasa

1 If we conceive of Surya as a Galilean body or a Newtonian star (though Newton still believed that angels directed the movements of the heavenly bodies) we shall not understand this magnificent prayer for Light and to Light. This chant is uttered from two perspectives: that of distance from the cosmos, so that Man can take the initiative in asking for favors, and that of harmony with and participation in the cosmos, for Man is aware that he himself fits harmoniously into the complex pattern of the universe. It is both a cosmic and a personal prayer because Surya is also both matter and spirit, physical and divine, the sun and the light, exterior and interior. Human happiness, the hymn suggests, is not exclusively psychological or exclusively physiological well-being; it is a matter neither of pure subjectivity nor of sheer objectivity. It is, rather, the result of a complete harmony in which the parts are not treated in an egalitarian way, as if all sparks of being had the same ontological density. This prayer does not ask for miracles or for privileges; it asks for the realization, active and passive, of true universal harmony. It recognizes that there is such a thing as physical law, but that there are also other factors involved in the operation of the universe which are open to and even solicit human entreaty.

The whole hymn is pervaded by a parallelism between the spiritual and the material; it expresses both dimensions at the same

time so that we discover their radical unity. Surya, the sun, dispels tamas (the forces of darkness, the inertia of matter) and jyotis, his light, banishes spiritual gloom, anira. The sun's rays arouse the whole universe and are invoked particularly to remove sorrow and distress.

Surya is not only the sun; he is also light and warmth and life. He is time, for he measures all movement and all dynamism depends upon him.¹⁶ Surya is called vishvakarman,¹⁷ "all-creator," but he himself has been created: his father is Dyu, the heaven (v. 1). The Gods place him beyond the ocean,¹⁸ while as a manifestation of Agni he stands in heaven.¹⁹ He shines for Men and Gods alike.²⁰ He is the eye of the Gods.²¹ All creatures depend on him.²² He is one of the most powerful theandric symbols, for, though not the supreme godhead, he shares fully in both worlds and combines in himself all spheres of reality. Among the Gods he is the priest.²³

Sham no bhava cakshasa

RV X, 37

1. Homage to the Eye of Mitra and Varuna!
To the mighty God offer this worship
to the farseeing emblem, born of the Gods.
Sing praise to the Sun, the offspring of Heaven.
2. May this word of Truth guard me on all sides,
while earth and heaven and days endure.
To its rest goes all else that moves, but never
do the waters cease flowing or the sun rising.
3. From ancient days no godless man
obstructs your path when you drive the winged sun-horse.
Your one dark side is turned eastward; with the other,
the light-filled side, you arise, O Sun.
4. By your light, O Sun, which scatters gloom,
by your rays which arouse the whole creation,
dispel from our hearts all languor, all neglect
of worship, all grief and evil dreams.
5. Sent forth as an envoy upon your course,
you superintend each creature's welfare,
rising with calm unvarying. May the Gods
grant us to achieve our goal today!
6. This prayer of ours may Heaven and Earth,
the Waters, Indra, and the Maruts heed!
May we never be deprived of the Sun's shining,
may we attain old age in happiness!
7. Keen of mind and keen of sight,
free from sickness, free from sin,
rich in children, may we see you rise
as a friend, O Sun, till a long life's end!
8. O farseeing Sun, the bearer of Light,
the joy of every single eye,
may we live to see your glorious radiance
flooding in as you ascend on high!
9. You shine, all living things emerge.
You disappear, they go to rest.
Recognizing our innocence, O golden-haired Sun,
arise; let each day be better than the last.
10. Bless us by your gaze, your brightness and shining.
Bless us in cold and in heat. O Sun,
grant us blessings at home and, when we are traveling,
bestow upon us your wonderful treasure.
11. Protect both our species, two-legged and four-legged.
Both food and water for their needs supply.
May they with us increase in stature and strength.
Save us from hurt all our days, O Powers!

12. Whatever grave offense we have committed against you,
by our tongue, O God, or by carelessness of mind,
lay the burden of this sin on the one who plans evil,
on him, O Vasus, who wishes us ill.

1. Worship: Rita, sacrifice and also song, speech.
Emblem: ketu, sign, banner, often used for the sun.

2. Word of Truth: satyokti.

3. Godless man: adeva, "Ungott" (Geldner).
Obstructs: ni-vas-, obscure verb.
Sun-horse: Etasha.

4. Light: jyotis.
Languor: an-ira, want of vigor, loss of spirit.
Neglect of worship: an-ahuti, nonsacrifice, i.e., lack of offerings, desecration.

5. With calm unvarying: a-helayat, without excitement, without causing anger; svadha anu, spontaneously, willingly,
according to wont.

7. Keen of mind and keen of sight: lit. good thinking and good seeing, sumanas, sucakshas.

11. O Powers: devah.
The Supreme Light
Jyotir uttamam

2 There is no doubt that Surya means the sun, though the word is applied in the first place to the heavenly sphere described by the solar star and not to that solar star itself. But there is more doubt as to what "sun" really means. Whereas for the poets, for instance, Savitri appears to be connected with the sun but in no way identified with it, and whereas other minor solar deities, such as Bhaga, Aryaman, Pushan, and so on, represent certain of the functions of the sun, Surya undoubtedly refers to the whole complex reality that Vedic Man discerned in the sun.

A red bird he now
has entered the womb
of the primeval Father.²⁴

He appears in a chariot drawn by one or more steeds or bay mares. His rays are described as "seven horses;" his "mares" are called "the daughters of his chariot." He is omnipresent:

Surya has pervaded air and earth and heaven.
He is the soul of all that moves and moves not.²⁵
His radiance is hymned tirelessly; his shining in the sky is worshiped as the apotheosis of Agni, the Sacred Fire.²⁶

His appearance at dawn is majestic and the Rig Veda succeeds in conveying the solemnity in which Men, animals, plants, and the whole earth are enthralled. It is he who proclaims the hour of the ritual sacrifice and the resumption of human activity:

All radiant from the bosom of the Morning,
Surya, delight of singers, now ascends.
Brilliant, farsighted, he rises in the heavens.
His end is far, he hastens on, light-giving.
Inspired by him, men go about their business,
accomplishing their tasks whatever they may be.²⁷
His light and warmth impart life to all beings:

At all times may we be of daring courage
and witness always the rising of the sun.²⁸
Hymn I, 50 of the Rig Veda starts with a description of the progressive emergence of the Light "which knows all living

things" (v. 1). At his approach the stars and night steal away like thieves (v. 2); rays of warm light shine upon mortal men (v. 3); then, having displayed the glory of his light (vv. 4 sq), he mounts in his chariot drawn by his seven bright mares (vv. 8 sq). The last stanza eulogizes Surya as the God of Gods and the expression of the Supreme Light.

We may pause here for a moment. Man until very recent times had only two sources of light: the heavenly bodies--the Sun and the Moon with the Stars--and Fire. Or should we not say rather that Light manifested itself in two different ways, a heavenly way and an earthly way? Without these two sources of light eternal darkness would cover the earth (and Man also). In the dark we may well be quiet and not moving; the static predominates, but without movement life would soon stifle. Now light was of two kinds: a cold one represented by the moon (the stars being negligible for, though they are certainly "visible," they do not permit vision; i.e., they do not enable men to see) and a hot one embodied in the two fundamental symbols of light: Sun and Fire. Man knew that Light was fundamentally Sun and Fire, but he had the blessed ignorance of not "understanding" sun and fire as merely a process of oxidization or a "loss of electrons" or as a simple combustion. He knew a great deal about the nature of light, even if he did not know that light manifests itself only in or as a certain wavelength. In any event, Vedic Man knew that light is one of those fundamental terms that are not exhausted by any rational or emotional, material or spiritual, approach. The word expresses many things simultaneously precisely because it does not stand for a "thing." One of the symbols of Light is the Sun or, in order to convey the Vedic meaning of this expression, we could reverse it and say that one of the symbols of the Sun is Light. We may recall that by symbol we do not understand a merely epistemic sign, that is, a kind of arrow for our mind pointing toward something else, this latter being the "real" thing.²⁹ A symbol is the thing itself as it manifests itself; it is the proper appearance of the thing itself, not an artificial disguise but its proper ontic garb. The symbol is not a sign of another thing but is the very expression of the thing; the symbol always symbolizes itself as symbolized. In this sense Sun and Light are symbolically connected.

Agni is Light; Light is the Sun. Praise!
This is the Evening.
The Sun is Light; Light is Agni. Praise!
This is the Morning.³⁰

A glimpse of this vision unifying, though not confused is given in the hymn.

Jyotir uttamam

RV I, 50

1. His shining beams now introduce
the God who knows all living things,
that all may see the Sun.
2. Accompanying the somber Night,
the stars, like thieves, now steal away
at the all-seeing Sun's approach.
3. His herald rays are seen from far,
shining on the homes of men like tongues
of fire that burn and blaze.
4. Swift and beautiful are you,
O Sun, maker of the Light, who illumines
all the radiant sky.
5. You shine upon the host of Gods
and likewise on the race of men, that all
may see the heavenly Light.
6. With this your Eye, O pure Varuna,
you keep strict watch upon the man
who moves among the peoples.
7. You steer your path across the sky,
O Sun, across the realms of space,
measuring the days by means of your shining,
observing all that comes to birth.
8. Seven bay mares drawing your chariot
conduct you, O far-seeing God,
Surya of the flaming hair.
9. The Sun has harnessed his seven mares,
the shining daughters of his chariot.

He advances driving his well-trained team.

10. Gazing be dark we reach
the supreme Light and attain the Sun,
the God of Gods, the Light.

1. Sun: Surya.

4. Maker of the Light: jyotish-krt.

7. Shining: aktu, can also mean night.

8. Seven bay mares: symbolizing the seven rays of the sun, sometimes the seven poetic meters.

10. Supreme Light: jyotir uttamam, highest Light. Cf. CU III 17, 7 (§ III 6). Cf. also AV VII, 53, 7.

11-13. Omitted.

The Dispeller of Darkness
Tamase viprce

3 Light and Darkness are correlated. Surya shines on both Men and Gods, as we have already seen.³¹ He illumines the whole world,³² and he sees what is happening in the entire universe.³³ Moreover, he performs the function of suffusing everything with light precisely because he dispels darkness.³⁴ He is, in fact, "the God who rolled up darkness like a skin,"³⁵ and he triumphs over "things unseen" and evil spirits.³⁶ His rays push down the darkness beneath the waters, as we are going to read.

In the following hymn this process is described in a magnificently simple way in the form of a morning song. Every morning the world reminds us that the light has power to overcome darkness in a way no less mysterious than the way in which the sun, though unsupported, does not fall down into the abyss which is a marvel, even if we think we know the "laws" by which the heavenly bodies cohere.

An important point to stress here is the absence of any tendency toward dualism. Light and Darkness are not on the same plane; they are not two forces of equal strength or two parallel principles governing the world. Tamas (i.e., darkness and the forces of evil) exists and is powerful enough to give us a realistic picture of the world's situation; but it is not to be compared with the radiance of Light, with the power of the Sun, with the healing forces of Surya.³⁷ To put it paradoxically but with rigorous logic: it is precisely by their not receiving the light that evil and darkness are vanquished. If they were to receive the light they would swallow it and convert it into darkness; their refusal is their defeat. The Dispeller of Darkness is stronger. Light is here not only the antagonist of Darkness; it is its other side. Let us not forget that Light is dark and that it becomes luminous only when it illumines (things, objects). What we see is only the outer or upper side. Light always shines out of Darkness; otherwise it would not shine.³⁸

Tamase viprce

RV IV, 13

1. Fire has gazed benignly
on the shining wealth-giving Dawn.
Come, Spirits, to your worshipers' dwellings.
The Sun rises in splendor!
2-3. The Sun-God extends far his radiance,
unfurling his flag in the sky,
like a strong man bent on spoil.
The higher Gods ply their course.
Masters of unchallenged domains,
they send forth the Sun on his way
with never-failing precision.
The Sun, dispeller of darkness,
whose eye contemplates all things,

is borne onward by seven shining mares.

4-5. His mighty steeds advance
inexorably, like a spider's web,
rending the night's dark robe.
The rays of the Sun, quivering,
push down beneath the waters
the darkness, like a heavy hide.
How strange the Sun! Untethered,
unsupported, he hangs in space.
What inner power propels him?
Who can observe it? He guards
heaven's vault, the sky's pillar.

1. Fire: Agni.
Spirits: Ashvins.
Sun: Surya throughout.

2-3. Sun-God: Savitri.
The higher Gods: Varuna and Mitra.
The Mediator
Agnim ile purohitam

4 Agni is, along with Indra, the God most frequently mentioned in the Rig Veda (over two hundred hymns are dedicated to him); he represents in fact one of the cornerstones of the Vedic world structure.³⁹ He is one of the most comprehensive symbols of the Reality that is all-encompassing, of the Divine, we might say, if by this word we understand not only an abstract Absolute but also a Relative, insofar as this latter is the Relative of and to the Absolute (which by this very fact ceases to be absolute, i.e., unrelated). Agni represents, in point of fact, the theanthropocosmic transcendental dimension of all that is. No other symbol has this richness and this underlying unity.⁴⁰ No wonder that most of the theories about the Vedic theophanies are at a loss when they seek to compartmentalize Agni and to docket him in one of the neat and clear-cut divisions of the Vedic pantheon. Agni, like life-giving warmth, is spread everywhere.⁴¹

Agni is, first of all, a divine epiphany; he is leader of the Gods,⁴² a kind of minister plenipotentiary of the Gods,⁴³ an envoy both among the Gods⁴⁴ and between them and Men;⁴⁵ he is the priest of the Gods,⁴⁶ their tongue,⁴⁷ and the spokesman to them on behalf of Men. Even more, he gives immortality to the Gods,⁴⁸ is superior in wisdom to the rest,⁴⁹ gives them strength,⁵⁰ and "encompasses" them.⁵¹ Indeed, all the Gods worship him,⁵² for he sets a watch over them⁵³ and commands them.⁵⁴ Nor is this all: he is the wise one among the Gods,⁵⁵ God among the Gods, first in rank,⁵⁶ the spirit of the Gods,⁵⁷ their Father and their son.⁵⁸ In one place he is actually called the "Father of his father."⁵⁹

At the same time Agni's relationship with the Gods is ambivalent: the Gods beget him,⁶⁰ create him,⁶¹ put him on earth among Men as their friend;⁶² they appoint him as offerer⁶³ and make him strong.⁶⁴ He in his turn invites the Gods to the place of sacrifice and worships them,⁶⁵ intercedes for Men, and asks for the favor of the Gods,⁶⁶ whose good friend he is said to be.⁶⁷ In short, Agni is the divine priestly and sacrificial agent, bringing into existence the whole of reality.⁶⁸

In the second place, Agni has a clearly terrestrial character. "We pay homage to Agni, who dwells in the earth," says one Upanishad.⁶⁹ He is a cosmic power. He is the Fire, he is earthly, "the navel of the earth,"⁷⁰ the "fruit of the womb of the world;"⁷¹ he makes the sun rise in the sky;⁷² he is in fact the sun itself;⁷³ he is the seed of all,⁷⁴ the leader of the world,⁷⁵ the lord of the earth,⁷⁶ which he even eats,⁷⁷ fecundating everything.⁷⁸ He is at the same time the "king in the waters,"⁷⁹ and yet their child,⁸⁰ for it is said that the waters are his mothers.⁸¹ Before his presence heaven and earth tremble,⁸² though they follow his will⁸³ and are his wives.⁸⁴

Third, he is the head of the heavens;⁸⁵ his light⁸⁶ and his strength are manifested in both heaven and earth.⁸⁷ He goes between heaven and earth,⁸⁸ sustains the sky,⁸⁹ and maintains the earth:⁹⁰

With fiery brightness, like a lover of Dawn,
he has linked the two worlds with the light of heaven.⁹¹

We note, furthermore, that Agni is one of the most anthropomorphic symbols. He is not only born and even has many births⁹² (he is the only one in the Rig Veda called dvijanman, "having two births"),⁹³ but he also grows⁹⁴ and develops,⁹⁵

eats,⁹⁶ and possesses human features such as head, mouth, teeth, body, and so on. Practically all creatures are on various occasions said to be his parents⁹⁷ and he also possesses more sublime parents such as rita,⁹⁸ Strength,⁹⁹ the supreme Father,¹⁰⁰ and so on. He is also the guest of every house and family,¹⁰¹ the friend,¹⁰² the closest friend.¹⁰³ He, the immortal, dwells among Men.¹⁰⁴

Throughout, Agni has a markedly trinitarian structure. He is at one and the same time cosmic, human, and divine; he has a threefold birth,¹⁰⁵ three heads,¹⁰⁶ and three bodies.¹⁰⁷ The Gods have made him threefold¹⁰⁸ and he dwells in the three places. ¹⁰⁹ It is this character that makes him the mediator par excellence. Here perhaps it is appropriate to draw attention to the fundamental distinction between a mediator and an intermediary. The latter is only a broker, or at most an agent; he is not involved with either party, for he constitutes an external link; he is certainly a means of communication, but not of communion, for he separates as much as he unites; an intermediary functions as a middleman for purposes of exchange of material or spiritual goods. Not so the mediator. He is involved, because he himself belongs to both sides and has a stake in both camps; he is at home on the two shores and partakes in both spheres. This idea is developed further in the section dedicated to sacrifice: Agni is the triple sacrificial fire, he is the mediator rather than the intermediary, he is the priest of both worlds, that of the Gods and that of Men.¹¹⁰

He, master and envoy, coming to both worlds,
the herald well-established, great High Priest of men.¹¹¹

Agni is the one who presents the sacrifice, renders it acceptable and pleasing, transforms and divinizes the gifts offered, and brings together the whole cosmos. Indeed, his ability to transform is total. His burning flame of sacrifice may also consume sins and wickedness, demons and foes.¹¹² Nothing can withstand him; everything must be burned, transmuted into light. Connected with this attribute is another aspect of Agni, infrequently mentioned but nonetheless important: the terrible corpse-consuming (kravyad) fire of the funeral pyre.¹¹³ This flame, though impure by reason of its contact with the corpse, has power nevertheless to remove all stains and all traces of evil.

The following hymn is the first hymn of the Rig Veda. Addressed to Agni, it is a unique prayer in which praise, description, and a whole theology of sacrifice are expressed with admirable simplicity and a high degree of poetic harmony.

Agnim ile purohitam

RV I, 1

1. I magnify the Lord, the divine,
the Priest, minister of the sacrifice,
the offerer, supreme giver of treasure.
2. Worthy is the Lord to be praised
by living as by ancient seers.
He makes present for us the Gods.
3. The Lord brings us riches, food
in daily abundance, renown,
and hero sons to gladden our hearts.
4. Only that worship and sacrifice
that you, Lord, guard on every side
will reach the heavenly world of the Gods.
5. May the Lord, wise and true offerer,
approach, most marvelous in splendor,
encircled with his crown of Gods!
6. Whatever gift you may choose
to give, O Lord, to your worshiper,
that gift, refulgent One, is true.
7. To you, dispeller of the night,
we come with daily prayer
offering to you our reverence.
8. For you are Lord of sacrifice,
enlightener, shepherd of the world,
who wax mighty in your own abode.
9. So, like a father to his sons,
be to us easy of entreaty.
Stay with us, O Lord, for our joy.

1. Already given as the general Antiphon for the whole anthology.

Lord: Agni throughout. In this first hymn Agni is invoked three times as priest (sacrificer or offerer), viz., purohita, rtvij, hotr.

Giver of treasure: ratnadhatama (superlative).

2. Seers: rishis, prophets.

Makes present: vakshati is from the root vah-, i.e., lead, conduct.

The Gods: devah, may also mean powers.

3. Riches: rayi. Cf. §§ I 4; II 6; II 34; VII Introductions.

4. You guard on every side: lit. your presence filling every side.

Will reach . . . : lit. verily goes straight to the Gods.

5. Lit. may the God come (to us) with all the Gods (as his crown).

6. Worshiper: or servant from the root dash-.

7. Night: dosha.

Prayer: dhi, meditation, thought (cf. dhyana, meditation).

8. Wax mighty in your own abode: reference to the receptacle on the altar holding the fire, but internal growth is also suggested. Cf. RV VI, 9, 4 (§ III 5).

The Universal Lord

Agni vaishvanara

5 "Agni is well known in the Rig Veda under the title vaishvanara: he who belongs to all Men."¹¹⁴ He belongs to all Men by virtue of his attribute of light, both external and internal. The hymn starts with the appearance of Agni the Universal, whose light scatters shadows. Then the sage, dazzled by the light, can no longer express what he senses to be behind it. He confesses his inability to grasp the mystery of reality by using a metaphor well known in olden times, the metaphor of weaving. The loom upon which the thread is stretched represents the sacrifice, not only with reference to its outward ritual performance in time but also to its timeless dimension. The thread that he does not find in the debating contest among the sages, ¹¹⁵ since he mistrusts all human discourse, is the link (the "religio") between Men and Gods. The sage acknowledges that the mystery is beyond him. It is Agni alone, the Shepherd of Immortality, who is able to find words to unravel the mystery; he knows the thread.¹¹⁶ The poet is no better than his own father and master. There follows a magnificent paean of praise to Agni, cosmic light, the light of both fire and sun and also that immortal inner light, sole source of inspiration, which illumines the mind (mind being compared to the swiftest of all the birds of heaven). In verse 6 the poet, wholly absorbed in his contemplation, is rendered speechless by his own intuition, which transcends his faculties. Awed and overcome by the beauty and depth of his vision (before which even the Gods tremble, for it is a mystery both of darkness and light), the poet concludes with a final chant of praise to Agni, the universal, the immortal.

We have here a fine example of that meeting of opposites which is so characteristic of any theandric symbol. Agni is known and unknown, far and near, bright and dark. One beautiful stanza puts it most poignantly:

We know your three powers in three forms, O Agni,
your forms diversified in many places.

We know the supreme name you have in secret.¹¹⁷

We know the source from which you have proceeded.

How can Agni have a secret name if we know it? We may say, with Indian scholasticism, that it is secret, that is, unknown to those who do not know the Vedas, and this could lead to magic and priestcraft. It is also possible to say that the secrecy of the name stands for the transcendence and inaccessibility of the Divine, and this, equally, could lead to religious hypocrisy. If we know that there is a transcendence, then, insofar as we know it, it is no longer transcendence: it enters into the domain of our knowledge. It is here that the Vedic Revelation, as on many other occasions, is shown to be bold and to possess a liberating power. It unveils without desecrating; it reveals without profaning. It declares that his name is veiled, and secret,¹¹⁸ but declares nevertheless that we know it, that we know that his name is not noised abroad, is not this or that; that it is not to be expressed in any known name, because it is the most internal and hidden element of any name and may be concealed in any name. It is not a special name that nobody knows or that only specialists may discover. It is universal and also ineffable: "What shall I utter, what my mind envisage?" The universal lordship of the Lord is so secret because it is everywhere revealed; it is so invisible because it does not conceal itself. It requires only an attentive and loving eye. It is an open secret

hidden in its infinite manifestations.

Agni vaishvanara

RV VI, 9

1. The day is dark and also bright. These two hemispheres, thanks to their own intelligence, revolve. Once born, the Universal Lord, the Monarch, thrust back by his own light the encroaching darkness.
 2. I know not how to stretch the threads or weave or discern the pattern of those who weave in the contest. Whose son will be the one to speak so well as to surpass, advancing from below, his father?
 3. He who knows how to stretch the thread and weave in their due time the proper words will speak. He, the Shepherd of Immortality, knows it. Though moving below he sees beyond any other.
 4. Behold, then, the Priest, the first to perform the priestly function. He is for mortal men the immortal Light. He is born and is seated among us, not to be shaken, the immortal, increasing constantly in his own body.
 5. A steady light is set for men to gaze on, of all the moving things the swiftest Mind! All spirits divine with but one thought and intention proceed unerring toward that unique Splendor.
 6. My hearing fades away, my eyes grow dim. The light that dwells within my heart grows brighter. Far roams my mind, its confines overleaping. What shall I utter, what my mind envisage?
 7. In fear and trembling all the Gods hailed you, O Lord, when you abode amidst the darkness. O Universal Lord, accord us your grace. May the Immortal now bestow his grace upon us!

1. Day and night rotate in ways intelligible to themselves or to their intelligence. Once born: jayamana, as soon as risen, begotten, born (the triple metaphor running throughout). The Universal Lord: Agni vaishvanara (also in v. 7).

2. The sacrificial connotations of this text refer to the liturgical structure of the universe. Advancing from below . . . : could also be translated as being younger (inferior) to his father.

3. Reference to transcendence and immanence: though living among men here below, he sees beyond and above. Shepherd of Immortality: amrtasya gopa.

4. Priest: hotr. Increasing . . . : growing, developing, progressing in his own self, body, person.

5. Spirits divine: devah.

6. The stanza describes an ecstatic form of consciousness. Cf. RV I, 164, 37 (§ I 11).

7. Lord: Agni.
 The Inner Light
 Atmajyotis

6 We pass now from the texts that are centered on the mystery of light to the inner light which is the main subject of this

group of Upanishadic texts but which we should not interpret in an exaggeratedly acosmic way. The process of interiorization which goes on in the Upanishads is not disconnected from the cosmological setting. Inner light it certainly is, but the Sun is still its best and living symbol. Even when all the cosmological lights are transcended, as in the passages of the Brihadaranyaka and the Mundaka Upanishads, explicit reference is made to all five cosmic sources of light: sun, moon, stars, lightning, and earthly fire. This Light of lights is none other than the Light that illumines all those other lights: it is the source of all the lights in the universe. It is the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which, having said that God is "the Lord of what was and what shall be," adds that "Him the Gods revere as Light of lights."¹¹⁹

Within the cosmological representations of the time, the five cosmic lights present no underlying physical unity; Vedic Man does not imagine that all these lights can be seen as the same physicochemical process. But he imagines, in a similar way, that there is a supreme light, transcendent and immanent, which is the source of all these other lights. The discoverer of the atman, he who realizes the core of all things and the ultimate dimension of everything, must also discover this inner light. Even more, one could say that there is here a criterion for the authenticity of spiritual realization. The truly realized Man is a light to himself and is himself radiant for others. God is Light, the atman is Light, and so the Man who has realized the atman is self-luminous and radiant. In many traditions we can readily find examples of the luminosity of the saints, of the aura of the jivan-muktas.

A text given later¹²⁰ tells us the dynamism by which we reach the inner light. It is described as a piercing, as by an arrow, of all intermediate stages, as an overcoming of darkness by penetrating it and going beyond, and as the discovery of reality as a wheel of fire and as the source of the light of both sun and moon, lightning and fire.¹²¹

Atmajyotis

SURY U 71

i) Glory to God the shining.
Protect me from death.
Glory to God the resplendent,
the First Cause of all.
May the Sun in the East, may the Sun in the West,
may the Sun in the North, may the Sun in the South,
may the Sun give perfect life,
with long life endow us.
PRASN U I, 6-7

ii) 6. The Sun, when rising, enters the eastern regions and gathers in his beams all the breath of life that is in the East. When he illumines the other regions, the South, the West, and the North, below, above, and in between, then he gathers in his beams the whole of the breath of life.

7. Thus arises the Sun as Fire, the universal Life-Breath which assumes every form.
BU IV, 3, 1-6

iii) 1. Yajnavalkya was going to visit Janaka, King of Videha. He thought to himself, "I will not say anything." Once, however, when Janaka, King of Videha, and Yajnavalkya were conversing together at an agnihotra sacrifice, Yajnavalkya granted the former a favor. The King chose to ask whatever question he wished and Yajnavalkya granted him this request. So the king proceeded to ask:

2. "Yajnavalkya, what serves as a light for man?"

"The sun, your Majesty," he replied. "For it is with the sun for a light that he sits, moves around, does his work, and returns again."

"Quite so, Yajnavalkya."

3. "But when the sun has set, Yajnavalkya, what then serves as a light for man?"

"Then the moon serves as his light," said he, "for it is with the moon for a light that he sits, moves around, does his work, and returns again."

"Quite so, Yajnavalkya."

4. "But when the sun has set, Yajnavalkya, and the moon has set, what then serves as a light for man?"

"Then fire serves as his light," said he, "for it is with fire for a light that he sits, moves around, does his work, and returns again."

"Quite so, Yajnavalkya."

5. "But when the sun has set and the moon has set and the fire has gone out, what then serves as a light for man?"

"Then speech serves as his light," said he, "for it is with speech as his light that he sits, moves around, does his work, and returns again. Therefore, O Majesty, when a man cannot see even his own hands, but a voice is uttered, then he goes straight toward it."

"Quite so, Yajnavalkya."

6. "But when the sun has set and the moon has set and the fire has gone out and speech is silenced, what then serves as a light for man?"

"Then the Self serves as his light," said he, "for it is with the Self as his light that he sits, moves around, does his work, and returns again."

CU III, 17, 7

iv) The early morning light we see
emerging from the primordial seed
and gleaming higher than the heaven.
And from the darkness that surrounds us,
gazing upon the highest heaven,
we attain to the Sun, the God of Gods,
the Highest Light, the Highest Light.
CU III, 13, 7

v) There is a Light that shines above this heaven, above all worlds, above everything that exists in the highest worlds beyond which there are no higher--this is the Light that shines within man.
SU V, 4

vi) Even as the radiance of the Sun
enlightens all regions, above, below,
and slantwise, so that only God,
glorious and worthy of worship, rules
over all his creation.
MUND U II, 2, 9-10

vii) In the highest golden sheath is the Godhead,
unsullied, indivisible; pure is it,
the Light of lights. He who knows the Self knows it.
Neither sun nor moon nor stars shine there.
Neither lightning nor fire finds there a place.
With the radiance of that Light alone all things shine.
That radiance illumines all this world.
MAHANAR U 1-2; 152-156

viii) 1. In the boundless waters in the center of the universe,
on the back of the firmament, greater than the great,
2. having suffused with his splendor all the lights,
the Lord of beings stirs within the womb.
152. He who is the guardian in the center of the universe,

153. he who [bestows] the worlds to virtuous people,
and the golden glow of death,

154. that golden light established in heaven and on earth,

155. may he bestow on us that light!

156. The cosmic waters glow. I am Light!
The light glows. I am Brahman!

i) God: Mitra.

Sun: Savitri.

May the Sun give perfect life: provide all things, suvatu sarvatatim, from the root su-, to vivify, set in motion, to create, to

bring forth, to yield; sarvatati: totality, wholeness, perfect happiness, or prosperity.

ii) 3-5; 8. Cf. § II 6.

iii) 1. "I will not say anything": another variant reads, "I am going to speak with him" (sam enena vadishya iti). Whatever question he wished: kamaprashna, cf. SB XI, 6, 2, 10.

5. Speech: vac, voice, sound.

6. The Self (atman) is the "light within the heart" (hrdyantarjyotih), cf. BU IV, 3, 7.

iv) 1-6. Cf. § III 27.

From RV VIII, 6, 30. Cf. RV I, 50, 10 (AV VII, 53, 7; § III 2). The passage from death to life is homologized to a rebirth into light. The preceding passage of the same U explains that there are three thoughts upon which one must take firm hold at the moment of bodily death.

vii) 1-2. Cf. § VI 3.

3-4. Cf. § VI 12.

5-8. Cf. § VI 5.

9. Cf. § VI II.

The Light of lights: jyotisham jyotih the source of all other luminaries. Cf. KathU V, 15 (§ V 5); SU VI, 14 (practically the same text); and also BG XV, 6.

viii) 1. Waters: ambhas, the original fluid, also the heavenly water.

2. Lord of beings: Prajapati.

Womb: garbha, cf. the hiranyagarbha myth. Prajapati is also the "firstborn" from the cosmic womb.

3-4. Cf. § V 18.

153. Worlds to virtuous people: punyaktan lokan, i.e., the worlds (heaven) merited by good deeds.

Golden glow of death: cf. IsU 15 (§ VII 31) where the "golden vessel" covering the face of truth could be understood as death.

156. Cosmic waters: adra, the humidity of the original waters. One can observe four steps in this condensed text, starting from the cosmogonic up to the realization of Brahman.

157-158. Cf. § VI 9.

The Splendor of God

Brahmatejas

7 Reality is luminous. The core of all things is the divine light dwelling in the heart of all. Light is within, but also without. Light shines in the innermost structure of things but is not imprisoned there. There is a divine splendor enwrapping everything but visible only when the inner and outer obstacles are removed. We do not see light, as we cannot see the seer or know the knower.¹²² We see by means of and in light. The Bhagavad Gita culminates in the luminous revelation of the Lord in the famous eleventh chapter: the Lord is transfigured, his splendor is seen to illuminate all things, and yet he regains his human form, "the body of a friend."¹²³

The shruti does not enter into any scholastic controversy, whether the way of knowledge or that of love has the first rank among the paths toward realization. The Gita is explicit in stating that this highest form of the Supreme "which even the Gods yearn to see"¹²⁴ can be known only (again jnana!) in and through love, bhakti, devotion to Him.¹²⁵

Brahmatejas

BG VII, 8-11

i) 8. The savor in the waters am I, the light
in the moon and the sun.

I am the Om in all Vedas, the sound
in space, in men vigor.

9. I am the sweet fragrance of earth
and of fire the brilliance.

I am the life within all beings,
the fervor in ascetics.

10. Know that I am the eternal seed
of every being.

I am the intelligence of the intelligent,
the glory of the glorious.

11. I am the strength of the strong, devoid
of desire and attachment.

I am the Love within all beings,
never contrary to Right.

XI, 12; 17

ii) 12. If suddenly the splendor of a thousand suns
shone forth in the sky,
such a shining might faintly resemble the glory
of that Supreme Self.

17. I dimly discern you, glory upon glory,
your crown, mace, and discus,
blazing on all sides, like fire, like the Sun,
incomprehensible.

XIII, 17

iii) He is the Light of all lights, averred
to be beyond darkness.

He dwells as Consciousness, its object and its goal,
in the hearts of all.

i) 8. Savor: rasa, taste, flavor, sapidity.

Space: akasha, the atmosphere that produces sound.

Vigor: paurusha, manhood.

10. Intelligence: buddhi, insight, intellect.

Glory: tejas, splendor, radiance, glow, energy, vital power, the tip of a flame (or the point of a knife), from a verb meaning to sharpen, etc.

11. Love: kama, desire.

Right: dharma, duty.

iii) Cf. BU IV, 4, 16 and MundU II, 2, 10 (§ III 6).

Beyond darkness: cf. MundU II, 2, 6 (§ VI 5); SU III, 8 (§ VI 7); MaitU VI, 24 (§ VI 12); BG VIII, 9.

In the hearts of all: cf. SU III, 13 (§ VI 7); IV, 20.

b) Cosmic Splendor in Man

Yashas

Modern Man tends to define himself as a bundle of needs and he asserts his right to the fulfillment of such needs. He needs food, clothing, shelter, "education," and work, and modern society is theoretically organized so as to provide for his needs. The Vedic view seems to be concerned less with organizing society and more with personal fulfillment. Instead of justice, glory seems to be the central value: a glorious Man and a glorious community.

Human glory seems here to be less an imitation of the divine glory than a participation in the universal and indeed divine splendor of creation. Man's glory is not a reflection of God's glory but a sharing in the very splendor of God by a full

realization of the human function in the universal adventure of reality. In other words, the underlying pattern is not a dualistic one, with the lower instance striving to imitate and reach the higher one, but a pluralistic structure in which each being, including both the Gods and material things, has its own proper function.

Yet this pluralistic structure implies a unitarian basis. Each being can realize itself and reach its own plenitude because each plays its part in the one harmonious and perfect pattern that admits no final incompatibilities. It is the privilege of Man to discover this pattern and thus to be able to realize the ideal described in the Isha Upanishad: to see all beings in his own self and his own self in all things.¹²⁶ This constitutes true human plenitude and an absence of delusion and sorrow.¹²⁷ The thirst for perfection, the striving for an ever better human situation, are inherent in Man. All depends, however, upon one's notion of perfection. What is the perfect Man? What is the ideal or model for Man?

The texts of this subsection illustrate a certain fundamental trait of the Vedic tradition and at the same time show its evolution and pluralism. The fundamental trait is deliberately suggested by the title: Cosmic Splendor in Man. Human plenitude is not attained by isolation from the rest of the world, nor does it consist in the development of one part of the human being. Man integrates in himself all the realms of the world and he radiates the splendor of the entire universe. Man is not the victim of blind cosmic forces nor is he a mere cog in the cosmic wheel; his situation is neither that of an absolute monarch nor of a slave cursed with the burden of responsibility. All such ideas are foreign and inappropriate here. The underlying idea is one of wholeness, of integration. The perfect Man is not he who merely possesses a pure mind or a healthy body, for perfection implies a certain integration of all existing human values. At the same time our texts show a variation in emphasis and even a wide pluralism in their understanding of this wholeness.

The first text, from the Atharva Veda (XIX, 51), sees human perfection as an undivided, integrated life not only embracing the entire human realm but also daring to embrace the divine.

The second hymn, taken from the Rig Veda (X, 158), evidences the same desire to embrace the whole of reality, but seems to be more concerned with encompassing the whole of the cosmic creation. Man does not want to be excommunicated from the world; he longs to embrace it by a single glance, both as a whole and in all its details. The happy life is here not to look at God, but to see the reality of the world face to face, in its entirety and in all its concrete particulars.

The following prayer, from the Yajur Veda (XXXVI), constitutes part of a ceremony and has a cultic character. The wholeness is here seen as harmony and peace, with Man having his own place in the framework of the universe. Disorder is the curse and the sin. Human perfection consists in being integrated in an orderly manner into the whole scheme of things.

The same atmosphere is breathed in another prayer, also from the Yajur Veda. It is addressed to Agni and asks for well-being of body, life, and mind and for whatever else may be needed for our perfection.

The two other excerpts from the Atharva Veda (III, 22; VI, 38) portray Man's longing to reach the summit of creation. Man cannot tolerate the thought of any splendor outside himself, that is to say, which he also may not possess. He wants the majesty of the elephant, the strength of the lion, the swiftness of the waters, the power of thunder, the might of the winds, and all the attributes of nature. He aspires even to the glory of the Gods and longs to be invested with it; he yearns to be king of the universe and thus candidly prays to the Gods to be endowed with unlimited power.

The Whole Man
Ayuto'ham sarvah

8

AV XIX, 51

1. Unified am I, quite undivided,
unified my soul.
Unified my sight, unified my hearing,
unified my breathing--both in and out--
unified is my continuous breath.
Unified, quite undivided am I.
the whole of me.
2. Under the impulse of the divine Impeller,
with the Powers for arms

and the Spirit for hands,
I, impelled, grasp hold of you!

1. Unified: ayuta, undisturbed, unrepelled, integrated, unbound. The exact meaning is uncertain.
In, out, continuous breath: prana, apana, vyana.

2. Divine Impeller: Savitri.
Powers: Ashvins.
Spirit: Pushan.
Give Sight to Our Eyes
Cakshurno dhehi

9

RV X, 158

1. May the Sun guard us
in the highest heaven!
May the breezes protect us
in the airy spaces!
May Fire be our guardian
in earthly places!
2. May the Inspirer, whose glowing flame
deserves a hundred
sacrificial offerings,
be pleased with us!
From lightning flashes
keep us safe.
3. May the God of light
grant to us sight!
May the heavenly peaks
grant to us sight!
May God the creator
grant to us sight!
4. Give sight to our eyes
and sight to our bodies
that we may see.
May we see the world
at a single glance
and in all its details.
5. Thus, O Sun,
may we gaze on you,
most fair to behold!
May we see clearly,
with the eyes of Men!

1. Sun: Surya, the guardian of the sky (div).
Breezes: vata, the ruler of the antariksha.
Fire: Agni, the protector of the earth.

2. Inspirer: Savitri.
Glowing flame: haras.

3. God of light: Savitri.
Heavenly peaks: parvata.
God the creator: Dhatr

4. The world: idam, "this." Only the two different prefixes sam- (together) and vi- (apart) express the two ways of seeing, the unitarian and the analytical. The same occurs in v. 5.

Eyes of men: nrcaksha, human eye, or the eye of a hero. Cf. the divya cakshu in BG XI, 8. To see the world requires a human eye, to see God a divine one.

Prayer for Well-Being

Balaprapti

10

YV XXXVI, 1-2; 4; 6-7; 10-13; 18; 24

1. I take refuge in the Word as the Rig Veda,
in the Mind as the Yajur Veda,
in the Breath as the Sama Veda.
I rely on sight and on hearing.
In me is the power of speech full of vigor.
I inhale and exhale deeply.

2. Whatever defect I have in my sight,
in my heart or mind,
may God amend!
May he, the Protector of the world, bless us!

4. What succor will he bring us, our wonderful Friend,
whoever prospers in his ventures?
With what most powerful aid will he support us?

6. You are the Protector of us who are your friends
and sing your praises.
Come to our help with a hundred aids.

7. O Strong One, what help are you going to bring us?
What do you give to those who sing your praise?

10. May the wind fan us with blissful breezes!
May the Sun warm us with delightful rays!
May the rain come to us with a pleasant roar!

11. May days come and go for us with blessings!
May nights approach us benignly!

12. May the celestial waters, Our helpers, be sweet
to our taste and shower on us blessing!

13. May the earth also be pleasant to us,
our resting-place be free from thorns;
may it grant to us shelter far extending!
May light thrust far from us ill-fortune!

18. O earthen vessel, strengthen me.
May all beings regard me with friendly eyes!
May I look upon all creatures with friendly eyes!
With a friend's eye may we regard each other!

24. May we see your bright Eye, fixed by God,
rise again and again for a hundred autumns!
A hundred autumns may we live!

1. The anthropological triad is related to the three Vedas. Cf. BU I, 5, 5; etc.
I inhale and exhale deeply: lit. in me are in-breath and out-breath.

2. God (Protector of the world): Brhaspati.

4. Friend: Indra; cf. YV XXVII, 39; RV IV, 31, 1.

6. Protector: Indra; cf. YV XXVII, 41; RV IV, 31, 3.

7. Strong One: vrshan, Indra.

10. Rain: Parjanya.

13. Cf. YV XXXV, 21.

17. Cf. § II 38.

18. Earthen vessel: the vessel in which milk is heated for the sacrifice.

24. Cf. RV VII, 66, 16 (§ VII A d Antiphon). Reference to the sun.

Giver of Life

Ayurda

11

YV III, 17-19; 29; 31-33; 37; 39-40

17. You, O Lord, are the body's protector.

My body protect.

You, O Lord, are the giver of life.

Grant life to me.

From you, O Lord, comes brilliance of mind.

Illumine my mind.

Whatever is lacking to my being, O Lord,

supply that to me.

18. Ourselves enkindled, we enkindle you, the shining one,
through a hundred winters.

Vigorous, we enkindle the giver of vigor;
strong, the source of strength.

Unharmd, we never have harmed you, O Lord,
the harmer of our foes.

O light-bedecked night, may I in safety
reach your other shore!

19. You have won, O Lord, the splendor of the sun
and the praises of poets.

You have come, O God, to your own desired abode.

So may I also

attain length of days, splendor, and offspring,
and a goodly store of riches!

29. May the Lord of the Word, the wealthy, the healer,
the discoverer of treasure
and increaser of well-being, swift to our aid,
abide with us still!

31-33. We claim the powerful, invincible favor
of the heavenly Three--

Mitra, Aryaman, Varuna over whom
the malevolent foe

wields no power, whether at home or on pathways
beset with obstacles.

For these sons of Infinity surround with light immortal
mortal man, that he may live.

37. Earth, Space, and Sky! May I abound in children, in men, and in riches!

O Friend of men, protect my children.

O Adorable one,

protect my cattle. O rapier of flame,
protect my nourishment.

39-40. O Lord of the home, best finder of riches
for our children are you.

Grant to us splendor and strength,

O Master of our home.

A bounteous bestower of plenty is the God
who is Master of our herds.

Grant to us splendor and strength,

O Lord and Master.

The nature of the YV obliges us to employ a certain license in the translation.

9; 11. Cf. § III 16.

17. Lord: Agni.
Brilliance of mind: varcas, splendor.

20-21; 25-26. Cf. § III 16.

29. Lord of the Word: Brahmanaspati of v. 28.

33. Infinity: Aditi, mother of the Gods.

37. Earth, Space, and Sky: bhuh, bhuvah, svah the three ritual utterances (vyahrti).

38. Cf. § III 16.

39-40. Lord of the home: agnir grhapatih.
Man's Glory
Varcasprapti

12

AV III, 22

1. May the splendor of an elephant, the greatest of all creatures,
may that great glory,
which was born from the Boundless, now be diffused.
The Gods together have bestowed it upon me.
2. On this splendor have all the powers of heaven
concentrated their thought.
May those Gods who nourish all life on earth
anoint me with splendor!
3. That splendor that resides in an elephant, in a king
among men, or within the waters,
with which the Gods in the beginning came to godhood,
with that same splendor make me splendid, O Lord.
4. O All-Knowing God, that powerful strength
with which sacrifice endows you,
the strength of the sun, the strength of the elephant,
King among men--
may the two Spirits, garlanded with lotus,
vouchsafe that to me!
5. From the four directions, as far as the eye
can direct its gaze,
may that force, that elephant splendor, assemble
and concentrate its virtue in me.
6. Behold the elephant, best of all creatures
to mount and to ride!
I anoint myself with his share of strength,
with his elephant splendor!

1. Splendor of an elephant: hastivarcasa.
The Boundless: Aditi.

2. All the powers of heaven: lit. Mitra, Varuna, Indra, and Rudra.

3. Lord: Agni.

4. All-knowing God: jatavedas.
Two Spirits: the Ashvins.

6. His share of strength: bhaga, also his fortune, his luck.
Human Splendor
Varcasya

13

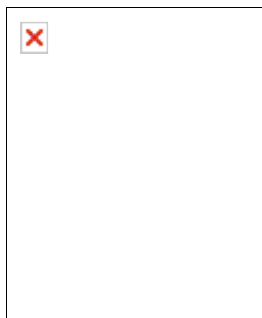
AV VI, 38

1. With the splendor that resides in a lion, a tiger,
an adder, the fire,
Brahman, the sun,
may that blessed Goddess who gave birth to Indra
now come to us, endowed with splendor!
2. With the splendor that resides in an elephant, a leopard,
in gold, in the waters,
in cattle and in men,
may that blessed Goddess who gave birth to Indra
now come to us, endowed with splendor!
3. With the splendor that resides in a chariot, in dice,
in a strong bull, in wind,
in rain and in thunder,
may that blessed Goddess who gave birth to Indra
now come to us, endowed with splendor!
4. With the splendor that resides in a noble, a drumbeat,
an arrow's flight, a man's shout,
a mettlesome horse,
may that blessed Goddess who gave birth to Indra
now come to us, endowed with splendor!

1. Blessed Goddess: devi subhaga.

3. Rain: Parjanya, the Rain-God.

Thunder: lit. Varuna's vehemence.



B. SACRIFICE

Yajna

This sacrifice is the navel of the world.
RV I, 164, 35128

All power to our life through sacrifice!
All power to our lungs through sacrifice!

All power to our eyes through sacrifice!
All power to our ears through sacrifice!
All power to our backs through sacrifice!
All power to Sacrifice through sacrifice!
YV IX, 21

All this, whatever exists, is made to share in sacrifice.
SB III, 6, 2, 26

Sacrifice is a reliable ferry.
AB I, 13 (III, 2, 29)

The boat which father and son use for
transport undergoes no damage.
Now sacrifice is the boat of the Gods.
JAIM B I, 165

One indeed is the sacrifice!
JAIM B II, 70

If one had to choose a single word to express the quintessence of the Vedic Revelation, the word yajna, sacrifice, would perhaps be the most adequate. Sacrifice is, in fact, an ancient, far-reaching, and pervasive intuition of the shruti. The conception of sacrifice, certainly, varied through the ages, and the term itself has received differing connotations, but the underlying intuition and its centrality have remained. The basic characteristic of yajna seems to be that of an action that reaches where it intends to reach, that really and truly offers something, that stretches out and extends itself. In other words, sacrifice seems to suggest an action that effectively "creates", that is, it acts, is efficient, and produces what it intends. Or, again, sacrifice is the transitive act par excellence, the projecting act, the action that links directly the acting and its results in one and the same event. It is not something that, once done, remains suspended, as it were, independent from the act, but an action that forms part of the acting itself. The proper sphere of sacrifice is the sphere of communication, and communication constitutes the very structure of the universe. All this, of course, sounds inconveniently abstract, so it may become more intelligible if we proceed to describe the main themes related to sacrifice.

The conception of sacrifice found in the Vedas arises out of one of the two fundamental world views adopted by the human mind as it approaches the mystery of reality and seeks to discover therein the place of Man, that is, his human vocation. We could try to formulate this basic alternative in the following way. An early and universal human experience is the experience of the fact of change in the world or, in a word, that there is a becoming. Now, "becoming" can be understood in two ways: as a "coming from be(ing)" or as a "coming to be(ing)."

There is a trend within human thinking which leads to the assumption that nothing can come to be unless, somewhere and somehow, it already "is;" that nothing can be-come if it does not come from a Be, from a Being; that all that happens is potentially already there. This hypothesis assumes that there is a sort of infinite reservoir of possibilities, an infinite Being, a God, a Ground, ultimately responsible for all that is, for all change, for all becoming. The terms Immutability, Being, God, Creator, Ground, Origin, Substance, Essence, and a score of other notions convey this world view, and philosophies both inside and outside India have developed it to the highest degrees of subtlety and "depth." In the beginning was Fullness, and from this Fullness everything came, that is, be-came, and to it everything will return.

Another human option follows the second part of the alternative. Becoming is here not a coming-to-be from a Be, from a Being: change is not evolution, that is, a development or unfolding from what was already there, though undeveloped, folded, unstretched. On the contrary, becoming is a coming into be, into being. Being is simply such because it is be-ing, because it has come to be. Let us not hastily jump to the conclusion that here Nonbeing has the primacy,¹²⁹ but let us rather dwell particularly on the intuition here expressed that Nonbeing "is" not and thus cannot be handled as if it were negative Being. To

affirm that there is nonbeing, that there is "not-is," is a contradiction in terms. The main reason for rejecting such an approach, however, arises from the notion of sacrifice as the primordial act, as Act, as the act that makes beings to be and is thus responsible for their becoming, without the assumption of a prior Being from which they come. In the beginning "was" Sacrifice. In the beginning "was" neither Being nor Nonbeing,¹³⁰ neither Fullness nor Void. We cannot properly say that at the beginning there was Sacrifice, because neither say nor was has any meaning before there were Being and Word; and yet this would be the least inappropriate way of expressing this intuition. It is here that sacrifice finds its proper focus. It is the Prajapati-sacrifice, in mythical terms, which gives birth to Being, as well as to beings, and which releases Being of the burden of having to be the origin and the cause of beings.¹³¹

At the origin of every being there is a sacrifice that has produced it. The texture of the universe is sacrifice, which is the act par excellence which produces all that is. Now this primordial act of sacrifice is a pure act devoid of any ontic or ontological attribute, positive or negative: it "is" neither being nor nonbeing. It "is" an act of which we can be aware only in the action itself and in connection with the "actor" or the "acted," though as innumerable texts emphasize we should distinguish, but not separate, four "moments": the act, the action, the actor, and the acted (kriya, karman, kartr, karya). The act is the sacrifice proper, the action is its inherent result, the actor is the agent (which is nothing other than the act acting), and the acted is another aspect of the action, namely, the concrete result of the act. We may distinguish, then, act (actor) and action (acted), but all is summed up in the single act, for the act as such includes everything else.

In the context of sacrifice this fundamental intuition is here not expressed in terms of being or nonbeing; it is not the dialectical approach that was developed in later periods. It is, however, the basis and the starting point of all Indo-European philosophizing. We may recall the two traditions that are to be found within most of the cultures of the world: the substantialist tradition and the functionalist, the one giving primacy to the stable and the other to the dynamic. It must be added that the Vedic intuition cannot be said to incline toward one and only one of these two philosophical views, for the paradoxical and enriching fact is that the dynamic or Heraclitean tone of the first Vedas is followed by the static or Parmenidean tone of the Upanishadic period. Or, to put it in a rather untraditional way, the first Vedas, prior to the Upanishadic interpretation of them, include the seed of both the classical Hindu and the classical Buddhist conceptions.

We must recall, once again, that the Vedic Revelation opens up reality not by means of concepts or, generally, by the telling of myths, but by means of symbols. We need to be aware of symbols in order to enter into communion with reality. A concept relates to logical intelligibility and is expressed in the different notes or attributes that define a word. A symbol, when expressed in words, stands for all that the word reveals over and above the conceptual intelligibility, though the latter is not necessarily excluded. Moreover, a symbol allows for a much wider range of interpretations than does a concept. For this reason the interpretation of Vedic words as concepts, which then have to be reinterpreted allegorically and metaphorically, has led to the discrediting of this ancient wisdom, as if it were only a collection of phantasmagoria. The Vedas are neither a metaphysical system nor a metaphorical or allegorical document, and that is why a special method of approach to them is required, for here Philosophy and Poetry, Speculation and Art, Theory and Praxis, are as yet unseparated.

Next we may note that Vedic sacrifice, as we shall read in the chapters of this section, is undergirded by an important symbol. This symbol, having received one particular name at the beginning, goes underground, as it were, in the subsequent periods, but remains none the less active and effective, even though under different names. This symbol is rita. As its etymology suggests¹³² and as related words confirm,¹³³ rita stands for that nonontological but nevertheless real principle of order and of activity. Rita is the very energy of the sacrifice; it is what triggers the sacrifice. We may remember that ardor, truth, and rita share an intimate relationship.¹³⁴ Truth without rita would not be true.¹³⁵ All the powers of ardor, concentration, energy, and the like are connected with rita. Indeed, the whole order of the universe comes from and is maintained by the dynamism of rita.

Rita is generally translated by "Cosmic Order," which is a valid translation provided one bears in mind that cosmic order is not a fixed physical or mathematical law, but a "sacrificial" order. In the words of the Rig Veda itself: cosmic order is maintained by sacrificial order; that is, rita is upheld by rita.¹³⁶ It is through rita that Varuna governs the universe.¹³⁷ Rita is the ultimate foundation of everything; it is "the supreme," although this is not to be understood in a static sense.¹³⁸ Rita points to an original and universal factor prior to the cosmic and human scission between the father and mother principles.¹³⁹ From rita comes the Firstborn (the Word?)¹⁴⁰ in the whole ordering of reality, while in another place it is affirmed that this Firstborn is no less than Prajapati himself ¹⁴¹ or Agni¹⁴². Agni is closely related to rita.¹⁴³ These and other utterances¹⁴⁴ are both bewildering and plainly contradictory, if rita is understood as a "substance" or a "thing," if rita can be "pinpointed," separated from and made independent of the "beings" it informs. Rita is rather the "law" or universal order embodied in sacrifice. It is the expression of the primordial dynamism that is inherent in everything and also possesses its own internal coherence, a unifying force that could be said to be the very soul of sacrifice. This also explains why rita appears in the Rig Veda as being superior to and independent of the Gods, yet at the same time is their instrument. Rita is not a reservoir of energy upon which Gods or Men can draw for one purpose or another; rita as the principle of order is capable of growth, of expansion, of evolution out of itself: rita, in fact, can increase by means of rita.¹⁴⁵ The order of things, be they

nature, Men, or Gods, is certainly a real order, but it is not an immutable and static one; the order of reality depends ultimately on reality itself.

The moment that rita is converted into a concept and is given a consistency in itself it is bound to appear as something rigid, immutable: a fixed cosmic order like a mathematical law which does not tolerate exceptions, a strict regulation which does not tolerate deviations, a stern ordinance which does not allow for freedom and improvisation. It does not so appear, however, in the first Veda, where as an adjective, for instance, it means right, proper, holy, true, and the like, all words that denote flexible adaptation rather than rigid immutability.

This feature of rita, defying all that can properly be either objectified or substantivized, comes more clearly into view when we realize its intimate connection with sacrifice and all other cultic activities. Rita is, in point of fact, the actual functioning or rather the proper rhythm of the sacrifice, while sacrifice is that which causes things to be what they are. By sacrifice Gods and Men collaborate, not only among themselves but also for the maintenance and very existence of the universe. Reality subsists, thanks to sacrifice. But this truly primordial sacrifice is not left to the whim of either Men or Gods; it has an internal structure and mode of operation, namely, rita. Without rita the Vedic sacrifice would degenerate into a manipulation of the whole cosmic order by Gods or Men, and we would fall into a hideous world of magic, as Men are sometimes prone to do.

We would venture to describe this paradoxical intuition in this way: the self-subsistency of reality harbors its own absolute contingency. It is not necessary that beings or even Being exist; nothing prevents a total relapse into utter nothingness; nothing guarantees that time will endure forever, or that the world will not one day destroy itself. This Vedic vision awakens us from the illusion of ontological self-complacency: the whole of reality can collapse and disappear. Man can destroy himself, the world can have an end, existence is not indestructible, and even Being is not bound to be as if it were obliged to be Being by a superior necessity. Nonbeing is not only a dialectical, but a real, possibility. The experience of nothingness, which implies the nothingness of the experience itself, is one of the deepest disclosures of the Vedic Revelation. The whole of reality "stands on its own feet;" that is, it does not lean on something or somebody else, but depends on, "hangs," from itself. It is, as it were, a divine contingency.

On the other hand, reality is not merely contingent: it does not simply depend on Another, that is, another reality, which in turn leans on something else. Nothing can destroy reality but itself. Nothing can challenge the existence of the universe, except the universe itself. There is no fear of any enemy, except the one that lurks inside us. In scholastic or theistic terms, God can destroy himself, if he so desires. In other words, the universe has the power to perpetuate itself, to be established in being, to exist, to overcome all threats and obstacles; but it has no eternal warrant. It has its own resources and from them it can pour forth eternal life. Moreover, this power is not a fiction; it is real and thus it can fail, it can be betrayed by reality itself.

Sacrifice is that which preserves the universe in existence, that which gives life and the hope of life. The universe in its totality does not repose on the shoulders of any extracosmic reality; if it did, it would not be the whole universe, but only an appendix to it. Reality has to include all that of which we can be aware. Neither God nor the Gods can be excluded from it. Now this universe is neither reposing on another Ground, nor reposing on itself, as if it were just a "mechanical" or "automatic" Being, as if freedom and thus the freedom to cease to be were not at the very core of reality. The universe does not repose on anything other than itself and its own structure. This ultimate structure is not to be regarded as "another" or "deeper" "thing" or substance; it is in fact sacrifice, which is, precisely, the internal dynamism of the universe, universal rita, cosmic order itself. This order, this sacrifice, obviously cannot be a static result of an already performed action. Sacrifice is the act that makes the universe. It does it, not through an external agent, but by the self-cooperation of the universe itself. Men alone cannot accomplish this, and the Gods left to themselves are equally impotent. The highest God, the supreme Being, is equally incapable of performing this act alone, for he is not God for himself but for the "creatures." In point of fact he is never alone; he is relational and belongs to reality, in spite of all the provisos and distinctions that a thinking philosophical and theological mind is bound to make in order not to fall into an oversimplified monism or an unsustainable dualism.

To perform the sacrifice is not to participate in a good act or to do good to the Gods, to mankind, or to oneself: it is to live, to "make" one's own survival and that of the whole universe. It is the act by which the universe itself continues in existence. An analysis of the different texts would help us to discover a double stage and a double team of agents in the unfolding of this sacrifice. The one stage is ayam lokah, this world of Men; the other is asau lokah, the world beyond, the place of the heavenly beings. Moreover, of the two "teams," one consists of Men and the other of Gods and asuras. The cosmic liturgy that holds the world together and keeps it in existence is performed (1) by Men trying to ascend to the world of the Gods to celebrate the sacrifice there; (2) by the Gods responding to the call of Men and celebrating the sacrifice here on earth; (3) by Men performing it here also; and finally (4) by the Gods celebrating this life-giving sacrifice in heaven. A meditation on the texts will lead us to discover this fourfold conception.

If sacrifice is the ultimate and supreme principle, superior, thus, to the Gods and derived from God but not separable from either, it is understandable that some of the texts may sound magical to those who can accept only anthropomorphic world views. If the notion that God acts is not considered magic, the fact that sacrifice is efficacious cannot be said to be magical either. It would certainly be so if it did not constitute the ultimate structure of reality; but it is constantly taught in the Vedas down to the Upanishads, and it is repeated subsequently in philosophical works, that sacred science consists in the knowledge of sacrifice and that sacrifice is the ultimate principle. The deterioration of this world view begins when sacrifice is interpreted in a substantialized way, that is, when it is reified and thus permits the introduction of magical interpretations.

From this perspective of the primacy of sacrifice, the whole world appears new every moment and its path unpredictable. It will all depend on the sacrifice, on how the creative act is going to happen. This is a realm of true freedom, but it involves also the risk of misuse. That which allows for freedom may also allow for exploitation by those who understand the labyrinth of sacrifice. It is no wonder that the theory of karman appeared after a short time as an urgent corrective to a world view risking dependence only on whim and on the mere performance of rituals.

Before closing this introduction we should mention a general feature of sacrifice which appears in its post-Vedic development, whereby it is viewed under a more personalistic perspective. The proper name for this is perhaps puja, worship, rather than yajna, sacrifice.

Even when Man's worship has lost sight of the overall perspective just described, worship is still considered as a human activity by which Man attains the fulfillment of his being, not so much in the sense that our being is thereby enhanced or expanded as in the sense that it is only in worship that we fully are. Worship enables us to overcome the obstacles that obstruct the realization of being. Worship is not only a profoundly meaningful spiritual attitude; it is also an action in which Man's whole being is involved and through which Man realizes his "self."

In the performance of worship Man always endeavors to transcend time, to free himself from time. By this liberation he enters into the sphere of ultimate Reality. Liberation, moksha, is absolute freedom, it is an escape from subjection to time.¹⁴⁶ Worship permeates the whole of human life; it is both a means and an end, a means leading to final perfection, and an end, that is to say, perfection itself.

Creation is God's sacrifice, for not only does God bring it into existence, create it, but he also permits it to return to him again. He has in fact decreed its return. Now, to recognize an existence that restores itself by its own act is to invest it with immortality. Sacrificial acts, then, perform the function of finalizing this sort of exchange. Worship is the way to immortality.

Worship does not consist solely in prayer or feeling or knowledge; it is action, an action by which duality is transcended and dissimilarity banished. This act contains within itself, essentially, a sacrificial aspect, a death and a becoming, a doing, karman. This word, which in the course of time will take on numerous other meanings, has here the significance of "action," understood as the act of worship and sacrifice. Action that does not include an element of making and remaking (creation and redemption) does not deserve the name. By worship salvation is rendered attainable and worship must needs entail sacrifice, for only sacrifice can produce the essential conversion. There is no other way to salvation except through sacrifice, for salvation is not attainable except by means of a break, a leap onto the other shore, or some sort of transference into a supranatural order. Man can be saved only by the performance of sacrificial worship; apart from such worship he is powerless, at the mercy of blind forces.

We must stress at this point the sacrificial element implied within the concept of karman and not load it with ideas of morality which it does not primarily contain.¹⁴⁷ The tendency to equate religion and morality, to see in karman a simple chalking-up of merits and demerits according to good or evil conduct, is secondary to authentic religiousness. For the Vedic Experience, religion is essentially worship and worship means a dynamic ontological two-way relationship of Man with the divine. Karman implies action, not only in its etymological but also in its intrinsic meaning, and, what is more, it implies an act of worship that is identified with sacrifice. Karma-marga is a way of sacrifice and of worship.

Creation of Sacrifice Yajne jate

¹⁴ Cosmogony is liturgy and liturgy is cosmogony: thus we might sum up the main intuition of this text, which at the same time formulates one of the deepest convictions of the Vedic world view. The world owes its origin to a divine sacrifice and, thanks to the same sacrifice, it continues to be. If the first act is divine, the second is human. We have here a cosmotheandric action for which an appropriate symbol is the loom, connected with the human activity by which Man creates his own patterns and makes his own clothing.

In fact every liturgy has always been and still is a remaking of the world, a reenactment of the creative act by which the world comes into being. This "making of the world" can, however, be understood not only as a cosmological cosmogony but also as a historical or even a sociological one. Modern liturgy tends in fact to be the coming together of people in order to reshape the environment, social, cultural, political ecological, and artistic.

Throughout the hymn there is an interplay between two ideas and sets of actions, weaving and sacrifice, the latter actions mirroring or rather reenacting the creational acts of the former. The meaning of this hymn becomes clearer when we remember parallel texts that speak of two maidens, symbolizing day and night, dancing in circles and endlessly weaving the stuff of the world, spreading all the colors of reality over the six regions of the universe.¹⁴⁸ This world-building action is not left, however, to cosmic forces alone; Men and the ancestors, or "Fathers," are also involved in the task of weaving the fabric and spinning the threads. The rituals are the threads, the hymns the shuttles, the weavers the ancestral sacrifices. As the cloth has its design, so the sacrificial texts have their meters. One Upanishad says¹⁴⁹ that the Gods were afraid of death and that each one covered himself with his respective meter for protection. The origin of this conception is to be found in the text given here, where each God has his own meter in which he is praised and which gives him strength. The power of poetry is such that the poets sometimes wonder whether it is the Gods who inspire their song or their poetry that gives life to the Gods. But the text also says (v. 5) that the human poets follow the already existing relationship, discovering divine power in every meter. A male figure, the puman, which appears here is related to the purusha, the primordial Man, of our previous texts.¹⁵⁰

Yajne jate

RV X, 130

1. Sacrifice [resembles] a loom with threads extended this way and that, composed of innumerable rituals. Behold now the Fathers weaving the fabric; seated on the outstretched loom. "Lengthwise! Crosswise!" they cry.
2. Behold now a Man who unwinds and sets the thread, a Man who unwinds it right up to the vault of heaven. Here are the pegs; they are fastened to the place of worship. The Saman-hymns are used for weaving shuttles.
3. What was the model, the pattern, what the connection? What was the ritual butter and the line of demarcation? What was the meter, the hymn, the preliminary chant, when all the deities sacrificed God in oblation?
4. The Gayatri meter became the yokefellow of Agni, Savitri took as his companion the meter Ushnih, Soma, the one who is praised by hymns, took Anushtubh, while the word of the Lord of Speech was strengthened by Brhati.
5. The meter Viraj was reserved to Mitra and Varuna; for Indra's day the meter allotted was Trishtubh. The meter Jagati had access to all the Gods. To this arrangement the human poets conformed.
6. It was this same ritual the Seers, our Fathers, adopted when in the beginning sacrifice was first created. With the eyes of my mind I believe I can envisage those who were first to offer this sacrifice.
7. The rituals, meters, and hymns were according to the rubrics, even those of the Seven godlike Seers of old. When the sages follow in the path traced by the ancestors they take the reins in their hands like charioteers.

1. Innumerable: ekashatam, lit. one hundred and one.
Rituals: devakarman, rite, act of worship.
Fathers: pitarah, ancestral sacrificers as in v. 6.

2. A Man: puman, the primordial man, i.e., adipurusha, or the purusha of RV X, 90 (§ I 5). He is the sacrificer and the sacrifice at the same time: yajnapurusha. Cf. AV X, 7, 43 (§ I 3).

3. Correlation and analogy between model, pattern, and connection (prama, pratima, nidana) and meter, preliminary chant, and hymn.

Ambivalent sentence: the deities offer to the unique God and also the deities offer God as sacrifice. Cf. RV X, 90, 6 (§ I 5). All the deities sacrificed God: yad deva devam ayajanta vishve. Cf. the parallel idea in RV I, 164, 50. They offer the sacrifice of Man, the mediator of v. 2. These may be the ancestors, pitarah, of v. 1 whose function is to "weave the hundred and one rituals."

4-5. Relate the Gods to their respective meters; cf. also AB VIII, 6, 3 (XXXVII, 2).

Lord of Speech: Brhaspati. rs question
The Origin of Sacrifice
Brahmayajna

15 We recall from the preceding hymn that sacrifice is envisaged as a universal fabric reaching everywhere; or rather, sacrifice is seen as the creative act of weaving that cosmic fabric in which everything has its place and receives its meaning. It is by means of this primordial act that the Gods are able to reenact that action through which Reality is. The original dharmas, that is, the original structures of reality (or the primordial rites, statutes, ordinances) are thus prescribing what is mentioned in the first verse of the first hymn following and is repeated in several other places: a sacrifice to the Sacrifice by means of the sacrifice. To "offer" means to "stretch" and by this very fact to "reach" reality by means of performing the act by which reality is.

If we do not freeze reality into a form of static being, but consider it rather as the act acting, with the Gods as the first agents of the sacrifice, we may understand the stanzas of the hymn. The sacrifice is not a ready-made act, over and done with. It is, on the contrary, the act by which the world is, and thus this act comes to be, it becomes manifest, it is born and grows again and again. It becomes the ultimate criterion, the ruler, the highest instance: the overlord of even the Gods.

The third verse calls Men to partake in the divine banquet, in the feast of the Gods, in the authentic form of existence. The Gods are our forerunners and we pray that we may follow them and be allowed a place with them in the sphere of authentic existence: the parama vyoman. It is a place in which human life is unrestricted: we may experience this new and real dimension of our being while still continuing in our earthly life, while seeing the rising of the sun with our own personal eyes, now no longer limited, of course, to sensorial perception. In the parama vyoman human life is elevated to the life of the Gods. Vyoman is the realm of freedom from limitations. The rising of the sun corresponds also to the ascent of Man to that supreme stage.

The Gods have no existence of their own; they exist in, with, above, and also for Men. Their supreme sacrifice is Man, the primordial Man, whom we have already met in other hymns. It is overwhelming, this experience of being Man: Man is the most important and central creature in the universe but he is also the most miserable, the most suffering, and often even the most despicable. Human life is the most precious thing and at the same time the most lavishly wasted. Man is the sacrificer, but also the sacrificed; the Gods, in their role as the primal agents of sacrifice, offer their oblation with Man. Man is not only the cosmic priest; he is also the cosmic victim. Human history, we may venture to translate, is the most blatant example and confirmation of the truth that Man is both sacrificer and sacrifice. To say that the history of human existence on earth has a meaning amounts to declaring that the Gods performed their sacrifice with Man as their oblation. The last two verses, however, give us a glimpse of an intuition that the coming cosmic liturgy will no longer be the exploitation of Men by Men, or the religious sanction of it, but a new hymn, a new song, whose melody the Gods themselves will have to learn from Men, once the latter have invented it.¹⁵¹

The second text places the sacrifice in its true perspective: even if Brahman here is not the "absolute world ground" of the later philosophical sense, it is on the way to becoming so. The reciprocal definition of Brahman and sacrifice in the second verse illumines the meaning of both: Brahman is the sacrifice and all its elements precisely because it is the inner reality (or essence: sattva) of the sacrifice and also that ineffable power that makes the priests' sacrifice a real sacrifice. The text makes it quite clear that the different kinds of priests are merely instruments in the realization of the sacrifice and that as such they are praiseworthy. Yet a consciousness of the unity that exists among all the parts and elements of the sacrifice, and an awareness of the underlying reality of Brahman, are already beginning to pervade the performance and the understanding of the sacrifice itself.

Brahmayajna

AV VII, 5

i) 1. Through sacrifice the Gods sacrificed to the Sacrifice.
Those were the first established rites.
Their greatness enhanced, they ascended to heaven
where dwell the ancient Gods who must needs be appeased.
2. Thus originated sacrifice; it manifested itself.
It came to birth and then increased.
It became the Lord and Ruler of the Gods.
May sacrifice bestow upon us some treasure!
3. There where the Gods made an offering to the Gods,
where, immortal, they worshiped with heart immortal,
may we also revel, in highest heaven.
May we gaze on it in wonder at the rising of the sun!
4. Using the Man for their oblation,
the Gods performed the sacrifice.
But more powerful still than this oblation
was the offering they made with the Hymn's invocation.
AV XIX, 42, 1-2

ii) 1. Brahman is the priest, Brahman the sacrifice;
by Brahman the posts are erected.
From Brahman the officiating priest was born,
in Brahman is concealed the oblation.
2. Brahman is the spoon dripping fatness;
by Brahman the altar is established.
Brahman is the essence of sacrifice
the priests prepare the oblation.
To the minister, praise!

i) 1. Cf. RV I, 164, 50; X, 90, 16 (§ I 5) for the same stanza. Cf. also RV X, 130, 3 (§ III 14); SB X, 2, 2, 2.

3. In highest heaven: parame vyoman. Cf. RV I, 164, 34 (§ I 11).

4. The first two lines are the same as in RV X, 90, 6 (§ I 5).
Hymn: the hymn vihavya.

5. We have not given the last verse, which has many variant readings and is obscure.

ii) 1. Concealed: antarhita, placed within.

2. Essence of sacrifice: yajnasya sattvam.
Priests: rtvijah.
Praise: svaha.

3-4. These two last verses are omitted as they do not refer directly to the origin of the sacrifice.
The Fire Sacrifice
Agnihotra

16 Without light there is no life. We have already seen the central place and importance of light. But light is not an abstract reality; light is Sun and Fire. The Kaushitaki Brahmana says that

Light is Agni, Agni is light. The one who is light, he calls light . . . Agni offers
itself in sacrifice to the rising Sun and the setting Sun offers itself in sacrifice to
Agni in the evening; Night sacrifices itself to the Day and Day sacrifices itself to
the Night.¹⁵²

The sacrifice is the agnihotra. Continuity is thus established, the circle is completed, harmony is preserved.

The Sunlight of the day not only gives way to the light of the night, the Fire, but in a sense gives birth to it, by reason of a certain cosmic solidarity in which Man too has his part to play. This is the function of the agnihotra. All other sacrifices and

rites can be neglected, but not the agnihotra, for it is the quintessence of sacrifice¹⁵³ and through it one becomes immortal.¹⁵⁴ "The agnihotra is the ultimate [parama] foundation of everything."¹⁵⁵ One can then understand the text of the Shatapatha Brahmana which says that if the priest did not perform the agnihotra in the morning, that day the sun would not rise.¹⁵⁶ This, as we see from the central thrust of the whole shruti, is certainly not owing to some mysterious magical connection between the agnihotra and the sun, but to the theanthropocosmic link that maintains the whole of reality in truth and order, for Man is not simply a spectator in the cosmic display or an outsider set there just to exploit the earth for his own benefit.

The agnihotra represents the simplest possible form of the whole Vedic conception of sacrifice. Any householder, provided he is properly initiated, may perform the sacrifice in the evening and morning of every day and recite the prayers, some of which are given here along with other texts on the same agnihotra. The two temporal moments, in which this sacrifice has to be performed, are important: they are samdhya, the "holding together," the junction of Agni and Surya, the brief periods when the two lights meet, when one can distinguish no longer the one from the other, when Man can intervene as a part of the cosmos without disturbing the rhythm of the sun and the stars. In the morning the human heart is ready for life, while at sunset it is inclined to pour out its innermost feelings. Practically all religions of the world have considered these hours to be holy; these are the times even nowadays when the modern city dweller starts the new day with enthusiasm and hope, or longs at its decline for a friend, for love, for relaxation, for Soma.¹⁵⁷

It is not necessary to describe the rite of the agnihotra. Suffice it to say that besides the sun, time, and the light and thus also space a minimum of three fires and three persons, some milk, and, when possible, the cow that has given the milk are required: a complete microcosm.

Agnihotra

RV V, 15, 1-2

i) 1. To the Lord, the far-renowned, the wise Ordainer,
ancient and glorious, I offer the tribute of a song.
Anointed with oil is he, the Lord, the powerful
giver of bliss and guardian of noble riches.
2. On the power of sacrifice which is grounded in highest heaven
and by Cosmic Order in Cosmic Order established,
[our Fathers], though mortal, attained immortal seats
in those spheres above which firmly support the heavens.
RV X, 80, 4

ii) Agni extends the sacrifice to heaven:
his forms are scattered everywhere.
RV X, 100, 6

iii) Indra possesses power divine and glorious.
The singer in the house is Agni, the wise, the seer.
May our sacrifice be at hand and pleasing to the gathered people!
For freedom and for perfect bliss we pray!
YV III, 9; 11; 20-21; 25-26; 38

iv) 9. Fire is Light, Light is Fire. Glory!
Sun is Light, Light is Sun. Glory!
Fire is Splendor, Light is Splendor. Glory!
Sun is Splendor, Light is Splendor. Glory!
Light is Sun, Sun is Light. Glory!
11. Let us, proceeding to the sacrifice,
utter a prayer to the Lord,
who hears us even from afar.
20. You are sacred drink, may I enjoy your sacred drink!
You are greatness, may I share in your greatness!
You are power, may I partake in your power!
You are treasures, may I share in your treasures!

21. O shining ones, remain in this dwelling,
 stay in this gathering, this place, this spot.
 Remain right here and do not stir!

25. O Lord, be our closest friend, our savior
 and gracious protection. O wonderful Lord
 of glorious renown, come near us, we pray you,
 and bestow upon us most splendid treasures.

26. To you, most brilliant and shining God,
 we pray now for happiness for our friends.
 Listen attentively to our call;
 save us from every evil man.

38. Thus have we now approached the All-Knower,
 the one who is the best procurer of good things.
 Endow us, O Majesty, with strength and glory.
 SB II, 3, 1, 13

v) And so they say: all other sacrifices have an end but the agnihotra does not come to an end. All that which lasts for twelve years is indeed limited; the agnihotra is nevertheless unlimited, for when a man has offered in the evening he looks forward with confidence to offering in the morning; and when he has offered in the morning he likewise looks forward with confidence to offering again in the evening. Thus the agnihotra is unlimited and, hence, from its unlimitedness, creatures also are born unlimited. Whosoever knows the unlimitedness of the agnihotra is himself unlimited in prosperity and offspring.
 SB VII, 3, 1, 34

vi) You, O Agni, are the righteous, the truthful, the mighty, and most wonderful. You are indeed manifest to all: you, O Agni, are omnipresent. Men rank Agni highest for grace and joy, for grace and joy reside undoubtedly in sacrifice. You, who are heaven, the ruler and divine one, we human beings invoke with song.

i) 1. Lord: Agni.
 Anointed with oil: ghrtaprasatta.
 Powerful: asura, lit. the benevolent Asura.

2. On the power: shake, locative of shaka, might, power.
 In highest heaven: parame vyoman.
 By Cosmic Order in Cosmic Order established: rtena rtam dharunam dharayanta.
 Immortal seats: lit. unborn persons, probably the Gods. A difficult but important text.

ii) Extends: lit. stretches: tatana from the root tan-, to stretch out. Cf. RV X, 130, 1 (§ III 14) and also RV I, 159, 4; X, 57, 2 for the same metaphor.
 Cf. SB I, 4, 4, 1 (§ I 13) and what has been said about Agni in § III 4.

iv) 9. Cf. KausB II, 8 (quoted in the Introduction).
 Fire: Agni.
 Light: jyotis.
 Sun: Surya.

11. The first approach to the sacrifice requires an invocation to Agni, the mediator.

17-19. Cf. § III 11.

20. Sacred drink: andhas, soma plant, invigorating life-giving food and drink.
 Greatness: mahas.
 Power: bhakshiya.
 Treasures: rayi.

21. Shining ones: revati, which may refer to the cows, to the waters, and/or to holy speech.
 Dwelling: yoni, womb, but also homely abode.

25. Savior: tratr, protector.

Gracious: shiva.
 Protection: varuthya.
 Treasures: rayi, in a material as well as a spiritual sense.

26. Cf. RV V, 24, 3-4 (§ VII 53).
 Most brilliant: shocishtha.

29; 31-33; 37. Cf. § III 11.

38. Majesty: agni samraj. This prayer is uttered as the worshiper approaches the ahavaniya fire.

39-40. Cf. § III 11.

v) Have an end: are concluded, finished. There is a play here on the root stha-; sam-stha: to be concluded, to come to an end, and an-upa-stha-: to be unfinished, not to come to an end. Agnihotram na samtishthate/anupashtitam agnihotram: i.e., agnihotra is an everlasting, perennial sacrifice.
 Unlimited in prosperity . . . : this may also refer to the spiritual effect of the perennial, creative sacrifice. Cf. SB II, 2, 4, 8 (§ III 23).

vi) A hymn of praise to Agni.
 The Drop of Life
 Soma pavamana

17 The sacrifice of the Soma-juice, to which all the Vedas so frequently allude, is one of the major Vedic sacrifices.

All the one hundred and fourteen hymns of Book IX of the Rig Veda are dedicated to Soma, as are also certain hymns of the other books.¹⁵⁸ The importance of Soma derives from the fact that its sacrifice is an act in which the divine and the human both take part. Soma is, properly speaking, the drink of the soma-plant which allows Men to feel that they are more than just conscious animals. Thus they are given the elixir of immortality and at the same time are permitted to share in some divine form of consciousness.

The soma-plant has been identified with a brown or reddish bush some three feet high.¹⁵⁹ The golden hue of its juice inspires poets to acclaim tirelessly the "radiance" of this divinity and his close connection with the Sun. He creates light and scatters darkness. Nevertheless the plant should also be understood in a concrete physiological way. The action of Soma has a stimulating and inspiring effect which is something more than comfort or strength, though less than intoxication or drunkenness.¹⁶⁰

The process of extracting the juice from the soma-plant is described minutely with endless variations of ritual. The poets chant their hymns at that moment when Soma leaps forth from the press. The woolen strainer stands for heaven, the juice in liquid form is the rain; thus Soma is called Lord of the Rivers and son of Water. Elsewhere he is "a bull," and his descent into the milky water of the vat is likened to the insemination of a herd of cows. Thus the whole cosmos is involved in this very simple act of the extraction of the soma-juice.

The earthly origin of Soma is said to be in the mountains, on Mount Mujavat,¹⁶¹ but the mountains in general are also alleged to be his birthplace.¹⁶² His true origin, however, is in heaven: "child of heaven,"¹⁶³ "milk of heaven."¹⁶⁴ He was brought to earth by an eagle who snatched him from the Castle of Brass where the Gandharvas were guarding him.¹⁶⁵ In the Brahmanas it is Gayatri (a name for Agni) who steals Soma. As the most important of all plants he is given the title of Lord of Plants.

Soma is the vehicle of immortality. Soma "is" immortality.¹⁶⁶ Immortality is acquired by the drinking of Soma and not by abstaining from the fruits of the earth. The way to immortality is not one of escape from the material world, but rather one of assimilating earthly realities. Soma has the power of rendering both Gods and Men immortal. "We have drunk Soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the Gods," says our text (v. 3). Immortality is not the birthright of any being; it has to be acquired, conquered, merited, given.

The most frequent epithet of Soma is pavamana, the "flowing clear," which suggests both that the juice is purified in its elaborate processing and that it purifies by its effects.¹⁶⁷ Soma possesses healing powers: "The blind man sees, the cripple walks."¹⁶⁸ He also stimulates speech and evokes sublime thoughts. He is a poet, the "soul" of the sacrifice, a sage; his

wisdom is often acclaimed and he is the giver of all blessings.

The Sea are you, Seer, revealer of all things;
under your sway are the World's five regions.
You transcend both earth and heaven.

Yours, O Purifier, are the Stars and the Sun.169

In several of the late hymns of the Rig Veda, as also in the Atharva Veda, Soma is identified with the moon. Soma is luminous, is magnified in water, and is termed a globule.170

Hymn VIII, 48, is a chant of praise to Soma, God of immortality. The poet prays for the divine strength that mortal Men are powerless to resist, for protection against all evil, for light and wealth, for a long life.

Soma is here, as in some other places, addressed as *indu*, "Drop," a word that came to be used also with reference to the moon, probably owing to its connection with Soma, a brilliant drop, a plant to be collected during full-moon night. We have already seen that the waters are a symbol of life and that food is also a life-bringer. Now Soma, as a liquid, as a drop, is considered to be the drop of life, a drink that bestows health, both temporal and eternal. Without venturing any hypothesis regarding the actual Vedic use of Soma as a hallucinogenic potion, we may note the close connection between exciting material substances and religious life. Obviously there are negative factors in these practices, but there are also positive elements, for they demand an attitude that is life-affirming and accepts the importance of matter. Soma is praised, not as a way of escape from the normal human condition, but as a means of facing it more squarely. Second, the exciting effect of Soma tends to activate human potentialities, not to put them to sleep. Third, Soma, elevating the worshiper to a higher plane of human consciousness, claims to enhance his daily living and to help him to live with the awareness of a deeper dimension while he is carrying on his ordinary actions. These and similar ideas spring to mind as being involved in the old Vedic Soma sacrifice and its related rites in other cultures and religions, for the Soma sacrifice undoubtedly has connections with the *haoma* rites of Zoroastrianism and is viewed by some as having an inner relationship with the Eucharistic sacrifice.

The Soma spirituality (if we may use this expression) is an important characteristic of the Vedic Experience. We have already described it as being theandric. Both Men and Gods, that is, the human and the divine, are involved in the same adventure. Both must become immortal, both must coalesce. While the divinization of Men is a well-defined path, the humanization of the Gods is a mysterious process in which Soma is the link and sacrifice the means of attainment. The divinization of Man is not without repercussions on the Godhead, which in turn is humanized. Soma is the powerful symbol of this double and yet simple process.

This Soma spirituality is based on fullness and not on want. Many traditional religious forms seem to stress want, guilt, penance, asceticism, renunciation, and a flight from all corporal values and material pleasures and rightly so when Man lives in conditions of hardship and strain, as he all too often does. But there is more to human life. Soma spirituality stresses the opposite facet: Soma bestows and celebrates strength, courage, loquacity, and eloquence; he unleashes our thoughts so that, once blessed by Soma, they flow without inhibition. It is not only immortality that we acquire when we drink Soma; it is also joy, purification, and protection from all evil influences. It is Soma who instills in us the proper mood that enables us to perform the sacrifice with dignity and to face life with confidence. Soma is invariably a sacred drink, though it is not always drunk with accompanying rituals--a significant fact in view of the later development of the *agnishtoma*, especially when it involved multitudinous and complicated rubrics.

An interesting corroboration of this positive Soma spirituality is the meaning and use that the word *somya* acquires from the Upanishads onward: the drinker of Soma, the one who is worthy to be offered Soma, he who is related to or that which belongs to Soma, has come to mean gentle, dear, kind, auspicious, and has become a form of address for respectable persons, such as Brahmins. A respectable and excellent man is not from this point of view the ascetic in rags, but the "moon-shining" man, who, being satiated with Soma, is therefore radiant and kind, gentle and loving.

Soma pavamana

RV VIII, 48

1. I have tasted, as one who knows its secret,
the honeyed drink that charms and relaxes,
the drink that all, both Gods and mortals,
seek to obtain, calling it nectar.
2. Once penetrated within my heart,

you become Aditi and appease the Gods' wrath.
 O Drop, who enjoy Indra's friendship, convey
 to us wealth, like a steed who is bridled, obedient.
 3. We have drunk the Soma and become immortal!
 We have attained the light, we have found the Gods!
 What can the malice of mortal Man
 or his spite, O Immortal, do to us now?
 4. Bless the heart, O Life-Drop, which has received you,
 as a father his son, or a friend his friend.
 Wise Soma, whose voice we hear from afar,
 prolong our days that we may live.
 5. These glorious drops are my health and salvation:
 they strengthen my joints as thongs do a cart.
 May these droplets guard my foot lest it stumble
 and chase from my body all manner of ills.
 6. Make me shine brightly like fire produced by friction.
 Illumine us, make us ever more prosperous.
 Enthused by you, Soma, I find myself rich!
 Enter within us for our well-being.
 7. With hearts inspired may we relish the Juice
 like treasure inherited from our Fathers!
 Lengthen our days, King Soma, as the sun
 causes the shining days to grow longer.
 8. Have mercy upon us, King Soma, and save us!
 Do not forget that we are your disciples.
 We are eager, O Drop, with zeal and dexterity!
 Do not hand us over to our enemy's pleasure!
 9. It is you, O Soma, who guard our bodies;
 in each of our limbs you have made your abode,
 O surveyor of men! if we have transgressed your statutes,
 forgive us, O God, like a loving friend.
 10. May I take him to myself like a well-disposed friend!
 May this draught not harm us, O Lord of the bay horses--
 this Soma now absorbed within me! For this
 I pray to God to prolong my existence.
 11. Our weariness and pains are now far removed;
 the forces of darkness have fled in fear.
 Soma has surged within us mightily.
 We have reached our goal! Life is prolonged!
 12. This drop that has penetrated our hearts, O Fathers,
 this Soma, immortal deep within us mortals,
 him would we honor with our oblations.
 We long to abide in his grace and favor.
 13. In an intimate union with the Fathers, O Soma,
 you have extended yourself throughout Earth and Heaven.
 You would we honor with our oblations,
 desirous of becoming possessors of riches.
 14. O guardian Gods, pronounce on us blessing!
 Let sleep not overtake us nor useless talk.
 May we forever be dear to Soma!
 Having won the mastery, let us speak wisdom!
 15. Imparter of strength, come, take full possession,
 O Soma, light-finder, man's constant overseer.
 Enlist your helpers, O Lord; place a guard
 on our lives both in front and behind to protect us.

1. As one who knows its secret: sumedhas (a free translation), lit. having a good understanding, wise.
 That charms and relaxes: svadhyah varivovitarasya, that inspires and grants freedom, stirs and gives good thoughts.

2. You become Aditi: i.e., Aditi in her function of liberating from sin. When Soma is in the body he purifies and averts the anger of the Gods.

3. Cf. RV IX, 113, 7 (§ V 23).

4. Bless the heart sham nah bhava hrde, do good to our heart, be a blessing, a gift, blissful for us when drunk; sham hrde: refreshing the heart.
O Life-Drop: indu, drop (and also moon).

5. Glorious drops: yashas, object of honor and veneration.

8. Save us: svasti, for our salvation, well-being.
Disciples: vratyah, those who abide by your laws (vrata).

9. Surveyor of men: nrcakshas.

10. Lord of the bay horses: Indra.
God: Indra.

12. The Fathers, pitarah, are here called to witness, as they also love Soma.

15. Lord: indu.
The Pressing Stones
Gravastotra

18 Among the objects used in the sacrifice and hence invested with sacredness are the stones between which the Soma stalks are pressed and crushed in order to extract the juice, the nectar of immortality. The pressing stones are made the subject of several hymns.¹⁷¹ Here the stones hewn from the mountainside are personified: they are dancers, oxen, racehorses, speakers, and so on; they are godlike, immune to disease and fatigue and death. They play so integral a part in the sacrifice that the sacrificer even prays to them, offering them his reverence and homage, begging them to unloose the inspired tongue of the Soma presser. Finally, they are asked respectfully or scornfully, according to some interpreters to revert to their purely mineral state of being simply stones. The sacred character of a thing, we note, resides always in its function and not in its substance. For example, the murtis, the idols worshiped during popular festivals, are afterwards often immersed in the rivers or simply laid aside.

The whole world is called upon to contribute to the sacrifice; not only Gods, Men, animals, and plants, but also the earth and its elements. These stones are generally called grava and in Soma rituals the priest recites this Rig Veda hymn as part of the prescribed stotra.

Mention is made of these stones in many prayers so as to stress the sacramental, that is, the spiritual-material, aspect of this central and specifically human act:

Fixing with careful attention the press stones
of sacrifice, I invoke noble Heaven and Earth.
Now, O Lord, raise your flames pure and beautiful,
bringing to men all manner of blessings.¹⁷²

Gravastotra

RV X, 94

1. Let them utter loud sounds! We too will utter!
Give tongue, one and all, to the Stones who give tongue,
when, O rocks, O mountains, swiftly clashing,
you bring to God's ears your rhythmic din.
2. These Stones, gnashing their green-tinted jaws,
emit sounds like a hundred, a thousand, voices.
Their task achieved, these Pressing Stones,
noble workers in a noble cause,
forestall the offerer in tasting the oblation.
3. They utter loud sounds as they find the sweet Soma.

Booming, they gnaw the pulp prepared.
 These bulls, skillful pounders, bellow aloud
 as they seize the branch of the reddish shrub.
 4. Exalted and inebriated by Soma, they shout,
 calling upon God through whom they have tasted
 the ambrosial Soma. They skillfully dance
 with the sisters, held in firm clasp together,
 and make the earth resound with their stamping.
 5. They have raised their voices to heaven, these eagles,
 they have danced with vigor, these dark-colored hinds.
 Now they sink toward the lower stone, find contact,
 and effuse copious Soma-seed, brightly shining.
 6. Like strong draught animals who draw a cart,
 bulls who wear the yoke and are harnessed together,
 the Stones emit bellows, panting and heaving.
 Then the sound of their snorting is like that of horses.
 7. Acclaim [the Stones] with their ten [workers],
 ten belts, ten thongs, and tenfold harness,
 with their ten reins, who, never growing old,
 yoked ten times over, draw the ten yokes.
 8. These Stones are like racehorses with ten sets of reins,
 their bits well fixed within their jaws.
 At the flowing of the Soma-juice they have been first
 to taste the milky fluid of the first-crushed stalk.
 9. These Soma-eaters kiss the bay steeds of Indra.
 They are set for their stalk-crushing task on an oxhide.
 When Indra has drunk the sweet Soma they extract,
 he increases in strength, waxes great, like a bull.
 10. Your stalk is as strong as a bull. Naught will harm you!
 You are ever full of juice, ever replete,
 fair in glory, like the daughters of the rich
 in whose sacrifice, O Stones, you take delight.
 11. Smashing but never shattered, these Stones
 are tireless; they know neither death nor cessation.
 Exempt from sickness, old age, and suffering,
 sleek-looking, free from thirst or craving.
 12. Your fathers stand firm from age to age.
 Enamored of repose, they stir not from their seat.
 Untouched by age, of golden Soma never bereft,
 they have forced heaven and earth to pay heed to their sound.
 13. Thus speak the Stones at their release, when their journey is over, as they clatter, like men drinking wine.
 Like farmers sowing the seed, they decrease not,
 but rather increase by their gulping this Soma.
 14. They uplift their voices at the ritual pressing,
 like children who playfully push at their mother.
 Unshackle now the thoughts of the Soma-presser!
 May they roll underneath, these stones till now revered!

1. God: Indra, throughout.

3. Sweet Soma: mandu.

Pulp prepared: the prepared juice is compared with cooked meat.
 Reddish shrub: the soma plant.

4. Sisters: referring to the fingers of the priest pressing the soma.

5. Now they sink . . . : erotic comparison of the meeting between the upper and the lower stone.
 Soma-seed: retas, semen.

7. The Stones: added for intelligibility.

Ten [workers]: the ten [fingers] engaged in pressing, which is here compared with the harnessing of a horse.

8. The ten reins are the ten fingers of the priest.

9. Bay steeds of Indra: as Indra himself drinks the Soma, his steeds are fed with the soma-herb.

Oxhide: the pressing of soma is compared with the milking of a cow, both actions being done while sitting on a skin.

11. Neither death nor cessation: ashrthita amrtyavah, neither interruption nor relaxation. Root shrath-to loosen. The personification of the stones allows for a personified interpretation of the verse; otherwise we should translate: free from deterioration and erosion; or: active, effective.

Sleek-looking: oily, unctuous.

Free from thirst or craving: atrshita atrshnajah.

12. Your fathers: the mountains from which the stones are taken.

Enamored of repose: kshemakama.

"They" in the last line refers again to the stones.

Sound: rava, again refers to the noise of pressing.

13. The stones are compared with horses released from their chariot.

Men drinking wine: anjaspah; the meaning is doubtful. Does it refer to the horses "drinking at once?"

14. Roll underneath: vivartantam, from vi- vrt-, to turn around or move hither and thither, i.e., to stop working.

Revered: cayamana, lit. considering themselves (the stones) to be something, i.e., sacred and important. The root cay- means both to be afraid of and to respect.

The Sacred Tree

Vanaspati

19 "With your apex you touch the heavens, with your middle portion you fill the air, with your foot you establish the earth," says one text of the Shatapatha Brahmana,¹⁷³ referring to the poles of sacrifice and likening them to the thunderbolt which is an emblem of world conquest.

Among all the creatures engaged in the sacrifice perhaps none is more important or more full of symbolic power than the cosmic tree, the tree of life, the lord of the forest, the poles of the sacrifice. The poles are stakes cut from a particular tall tree and used to form the cross on which the victim will be impaled and sacrificed. By unction the sacrificial tree becomes a mediator between Men and Gods and the bringer of every spiritual and material treasure. This tree is at the center of the world and at the summit of the earth. From it flows grace from heaven, the branch of the tree having itself been sacrificed and having acquired by this very fact a new life, a second birth.

None of this is new to any student of religion nor is it unknown to the conscious members of a number of religions. Even modern Man preserves a sense of sacredness for the forest whose reserves and parks are often nowadays called sanctuaries. Modern literature still considers the forest a sacred place, and contemporary ecology imparts a new sense of sacredness to the "green belts" in both country and town. Moreover, objects made of wood evoke an altogether different warmth of emotion than do those made of steel, plastic, or other material.

We have already alluded to the cosmic tree, sheltering the Gods in its branches,¹⁷⁴ "spreading on the surface of the earth,"¹⁷⁵ and providing lodging for the whole of reality, including Nonbeing.¹⁷⁶ There is a connection between the image of the world-encompassing cosmic tree and the sun, which also embraces the entire universe. For this reason, perhaps, in the Rig Veda the cosmic tree is an inverted tree, with branches below and roots above, because the sun directs his beams down toward the earth and keeps his roots up in heaven.¹⁷⁷ This tree in the Upanishads symbolizes Life,¹⁷⁸ God,¹⁷⁹ and the primordial Man;¹⁸⁰ its branches are space, wind, fire, water, earth, and so on in fact, the whole of the universe.¹⁸¹ As a tree in the forest, so is Man.¹⁸² The Bhagavad Gita sums it up again by combining all these motifs.¹⁸³

Against this background the hymn we quote acquires a wider significance. It not only refers to the ritual of preparing the special branches for the performance of the sacrifice, that is, the blessing of them as utensils for the rite, but it also incorporates references to the cosmic sacrifice, the offering of the entire cosmos in order that it may have new life, be born again. The hymn seems to address itself sometimes to Vanaspati, the Lord of the forest, and sometimes to yupa, the branches that form the poles of the sacrifice.

Vanaspati

RV III, 8

1. At the time of sacrifice,
O Lord of the wood,
the worshipers smear
you with sacred oil.
When you stand upright
or when you repose
on Earth's bosom, you still
will grant us good fortune.
2. Set up to the East
of the sacred Fire,
you accept our prayer,
intense and unflagging.
Hold yourself high
to bring us prosperity.
Drive far away
dearth of inspiration.
3. Lord of the wood,
take now your stance
on this, the loftiest
spot of all earth.
Well-fixed and measured one,
give to the worshiper,
who brings a sacrifice,
honor and glory.
4. Girdled and adorned,
he displays youthful beauty,
yet is fairer by far
when brought to new birth.
With minds contemplative
and godward directed,
our sages of lofty
intelligence rear him.
5. Born anew, he is born
on a day most auspicious,
growing in wisdom
in the assembly of men.
Wise men and skillful
consecrate him with song.
Approaching the Gods,
the priest calls aloud.
6. O Lord of the wood,
whom god-fearing men
have firmly positioned,
and ax has fashioned,
be pleased to grant us,
O divine poles of sacrifice,
a precious treasure,
the gift of children.
7. May these posts which are felled
and fixed in the earth,
to which the sacrificial
ladle has been raised,
which fix the boundaries
of the sacred field,
gain for us from the Gods
what is meet to be chosen.

8. The Adityas, the Rudras,
and the Vasus, directing
Earth and Heaven
and earth's airy spaces,
shall bless in concord
our worship and raise
our emblem of sacrifice
high in the sky.

9. Like swans that fly
in a long-drawn-out line,
so these stakes have come to us
brightly colored.
Raised aloft by the sages
and turned to the East,
they proceed as Gods
to the Gods' habitations.

10. These posts, set in earth
and adorned with circles,
appear to my eye
like the horns of horned creatures.
Upraised by the priests
in supplication,
may they lend us their aid
at the onset of battle!

11. O Lord of the wood,
whom this ax well-whetted
has set in our midst
with resultant joy,
put forth branches
a hundred times over!
So may we also
with thousands be blessed!

1. Lord of the wood: Vanaspati, applied here to the one particular tree out of which the yupa, the sacrificial post, will be made.

Worshippers: devayantah those loving and serving God, the godly.

The tree is life-bringing, both when alive in the forest and when used as a pole of sacrifice.

2. Prayer: brahman.

Intense and unflagging: ajaram suviram, undecaying, unfading, and full of vitality (or "performed by the most eminent persons").

Dearth of inspiration: amati, lack of consciousness, of devotion, of awareness.

3. Loftiest spot: varshman, the surface of the earth, the center of the world: the place of the altar. Cf. YV XXIII, 62.

4. Girdled: parivita, lit. girt with a rope, i.e., the sacred cord (of grass) which is tied around the tree that is to be felled, so that it may become a yupa, or pole of sacrifice. A symbol also of the second birth, which takes place through the sacrifice. This verse is used in the initiation ceremony, upanayana, according to some GS (cf. e.g., AGS I, 20, 9).

Brought to new birth: lit. being born, jayamana, present participle. The act of being raised is the tree's initiation, a new birth accompanied by prayer (cf. v. 5).

6. Precious treasure: ratna, jewel, pearl, treasure.

Gift of children: prajavat, generative energy, offspring.

7. To which the sacrificial ladle: i.e., the ladle filled with sacred oil (cf. v. 1 and also RV IV, 6, 3) with which the posts are smeared.

Sacred field: kshetrasadhas.

What is meet to be chosen: varya, the most precious and valuable thing. Cf. ratna in v. 6.

8. Emblem of sacrifice: the yupa.

9. Stakes: here probably the posts that mark the line of separation between the different sacrificial areas (dedicated to different Gods).

The Sacrificial Horse
Ashvamedha

20 The horse sacrifice, or ashvamedha, is the "king of the rites"¹⁸⁴ and the rite of kings.¹⁸⁵ It is the royal sacrifice offered by a victorious king. It is the most solemn and impressive cultic celebration of the Vedas and at the same time it is one of the most secular and political. The priestly role is not here so prominent as in most of the other sacrifices. Though its actual duration is only three days, preparations for the rite take long months or even, according to the prescriptions, up to one year or sometimes two, with yet another year to conclude the ritual.

At the moment of sacrifice the royal court, including the queen who has an important role to play at a certain moment,¹⁸⁶ is assembled together with the entire population. At the start Soma-juice is offered and then, after many ritual acts, the horse is immolated with solemnity. Numerous other animals are also led to the appointed spot and certain ones are offered in sacrifice. After the sacrifice of the horse has been performed the prescribed procedure demands the sacrifice of a number of cows, followed by the distribution of honoraria and other gifts to the priests.¹⁸⁷

Today we are perhaps in a better position to understand the nature of this sacrifice, which has been the subject of much debate among scholars. Without taking part in the discussion we may see in this sacrifice the final, minutely detailed elaboration of a long process in which pre-Vedic elements, fertility rites, cosmogonic references, social motives, political factors, and priestly interests all play a part, together producing a highly elaborate and no doubt impressive ritual. In spite of its complicated, soon outmoded, and at times degraded ritual, the overall impression created by this rite, encompassing as it does the whole of the universe, is undeniably splendid. It is often called the Great Sacrifice, mahakratu, the great display of force and power. It blots out all sins, fulfills all wishes, answers prayers for a son, and also, at a deeper level, fulfills or perfects Prajapati and identifies with him the one who is offering the sacrifice.

The Rig Veda has two hymns dedicated to the sacrifice of the horse. Whereas the hymn preceding our text has a more ritual character,¹⁸⁸ Rig Veda I, 163, does not set out to describe the ashvamedha rite; it is a cosmogonic hymn in which the horse of the ashvamedha is homologized in a grandiose fashion with the sun and with a primordial cosmic horse that represents the entire universe.¹⁸⁹ In this hymn are to be found both metaphorical and factual allusions, metaphorical with reference to the sun (e.g., this horse is a primordial horse) and factual with reference to the actual sacrifice. Thus verses 1 and 2 refer to the sun in the heavenly "ocean;" verse 5 speaks of a magnificent champion racehorse, while simultaneously referring to the perfect performance of the sacrificial rites over which the said horse presides. In verse 6 the horse in its earthly course is identified with the Sun in its heavenly course. Verse 8 brings us back to the ashvamedha, to that moment when the horse moves majestically onto the sacrificial parade ground.

Verse 9 describes certain features of the horse's appearance, while referring once again to the Sun. In verse 12 the horse arrives amidst due solemnity upon the place of sacrifice, followed by other animals, by poets, singers, and priests. The hymn concludes with a prayer uttered by the officiating priest to the horse which has now been offered in sacrifice.

Throughout the Indo-European world the horse has occupied a rather special position and has been considered a powerful symbol both of the human psyche and of the universe, the link between the two being perhaps the connection of the horse with the waters, and in the ashvamedha, significantly enough, the horse is immolated by suffocation. The Vedic contribution in this regard is to stress the horse's cosmic and universal character, in contrast with the particular features to which attention is drawn in Greece or central Europe, and also to stress its sacrificial role. The horse occupies so central a place precisely because it assumes in itself the whole universe and has a vicarious role to perform. It is significant that the chapters of the Shatapatha Brahmana where the ashvamedha is minutely described are followed by a chapter on the purushamedha, or human sacrifice,¹⁹⁰ which in turn is followed by a further chapter on the sarvamedha, or all-sacrifice.¹⁹¹

Our second text is from the Yajur Veda and is a prayer said by the officiating priest in the course of the ashvamedha.

Ashvamedha

RV I, 163

i) 1. How worthy of telling and how superb your birth,
O Steed, when first you whinnied, on seeing the light,
as you rose from the ocean of sea or of space
with your eagle wings and limbs of swift gazelle.
2. This Steed, the gift of Death, Trita has harnessed,
while Indra was the first of all to mount him,
the Gandharva first to grasp in his hands the reins.
From the substance of the Sun, O Gods, you fashioned this Steed.
3. You, O Steed, are Death, you the Sun;
you by a secret decree are Trita;
by only a little are you distinguished from Soma.
You have, they say, three connections in heaven.
4. In heaven, they say, you have three connections,
three in the waters and three within the ocean.
You resemble, O Steed, the Lord of the Waters,
for there, they say, is your highest birthplace.
5. Here, Racehorse, are your haunts for bathing;
here are the traces of your champion hooves.
Here I have seen the blessed reins that guide you,
which those who guard Cosmic Order cherish.
6. Your innermost self I have perceived in spirit,
a Bird from heaven who directs his course on high.
I have seen you rearing your winged head and advancing
by dust-free paths, fair and easy to travel.
7. There I have seen your exalted form seeking
to obtain food in the track of the Cow.
When mortal man approaches you for enjoyment,
the great devourer of plants has awakened.
8. Behind you, O Horse, come a chariot, the hero,
an offering of cows, and a troupe of fair maidens.
Desirous of your friendship, many follow.
With splendid courage the Gods have endowed you.
9. His horns are of gold, his feet of iron;
he is fleet as thought and swifter than Indra.
The Gods are gathered for this sacred meal, offered
to the one who first of all mounted this Stallion.
10. Like swans, the celestial coursers form a line
when they, the steeds, reach the heavenly arena,
the end of their lengthened row being motionless,
while those in the center still proceed.
11. Your body, O Steed, flies as with wings;
your spirit moves quickly like the wind.
Your horns are found in sundry places,
advancing in the forests with a jumping motion.
12. The fleet-footed Steed, his mind recollected
and thoughts directed godward, advances
to the place of sacrifice. A ram of his kindred
is led before; next come sages and minstrels.
13. The Steed has attained the abode supreme.
He has gone to the place of his Father and Mother.
May he find a warm welcome today among the Gods
and thus win good gifts for him who offers!
YV XXII, 22

ii) O Brahman, in this kingdom may priests be born who shine brightly with sacred knowledge! May here be born warriors of heroic stature, who are skillful shots, good marksmen, invincible chariot fighters! May cows in this kingdom yield milk in plenty, our oxen be tireless, our horses swift, our housewives skillful! To him who offers this sacrifice may a hero-son be born, a champion, a mighty warrior, a persuasive speaker!
May Heaven send us rain for our needs!
May our fruit-bearing plants ripen in season!
May joy and prosperity fall to our lot!

i) 1. Ocean . . . of space: purisha, a much-discussed word, meaning not earth, as was traditionally said, but originally source, flood, afterward fullness, and still later dirt. Here the word almost certainly denotes the primeval source, the primordial waters. Cf., e.g., RV III, 22, 4 and also SB VII, 1, 1, 24.

2. Death: Yama, the King or God of Death, but here perhaps referring to Agni.
Trita: a little-known divinity related to Indra.

3. Death: Yama.
Sun: Aditya.
Three connections: i.e. his relationships to the divinities mentioned above.

4. The horse's threefold origin in the waters and in the ocean is here a poetic parallel to the three "bonds" of Varuna. Cf. RV I, 24, 15, (§ IV 8).
Lord of the Waters: Varuna.

5. The homology with the Sun begins here. The Gods are the keepers of the reins and the guardians of rita.

6. Perceived in spirit: manasa . . . ajanam.
A Bird: the vital principle of the Steed is here identified with the Sunbird, i.e., the atman of the Steed is the Bird.
Paths: i.e., paths leading to heaven.

7. Your exalted form: te rupam uttamam.
Track of the Cow: either the firmament where the "trace" of the Cosmic Cow is found or, on earth, the racecourse where cows are won.
Devourer of plants: Agni.

8. An offering of cows . . . : lit. cows follow and the charm of virgins.

9. Horns . . . of gold: probably meaning hooves and referring to the rays of the sun. According to v. 2 it was Indra himself who first mounted the Steed.

10. The order is slightly modified to make it more intelligible. The idea is that the celestial, i.e., sunhorses, form a row of which the middle part is moving while the end stands still.

11. Spirit: citta.
Horns: perhaps referring to the hooves. Others see an allusion to quickly spreading forest fires.

ii) Priests: Brahmins.
Heaven: Parjanya.
The Struggle for Immortality
Daivasura

21 The quest for immortality is one of Man's deepest instincts. At the same time he is aware that immortality is not his "natural" lot; immortality belongs, if at all, to the Gods. Thus a yearning to become a God springs up spontaneously within Man. We have already heard the chant of victory:

We have drunk the Soma and become immortal!
We have attained the light, we have found the Gods!¹⁹²
Man can become immortal only if he is divinized or, rather, divinization amounts to immortality.

In connection with this theme the Vedic experience contributes two intuitions, the first of which is considered here and the second in the next text. The Brahmanas tell us explicitly that not even the Gods were originally immortal, that immortality is not natural to the Gods, that they also had to struggle for it. Sacrifice is the way to immortality, because sacrifice is the one original and originating act, as we have already seen.

It would be merely a farce if the Gods were to achieve their immortality without a struggle, without the risk of not getting it and so we have the scene set for the asuras, those beings that are usually referred to as demons, for lack of a better term. One

should recall in this connection that angels and demons have the same origin and that their good and evil features are themselves the fruits of a struggle and a test.

The fact that the Gods are obliged to win their immortality has two important implications for Men. First, the Gods are real and inspiring examples, for they have gone through the same fundamental experience as Men: that of having to gain their real freedom. To attain freedom means to become immortal, to be free from the clutches of time, for as long as one is tied to time one is not really free. The Gods are really Men's fellow travelers on the journey toward immortality. Men's relation with them is one of companionship, for Gods and Men share a common destiny in spite of their differing positions in an acknowledged hierarchy. The other implication, the recognition of which gives peace and serenity to Man, is that the Gods cannot be whimsical creatures, for there is a rita, an Order, whose dynamism is Sacrifice, which transcends both Men and Gods and which can in no way be manipulated or considered as being activated by an anthropomorphic will.

Let us now take a closer look at the texts themselves. Prajapati, the Lord of all creatures, whose name is scarcely mentioned in the Rig Veda,¹⁹³ holds in the Brahmanas a position of capital importance. According to a lengthy narrative in the Brahmanas, Prajapati is the primordial being before whom nothing whatever was in existence. The Shatapatha Brahmana tells us over and over again that "Prajapati is sacrifice;" that is, Prajapati performed an act of self immolation, self-sacrifice, in order that creatures might come to be. Thus creation is regarded as the sacrifice of Prajapati, as the ontological self-despoliation of the supreme principle in order to bring into existence the intermediate order of things which consists of the cosmos, which has come forth from the Father of all beings and is neither the Father nor sheer nothingness. This intermediate order, being neither stable nor self-existent, is by constitution transitory, or, in other words, dynamic. The creature is powerless in itself to sustain itself or to complete its full span of destiny, but must attempt by means of sacrifice to recover its true status, to return to its source, retrieve its unity, that is, to become immortal, divinized.

Prajapati, we may remember, created two types of superior beings, the devas (Gods) and the asuras (demons). In the beginning neither the Gods nor the asuras were immortal. Both tried to become immortal and fought each other in order to achieve immortality. They discovered that only by means of sacrifice could they become immortal. Both performed sacrifice¹⁹⁴ and both strove to conquer the world.¹⁹⁵ The Shatapatha Brahmana abounds in anecdotes about this struggle for immortality, a struggle of a unique kind, a veritable ritual battle in which the combatants are priests and the weapons sacrifices. Sacrifice is the sole means by which the Gods may win the victory. Because the devas perform the sacrifice better than the asuras they win.¹⁹⁶ Before the final victory there are recurring conflicts and victories of a temporary nature, for the asuras try again and again to mount fresh assaults.

The rivalry between the Gods and the demons, the so-called daivasura struggle, is the subject of one of the richest myths extant concerning the conflict constantly being waged between the two forces harbored in Man. The conflict here, however, is not ultimate. Both devas and asuras are offspring of the supreme God and it is not even certain which of the two are the firstborn.¹⁹⁷ The asuras are the enemies of the Gods but very seldom appear as enemies of Men. Both strive for immortality, but they also know that there is an incompatibility between them so that the victory can be won only by one side. The rituals of sacrifice, which is considered the sole total and all-inclusive act, constitute the rules of the game. The first instrument of sacrifice is the firstborn of Prajapati, vac, the word. They will have to fight with it and for it. But this primordial word is both right and wrong, true and untrue. The word is always ambivalent. The Shatapatha Brahmana goes on to say that truth took refuge among the Gods and untruth among the asuras and that for this reason the devas became feeble and poor, while the demons became rich; but in the long run he who abides in truth reaches fullness of existence, while he who remains in untruth loses everything. It is by means of this sacrifice to truth that the Gods finally attained victory.¹⁹⁸ The symbolism needs no further interpretation.

Daivasura

SB I, 5, 2, 6

i) The Sacrifice ran away from the Gods. The Gods called out after it, "Listen to us! Come back here." It replied, "Let it be so," and went back to the Gods. Now with what had thus come back to them, with that the Gods worshiped, and by this worship they became the Gods that they are to this very day.

SB II, 7, 3, 1

ii) It is through Sacrifice that the Gods proceeded to the heavenly realm.

SB II, 2, 2, 8-14

iii) 8. [Once upon a time] the Gods and the asuras, both of whom were offspring of Prajapati, were striving between

themselves. Both sides were destitute of spirit because they were mortal and he who is mortal has no spirit. Among these two groups of mortal beings one, Agni, was immortal and it was through him, the immortal, that they both had their being. Now, whichever of the Gods was slain by the asuras was in very truth slain irrevocably.

9. And so the Gods became inferior. They continued worshiping and practicing fervent concentration, however, in the hope of overcoming their enemies who were likewise mortal. Their gaze, then, fell upon the immortal sacred Agni.

10. "Come," they said, "let us establish this immortality in our inmost self! When we have placed that immortality in our inmost self and have become immortal and unconquerable, we shall defeat our enemies who are neither immortal nor unconquerable."

11. They said: "The Fire is with both of us; let us then speak openly with the asuras."

12. They said: "Let us establish the two fires, but then what will you do?"

13. The asuras replied: "Then we shall set it in place, saying: eat grass here, eat wood here, cook rice here, cook meat here." The fire that the asuras set in place, it is by this that men eat [cooked food].

14. So the Gods established that Fire in their inmost self and, having established that immortality in their inmost self and become immortal and unconquerable, they defeated their mortal and conquerable enemies. And so he [the sacrificer] now establishes immortality in his inmost self, and though he has no hope of immortality, he attains a full lifetime. He becomes unconquerable, and when his enemy tries to overpower him, he is not overpowered. Therefore, when one who has established the Fire and one who has not are fighting, the one who has established the Fire overcomes. For by this [Fire] he becomes unconquerable, immortal.

SB II, 4, 2, 1-5

iv) 1. The beings came in a respectful manner to find Prajapati; by "beings" is meant the creatures he had made.

"Arrange," they said to him, "how we are to live." First the Gods drew near, ritually invested with the sacred cord [of sacrifice] and bending the right knee.

He said to them: "Receive Sacrifice as your food, immortality as your life-force, and the Sun as your light-sphere."

2. Then drew near the ancestors, bearing over the right shoulder the cord of sacrifice and bending the left knee. To them he said: "Receive the funeral offerings of each month as your food, the svadha libation as your mind-swiftness and the moon as your light-sphere."

3. Then drew near the race of men, clothed and bowing low. To them he said: "Night and morning shall you eat, your offspring shall be your death and fire your light-sphere."

4. Then drew near the animals. He allowed them to eat according to their fancy, saying: "Eat as chance allows, how, when, and where you will." And indeed they eat when and where they find something to eat.

5. Then, finally, drew near the asuras. To them he assigned darkness and power. The power of the asuras does indeed exist. All those beings, it is true, have perished, but beings continue to live according to the ordinance Prajapati has given them.

SB II, 4, 3, 3

v) It is by dint of sacrifice that the Gods have brought to completion all their proper undertakings, and the same did the sages also.

SB V, 1, 1, 1-2

vi) 1. The Gods and the asuras, both having Prajapati as their origin, were rivals of each other. So the asuras, swollen with pride, said, "In what, pray, should we place our oblation?" And they proceeded to place their oblations in their own mouths.

2. The Gods then proceeded to place their oblations each in the mouth of one of his fellows. And Prajapati gave himself over to them. In this way they became owners of sacrifice, for sacrifice is really the food of the Gods.

SB VIII, 4, 3, 2

vii) All that the Gods effect they effect by intoned recitation. Now intoned recitation is sacrifice; it is through sacrifice therefore that they do whatever they do.

SB X, 2, 2, 1

viii) And when he had emitted the creatures, he [Prajapati] rose up on high and departed to that world where that [sun] shines; for up to then there existed no other that was worthy of sacrifice. The Gods began then to offer him in sacrifice.

SB XI, 1, 8, 2-4

ix) Prajapati donated himself to the Gods. The sacrifice became verily theirs. Sacrifice is therefore the food of the Gods. When he donated himself to the Gods he emitted an image of himself, which is sacrifice . . . By sacrifice he purchased himself back from the Gods.

TS I, 6, 10, 2

x) It was by the perfect accomplishment of the sacrifice that the Gods proceeded to the heavenly realm, and it was by reason

of their defective performance of the same that the asuras were conquered.

i) Listen to us: a-shru-

Let it be so: so' stu tatha iti.

Sacrifice is the Gods' dynamic force.

ii) The verb upa-ut-kram- suggests an ascent by degrees.

iii) 8. Destitute of spirit: anatman, without atman, seems here to have a personal meaning of "without a personal spirit." Cf. v. 10, where the Gods desire to insert this immortality, idam amrtam, into their inmost self: antaratman.

9. The immortal sacred Agni: etad amrtam agnyadheyam.

10. Established: adadhata, from the root dha-, to establish. Immortality is always a second gift, the fruit of a second birth, the result of the sacrifice.

14. The sacrificer cannot attain immortality like the Gods, but he attains his own fullness as his complete ayus or lifetime. One who has established the Fire: ahitagni, the one who performs the agnihotra regularly. This sacrificial conclusion of a mythical text is typical of the B.

iv) Prajapati gives sacrifice, immortality, and the sun to the devas; masi-shraddha, svadha-shraddha (cf. thought-swift: manojavin), and the moon to the ancestors (Fathers); alternation of day and night, offspring (praja), and fire to men. To animals he gave no rite (and therefore no life-force) and no light, but only bodily sustenance; to the asuras, only darkness (tamas) and power (maya). Some translate maya as "illusion;" the power, however, is a shrewd and deceptive one, cunning might (Cf. § IV B b). Cf. SB XIII, 4, 3, 11, which again relates maya to the asuras so that asura-vidya becomes synonymous with maya, probably connoting magic. Noteworthy also are the different ways of approach: the devas are ritually invested with the sacred cord (yajnopavitin) on the left; the pitarah (Fathers) are pracinavitin (i.e., invested with the shoulder turned eastward, as for the shraddha ceremony); men are clothed.

v) By sacrifice the Gods and the rishis have accomplished everything that is proper for them to do, or have composed their rite.

Brought to completion: the root klp-, to make possible, to bring about, accomplish, perform, arrange, etc., is here used in the causative.

Proper undertakings: kalpa, fit; as a noun, rule, sacred ordinance.

vi) Cf. SB XI, 1, 8, 2 (ix).

vii) The Gods here are Prajapati and the pranas, creating together by means of stoma, i.e., by intoned recitation, song of praise, chant.

Life-Giving Immolation

Haviryajna

22 Our next texts, like those of the preceding section, all implicitly suggest that the human condition holds within it a deeper invisible dimension. This dimension Upanishadic spirituality seeks to develop (and sometimes to extricate) from the complex of human reality in order to form out of it an autonomous body of doctrine. This process runs the risk of becoming a discarnate or dematerialized spirituality. We are as yet far from this dichotomy, but already the emphasis is shifting more and more toward interiority.

Yet we should not forget the second and distinctive feature of Vedic spirituality mentioned in the preceding chapter. There exists in the Vedas a trend that is not directed toward immortality and takes no pleasure in the thought of it, but rather is repelled by the idea of "living forever." At this stage Man either seeks to interiorize and perfect the idea of immortality, or he prefers in his present human condition to renounce altogether such a dream of living forever. In a word, he craves either liberation, that is, escape from the given human condition, or its temporal reform, the latter desire finding its expression in the myth of rejuvenation. The Upanishads follow the former path, but we are still at this stage concerned with the latter, which, we may note, survives in popular religion until our own times. It is after all a constant desire of the human psyche: not to transcend time but to bring it to a halt.

There is a wonderful story in the Brahmanas which may well be the origin of other similar legends.¹⁹⁹ It tells how a certain

tribe was afflicted by dissensions and plagues as a punishment for their ill-treatment of the sage Cyavana who was now passing through an abandoned old age in pain and decrepitude. Their chieftain, Saryata, vexed to learn of this, went to the sage, paid him homage, and offered him in atonement his daughter Sukanya. The Ashvins, coming on the scene, tried to seduce Sukanya and sneered at her when she refused their advances, preferring to stay with the decrepit old man to whom her father had given her: "I will not abandon him as long as he lives," she said. The sage, aware of her promise (for indeed she told him), instructed her that if they came again she was to bring home to them their own incompleteness and imperfection, adding that he would not tell them in what respect they were incomplete and imperfect until they made him young again. The stratagem succeeded and the Ashvins made him young again by virtue of the waters of a certain pool. It is significant that what led them to make him young again was the desire they had to partake of Soma. Cyavana then told them that they were imperfect because they were excluded by the Gods from participation in a certain sacrifice they were performing in Kurukshetra.200

Not only is the whole text concerned with sacrifice, but it also derives its meaningfulness from the obedience and fidelity of Sukanya, who was ready to give her whole life in service to a ghostlike man rather than to disobey her father. This story supplies a vivid context for the more abstract quotations of this chapter.

Sacrifice consists of an immolation. We find here once again the thought that the sacrifice is "stretched out," just as thread is stretched on the loom to be woven. If it is a question of Soma-juice, then one presses it, extracts all its virtue, slays it; if it is fire, then it dwindles and dies. In the same way all sacrifice involves a dying. But this immolation is a dying-for-life, for the sacrifice in the very act of dying renews itself within the universe; it is thus a universal principle of life, everywhere in operation. All that is, the whole cosmos, comes to be through sacrifice. The highest act of God is that of Agni the sacrificer, the cosmic priest who constantly renews the life of every being. If it is unable to participate in the cosmic and universal sacrifice existence dwindles and is annihilated.

Haviryajna

SB II, 2, 2, 1

i) Verily, when this sacrifice is performed, it is slain; when one presses the soma-juice, one slays it; when one causes the victim to acquiesce and immolates it and thrusts a knife into it, one slays it. With the pestle and mortar or the two grindstones one slays the oblation.

SB III, 6, 2, 26

ii) Creatures who are not allowed to take part in sacrifice are reduced to nothingness. Therefore the sacrificer admits those who are not annihilated to take part in sacrifice, both men and beasts, Gods and birds, plants, trees, and everything that exists. Thus the entire universe takes part in sacrifice. Gods and men on the one hand and the Fathers on the other were wont in days gone by to drink together from the sacrifice. Sacrifice is their shared feast. In olden days they were to be seen as they came to this feast. Nowadays they are still present but remain invisible.

SB III, 9, 4, 23

iii) Now concerning why Soma is called sacrifice: when they press him, they slay him and when they stretch him out, they cause him to be born. He is born in being stretched out, he is born "going on": whence comes yan-ja, and yanja, they explain, is the same as yajna.

SB XIV, 3, 2, 1

iv) All that is, including all the Gods, has but one principle of life: sacrifice.

i) Every sacrifice is an immolation.

Causes . . . to acquiesce: samjnapayanti causative of sam-jna-, to agree, to consent. The sacrificial victim ought not to be led forcibly to its death, but made to accept it willingly.

Immolates: vishasati, from vi-shas-, to cut, to slaughter, thus to immolate.

ii) Reduced to nothingness: parabhuta (para-bhu-), to perish, disappear, be lost, succumb, yield, to vanish, to sustain a loss. Ontological nothingness entails being excommunicated from the sacrifice. Cf. § III B Antiphon for one sentence of this text in a different version.

Sacrificer: i.e., Agni, probably in his function as priest.

Drink together: sampibante, i.e., the Soma, shared feast; sampa, from the same root pa-, to drink.

Cf. SB I, 5, 2, 4; II, 3, 1, 20, which is the same text repeated (except for the last sentence).

iii) Sacrifice: yajna, hence the play on words at the end of the passage; going on: yan jayate, from which come the syllables that compose both yanja and yajna. The root i- suggests a cyclical conception.

He is born in being stretched out: sa tayamano jayate, sa yan jayate, with the idea of infinite extension and never-ending continuity.

iv) Principle of life: atman.

Sacrifice Is Man

Purushayajna

23 Although Scripture says more than once that sacrifice is that through which the Gods acquired immortality, or that by means of which Man obtains both material benefits and immortality, it stresses equally that "sacrifice is Man."²⁰¹ It is Man who offers, it is through him that sacrifice is performed. Sacrifice corresponds to Man in stature and proportions. In certain passages of the Shatapatha Brahmana the different parts of the human body are compared to the different constituent elements of sacrifice and to the objects employed in it. If it is true that sacrifice is Man it can equally be said that Man is a sacrifice. Sacrifice involves both immolation and new life and so it is with Man also. He is born, dies, and is reborn. The texts say that Man is born three times, once from his parents, a second time when he offers sacrifice, and a third time when, on dying, he is burned on the pyre. The second birth, that effected by sacrifice, is explained as follows: through the offering that he makes the sacrificer communicates with the world of the Gods and there comes about a sort of exchange. Just as a snake sloughs off its dead skin, so he who offers sacrifice "sloughs off" his mortal body. He presents it to the Gods and receives in return an immortal body. There is a whole series of preliminary rites called diksha leading up to the sacrifice proper. Through the diksha the Man receives a second birth, this time a divine birth, and he becomes immortal. The sacrificer has thus two bodies and it is his mortal body that he offers to the Gods in sacrifice. Once he is assured of a divine body he descends to earth once more and purchases back from the Gods his sacrificed body.

Certain texts also speak of human life in terms of a constitutive debt; one is indebted to the Gods, indebted to the sages, indebted to the ancestors, and indebted to Men. Debt is perhaps an ambiguous word²⁰² owing to the sociological and judicial connotations it has acquired. Rna refers, certainly, to a kind of moral obligation or duty that Man is discharging when he sacrifices, but this is to be understood as an act that must be done because it entails the fulfillment of Man's own being. Man's life on earth is ontically linked with the whole of reality and it is only when he responds with openness, or, to put it another way, when he permits within himself the unhampered circulation of being, that Man can be said to possess real life. To recognize one's place in the world involves the acknowledgment of a fivefold link, a fivefold debt, not merely as a social obligation but as a constitutive bond of unity. We have come into existence by a "jumping outside," by a movement or "transgression" away from the undifferentiated whole, and it is specifically by sacrifice that we reintegrate ourselves into the total reality.²⁰³

The passage about the four debts may help us to understand the way in which the sacrifice reintegrates Man into the whole of reality. By sacrificing to the Gods he restores his unity with the heavenly world; by reciting the Vedas, he acquires wisdom, he rescues himself from isolation and banality; by having progeny he establishes his links with mankind, past and future; finally, by practicing hospitality he communes with his fellow beings in an actualized present. The four debts do not impoverish Man; on the contrary they enrich him by letting him partake in the totality of the universe.²⁰⁴

The last text in this group sums up all that has been said and foreshadows the teaching of the Upanishads. It reminds us in brief that the life of Man, Man's daily round, consists of a series of sacrifices. Here there is already an advance beyond ritualism, an advance beyond all desire for prosperity or this world's goods--a declaration that true sacrifice consists of sacred study. A development is now taking place which will transform the idea of sacrifice, interiorize it, and purify it until in its performance only true knowledge will count.

The more general and cosmic interpretation of sacrifice does not, however, take priority in these texts over the concrete and ritualistic one. It is not only the cosmic purusha who performs the sacrifice and not only the primordial Man who can be termed both sacrifice and sacrificer; the concrete human being also is said to be the sacrifice and it is by sacrifice that he lives, because sacrifice links him with the whole of existence and enables him to perform all his duties as Man.

The fulfilment of all "debts" would lead inexorably to the elimination of the individual, to the immolation of the little self, to the purushamedha, the human sacrifice. It is not a question here of the destruction of the whole purusha, which would amount to an annihilation of the whole of reality, but to the immolation of the little purusha, that is, the individualistic ego. This ego is understood as all that constitutes individuality. To this end elaborate rituals will furnish the victim with a borrowed body so that substitution forestalls the actual killing of any human being.²⁰⁵ Yet Man is the first of the five victims²⁰⁶ and so must be the first one to be sacrificed,²⁰⁷ though (as other texts will say) the strength of one victim passes on to the next so that the horse is the substitute for Man, the bull for the horse, and so on,²⁰⁸ until finally by the immolation of one victim all are

adjudged to have been sacrificed.²⁰⁹

The human being is Man and Man is the sacrifice. This priestly identification of the individual with Man plays an important part in the understanding of human sacrifice. There is a twofold rationale to be observed in human sacrifice (we are ignoring, of course, degraded forms of it which are also found). This rationale is concerned in the first place with the debts owed by the individual to the Gods, the ancestors, and so on, by virtue of his having come to individual existence at all. Only by the sacrifice of himself as a separate ego can Man redeem and rescue himself. The rationale includes also the idea of a sharing by the individual in the cosmic sacrifice of the purusha. If the whole world has come into being by the sacrifice of Man, the individual must reenact that creating and saving sacrifice by performing it himself. Man, in this sense, is priest for the whole cosmos and his priestly action must include the sacrifice of himself. From this perspective we can understand two main features of Man's self-sacrifice: the looking for substitutes, on the one hand, and the interiorization of the sacrifice, on the other.

We may close this commentary on the human sacrifice by recalling the most ancient version of the story of Harishcandra as it is found in the Aitareya Brahmana²¹⁰ before its rich and variegated elaboration in the itihisas and puranas, that is, in the epics and in popular literature. In spite of his hundred wives, King Harishcandra had no son and, having prayed to Varuna for an offspring, he promised at the same time that he would sacrifice any son born to him to the God. A son, Rohita, was born and his father by different excuses succeeded in postponing the sacrifice until the young man could bear his own arms. "My son," said the father to him, "it is Varuna who has given you to me. I must sacrifice you to him." Rohita escapes to the forest and wanders there for six years. He meets eventually a certain poor rishi, who for a hundred cows consents to offer his second son Sunahshepa as a substitute for Rohita.²¹¹ The king and the God agree. "A Brahmin is worth more than a Kshatriya," says Varuna. For another hundred cows the same rishi Ajigarta binds his own son to the sacrificial post and for yet another hundred is ready to slay the boy himself, for nobody else is available to perform these actions, the four officiating priests having refused to bind the victim. At this Sunahshepa, realizing that he, a human being, is going to be sacrificed as if he were not a man, begins a mantra recitation to the Gods. His bonds loosen one by one as he recites this succession of verses in praise of Ushas. At the final verse the last knot is loosed and not only is Sunahshepa free but king Harishcandra also recovers from the dropsy with which he has been stricken. The famous sage Vishvamitra, one of the four priests, receives Sunahshepa as his son and curses Ajigarta.

Although this story is generally known as the akhyana (story) of Sunahshepa, we could consider also the figure of Rohita, Harishcandra's son, and call it "the myth of the human condition." Rohita represents Man in his basic human situation. He is born into life with a constitutive debt, the debt to the Gods. Rohita discovers the debt and escapes into the forest, but then recognizes his duty through his father's suffering (he has dropsy) and returns to face his destiny. Before returning he has to overcome, for the fifth time, the test (which comes not from a "bad" temptor, but from the God Indra himself) not to go back to his father and be sacrificed. It is only when he has set his heart and mind on the right way that he meets the poor Ajigarta and his sons, and vicarious substitution becomes possible.

Here we have most of the motifs connected with sacrifice: life is a free gift which can be preserved and fully lived only by means of a gift given in return; there is a supreme order of things over which neither Men nor Gods have any power; the vicarious substitution, whatever its subjective motive may be, has an ontological justification, because ultimately human value does not reside in the individual but in the person and thus one person can take the place of, put on the mask of, another. Herein is the realm of human freedom and the mystery of love. Prayer has a power of its own and can reverse the order of things because it introduces an element of mercy which would otherwise be stifled by unmitigated justice. Human greed and the mysterious ways of the Gods are also vividly depicted in this myth.

One of the most human and universal conceptions of sacrifice is the so-called pancamahayajna, the five great sacrifices. Here the idea of sacrifice embraces all aspects of life and Man's relationship to all beings, from plants and animals up to Brahman. Man is related to all beings by means of sacrifice. Sacrifice is not his link exclusively with the Gods; even water offered to a guest has the same value and symbolic depth as a complicated ritual. The study of the Scriptures itself is the highest liturgical act, the sacrifice to Brahman. It is not water or ghee, but the student's intellect which is the substance of this sacrifice. Thus, even before the Upanishadic spiritualizing of sacrifice, this conception saves sacrifice from becoming a mere speciality of the priests and enables it to penetrate the whole of Man's life.

Purushayajna

SB I, 3, 2, 1

i) The sacrifice is man. It is man [who offers it] because it is man who spreads it out and because, in being spread out, it

assumes exactly the same stature as man. For this reason, the sacrifice is man.

SB I, 7, 2, 1-5

ii) 1. When a man is born, whoever he may be, there is born simultaneously a debt to the Gods, to the sages, to the ancestors, and to men.

2. When he performs sacrifice it is the debt to the Gods which is concerned. It is on their behalf, therefore, that he is taking action when he sacrifices or makes an oblation.

3. And when he recites the Vedas it is the debt to the sages which is concerned. It is on their behalf, therefore, that he is taking action, for it is said of one who has recited the Vedas that he is the guardian of the treasure store of the sages.

4. And when he desires offspring it is the debt to the ancestors which is concerned. It is on their behalf, therefore, that he is taking action, so that their offspring may continue, without interruption.

5. And when he entertains guests, it is the debt to man which is concerned. It is on their behalf, therefore, that he is taking action if he entertains guests and gives them food and drink. The man who does all these things has performed a true work; he has obtained all, conquered all.

SB II, 2, 4, 8

iii) When a man dies, they place him on the pyre; then he is born out of the fire and the fire burns only his body. Even as he is born from his father and mother, so he is born from the fire. The man who does not offer the agnihotra, however, does not pass to new life at all. Therefore it is very necessary to offer the agnihotra.

SB III, 6, 2, 16

iv) Man, so soon as he is born, is to be regarded, his whole person, as a debt owed to death. When he performs sacrifice he is purchasing himself back from death.

SB XI, 2, 1, 1

v) Of a truth man is born three times over in the following way. First he is born from his mother and father. He is born a second time while performing the sacrifice that becomes his share. He is born a third time when he dies and they place him on the pyre and he proceeds to a new existence. Therefore they say: "Man is born three times."

SB XI, 2, 6, 13

vi) The question arises, "Which is the better, the man who sacrifices to the Self, or the man who sacrifices to the Gods?" "The man who sacrifices to the Self" must be the reply, for he who sacrifices to the Self is also the one who possesses the knowledge that through his sacrifice his body is brought to completion, through this sacrifice his body finds its proper place. Just as a snake rids itself of its dead skin, so the man who performs sacrifice rids himself of his mortal body, that is to say, of sin, and by dint of verses, formulas, Vedic melodies, and offerings takes possession of the heavenly realm.

SB XI, 5, 6, 1-3

vii) 1. There are five great sacrifices, namely, the great ritual services: the sacrifices to all beings, sacrifice to men, sacrifice to the ancestors, sacrifice to the Gods, sacrifice to Brahman.

2. Day by day a man offers sustenance to creatures; that is the sacrifice to beings. Day by day a man gives hospitality to guests, including a glass of water; that is the sacrifice to men. Day by day a man makes funerary offerings, including a glass of water; that is the sacrifice to the ancestors. Day by day a man makes offerings to the Gods, including wood for burning; that is the sacrifice to the Gods.

3. And the sacrifice to Brahman? The sacrifice to Brahman consists of sacred study.

i) The sacrifice is Man: purusho vai yajnah. Cf. CU III, 16, 1 (§ III 27). Man is of the same size as the altar. Cf. SB I, 2, 5, 14. And the altar is both the sacrifice and the center of the world. Cf. RV I, 164, 35 (§ I 11)

repeated in YV XXIII, 62. The same idea is repeated in SB III, 1, 4, 23, which, in addition to the identification between sacrifice and the word two verses before, makes a connection (matra) between yajna, purusha, and vac.

ii) 1. The text could also have the contrary meaning: the Gods, etc., owing the debt. Rnam ha vai jayate yo' sti.

iii) Cf. § III 16 concerning the agnihotra.

iv) Debt: rna.

v) Cf. § V A c for cremation rites and AV XII, 3 for cremation as a form of sacrifice.

vii) The pancamahayajna ("five great sacrifices") constitute the central acts of worship. They are (in the order of this text) bhuta, manushya-, pitr-, deva-, and brahmajajna (cf. the list given by Manu III 69-72). Cf. BU I, 4, 17 (§§ I 7 and III 26 Introduction).

The Desire of Heaven
Svargakama

24 Svargakamo yajeta, "with the desire for heaven he sacrifices," is a traditional formula explicated in the post-Vedic period with the closest attention to detail. There is no point in expounding here the various sacrifices and the proliferation of sacrificial practices which took place. We may simply take note in passing that the power of sacrifice has been used and misused for satisfying human wishes of all kinds.

Tradition renders svarga, which literally means "heaven," as happiness,²¹² and indeed the desire for heaven means the desire for happiness. Now happiness may be sought in different values: material riches, offspring, a wife, power, triumph, and the like. We detect here a peculiar process of secularization; sacrifice is being utilized for secular purposes, because in secular "values" Men see their relative or temporal heaven. One Upanishad, perhaps not without a certain irony, says that "one who desires heaven should offer the "agnihotra."²¹³

There is no doubt that human religiousness has overdone the idea of heaven all too often, but on the other hand we should be on our guard against converting religion into so lofty and chemically pure a business that only the sophisticated and "pure" elites can be expected to understand and practice it. At one extreme is the idea that religion is only for the masses, while at the other is the belief that it is only for the elite. In the former instance the "enlightened" persons do not need religion. In the latter what the masses have is only superstition.

The desire of heaven under one image or another, that is, the longing for happiness along with the conviction that an endeavor toward such a goal is not totally hopeless, constitutes mankind's most constant and most powerful impetus since Man became Man. Its interpretation is quite another matter. Yet here the emphasis lies, as with most religious values, not on the orthodoxy but on the orthopraxy, that is, on the action a Man has to perform in order to attain the desired goal. Furthermore, today's practices probably illustrate yesterday's attitudes: many people perform the traditionally prescribed actions without being convinced of their meaning or concerning themselves with their possible interpretation.²¹⁴

Svargakama

SB IV, 2, 5, 10

i) Every sacrifice is a boat to heaven.
SB VIII, 6, 1, 10

ii) So great is the power of sacrifice that it is the Self of the Gods. When, out of the essence of sacrifice, the Gods had made their own Self, they took their seat in the world of heaven. Similarly, the one who sacrifices now, when out of the essence of sacrifice he has made his own Self, takes his seat in the world of heaven.
SB VIII, 7, 4, 6

iii) Sacrifice has only one sure foundation, only one abode, the heavenly realm.
SB IX, 2, 3, 27

iv) "Those journeying to heaven do not look back; they ascend the heaven, the two worlds;" that is, those who are en route to the heavenly world proceed straight on; they by no means look back. It is also said, "The sage performing the all-supporting sacrifice . . .," because sacrifice is most certainly that by which the whole world is supported and those who perform it are the sages.
SB IX 4, 4, 15

v) Daily the sacrifice is spread.
Daily the sacrifice is completed.
Daily it unites the sacrificer to heaven.
Daily by sacrifice to heaven he ascends.
AB IV, 27 (XIX, 5, 4)

vi) The hymns are arranged in groups. Just as one travels [here on earth] in different stages, changing each time the horses or the oxen for those which are less exhausted, in the same way one goes to heaven by reciting each time new hymns in meters that are not yet exhausted.

i) Sarva eva yajno nauh svargya. Cf. JaimB I, 165 (§ III B Antiphon).

ii) Cf. SB XI, 2, 6, 13 (§ III 23) where another idea is expressed, namely, that the best sacrifice is the sacrifice to (or of) the Self (atman) and that it is superior even to the sacrifice to the Gods, because it is more intimate and because it opens the way to the highest realm. Cf. § III 27.

World of heaven: svargaloka.

v) Daily by sacrifice . . . ahar ahar anena (yajnena) svargam lokam gacchati. For this reason, the text goes on, yoking and unyoking of the fire altar has to be performed daily.

vi) An example of the concreteness of the rites leading to heaven; the liturgical ascension is taken realistically.

Hymns: chandamsi, meters.

Fidelity and Faith

Satyam shraddhayam

25 The performance of sacrifice may become complicated and difficult, for any error or failure tends to be corrected by a new caution, which soon results in a proliferation of regulations. In fact, "if the priest omits a syllable in the liturgy he is making a hole in the sacrifice,"²¹⁵ says one text, thus indicating the strict correspondence among word, action, and results. In the Shathapatha Brahmana we find frequent mention of "those who know," that is, the priests who are sure guides in this labyrinth of sacrifice. It is this knowledge on the part of priests which explains their importance (and hence that of Brahmins in general) and their superiority over the simple faithful. It explains also the strong tendency observable at the culmination of this process to consider them as Gods, as God-Men. In fact they have in their hands a formidable weapon, powerful both among Men and among Gods. No wonder, then, that before the performance of any important ritual priests must take an oath not to harm one another,²¹⁶ either intentionally²¹⁷ or by simple error.²¹⁸ It is not surprising that casteism and priestcraft have been among the most devastating abuses in all religions.

Those who perform sacrifice have to satisfy both the Gods above, to whom the sacrifice is offered, and the priests or Brahmins, to whom gifts must be presented. The presentation of gifts, which plays an important part in the ceremony, is called dakshina; the gifts may consist of gold, clothing, or cattle and horses. In the Atharva Veda we find stress laid upon these gifts to priests as "passports" to heaven.

Not only must sacrifice be flawlessly performed as regards the sequence of actions, but the prayers, verses, chants, and hymns must be impeccably pronounced. Just as the divine primordial sacrifice was accomplished through the medium of the word, so Man's sacrifice similarly employs words, which are for Man his sole instrument and indeed the inner soul-force of the sacrificial action without which no sacrifice could conceivably take place. Hence the extreme precision associated with the words of sacrifice. The primeval words are all cultic words.

This execution of sacrifice in as perfect a manner as possible does not demand merely the proper sequence of rites performed in a mechanical fashion. Sacrifice is valueless without a spirit of trust, without faith. Faith cannot be dissociated from precision, or fidelity to the rules. Moreover, there must be trust both in the sacrifice itself and in the priests, since it is they who take the lead in the performance of the sacrificial action. This "trust" or "faith" appears also as a personified divinity.²¹⁹ The one who is faithful (shraddha-deva) par excellence is Manu, the first priest, who accomplished the sacrifice so perfectly that he was thereafter frequently cited as a model to imitate.²²⁰

Even today in the Romance languages, though less in Anglo-Saxon idiom, one speaks of fidelity to observances and to rites, meaning both scrupulous observances and firm belief. There can be no fidelity without both elements: exactitude or precision, and faith or confidence. Shraddha means both equally.

The word shraddha has a fascinating origin. It is composed of shrat and the verbal root dha-, to put (place, set, lay). If we recall that the Latin credo, to believe, and the Greek kardia (Latin, cor) are also related to shrad (or shrat), we have practically all the ingredients of the notion of faith: to put one's heart, to put one's whole being, to have one's trust and confidence in something.²²¹ Shrat has been related in the Indian tradition to satya, being, truth that here means not only truth but also truthfulness and exactitude.²²² Shrat means the fundamental trust that is based on nothing other than the very nature of our entire being--there where our whole being is based.²²³ As already noted,²²⁴ faith, truth, being, and cosmic order go together.²²⁵ It is on this ultimate level that the discourse on faith is meaningful and not on the epistemic level of discussion

about different beliefs.

One passage of the Kaushitaki Brahmana relates in a profound and simple fashion, by means of a story and a dialogue, the human longing for permanence and durable effects in connection with sacrifice. If sacrifice is real it cannot be merely a fleeting action but must be an act done once and for all with permanent results. Yet if it is not reenacted each time one feels the need, how can one enjoy its blessings, or how are we going to know that it is efficacious for us? "What makes the sacrifice endure forever is faith; if one sacrifices with faith, the sacrifice is never lost."²²⁶ Faith is the permanent and enduring element in sacrifice. "Certainly it is out of faith that the Gods fashioned the initiation (diksha)."²²⁷

Faith also means truth and truth implies truthfulness, that is, the correct correspondence and right relationship among actions, words, meanings, and life. The external precision of the acts is only a symbol for the perfect correctness demanded from the sacrificer, for he does not perform the sacrifice through his own private capacity but enters into the ontological net of reality in order to maintain its cohesion and stability.

One text in this chapter (ii) leads us right up to the threshold of the Upanishadic world. Here the exactness of the rites is indeed essential, but still more essential is the spirit with which the ritual is performed. Imagine, the king says to Yajnavalkya, one of the most famous of sages, that the most elementary things are lacking for the performance of the agnihotra. What is to be used for the offering? The ontological interconnection of everything in the world permits Yajnavalkya to justify his substitution of one "thing" for another. When asked what would have to be done in the final extreme when nothing of the material world remains, he replies that one thing only remains: reality, truth (satya), and it is this that offers itself in faith; the sacrificer and the sacrifice coalesce when there is nothing else to offer.

It is the same Yajnavalkya who in the corresponding Upanishad of the later date²²⁸ expresses the beautiful thought that the sacrifice depends on the offerings and the offerings depend on faith. "But on what," he is asked, "does faith depend?" "On the heart alone is faith based," he replies.²²⁹

There is an intimate relation not only between truth and exactitude and between both of these and faith, but also between both of these and sacrifice. Sacrifice is the connecting link. "He who has laid the sacrificial fires should not speak untruth," says another text; "he should rather not speak at all, but he should not speak untruth," and, finally and epigrammatically, "Truth alone is worship."²³⁰

Satyam shraddhayam

SB I, 5, 2, 15

i) If he who draws near the sacrifice were to make an improper utterance he would waste the sacrifice, just as he might waste water by spilling it from a full vessel. Where the priests perform sacrifice as described with perfect mutual understanding, however, there everything takes place properly and no trouble appears. Therefore it is in this fashion that sacrifice should be carefully cherished.

SB XI, 3, 1, 2-4

ii) Janaka of Videha once asked Yajnavalkya, "What is used for the agnihotra, Yajnavalkya? Can you tell me?"

"I can, O king," he replied.

"What is it, then?"

"Milk," he said.

"If there were no milk, what would you use for the offering?"

"Rice and barley."

"And if there were no rice and barley, what would you use?"

"Some other herbs."

"And if there were no other herbs, what would you use?"

"I would use wild herbs," he said.

"And if there were no wild herbs, what would you use?"

"Some fruit."

"And if there were no fruit, what would you use?"

"I would use water," he said.

"And if there were no water, what would you use?"

"Then indeed," he replied, "there would be nothing at all, and yet an offering could be made--truth with faith."

Janaka then said: "You know the agnihotra, Yajnavalkya; I give you a hundred cows."

SB XII, 2, 3, 12

iii) Such are the difficulties and dangers of sacrifice which take hundreds upon hundreds of days to negotiate; and if any man venture upon them without knowledge, then he is stricken by hunger and thirst, by wicked men or friends, just as friends might harass foolish persons wandering in a wild forest. But if those who know do so they proceed one step after another and from one safe place to another, just as one might pass from one stream to another, and they thus obtain happiness in the world of heaven.

AB I, 11, 4 (II, 5, 13-14)

iv) One must prevent the sacrifice from unloosing. Just as in everyday life one ties knots at the two ends of a rope to prevent its becoming loose, so one ties knots at both ends of the sacrifice to prevent its unloosing.

TS I, 6, 8, 1

v) Whoever offers a sacrifice without first taking firm hold on faith, that man's sacrifice inspires no confidence . . . But if a man first takes firm hold on faith and then offers his sacrifice, then in that man's sacrifice both Gods and men place confidence.

i) Make an improper utterance: apavyaharet. As vyahrti is the effective and "proper" sacrificial utterance, its dangerous distortion is expressed by the prefix apa-

Mutual understanding: samvid, which means also common knowledge.

ii) And yet an offering could be made--truth with faith: athaitad ahuyataiva satyam shraddhayam, then one could offer only truth with faith. Cf. The same text in JB I, 19 and also BU VI, 2, 9 (§ III 26), where it is said that the Gods offer faith. Cf. other texts mentioned above (§ III 23) on the human tendency to reduce everything to essentials. Cf. YV XIX, 30:

By means of vows [vrata] one obtains consecration [diksha],

by consecration one obtains favor [dakshina, offering to the priest],

by favor one obtains faith [shraddha],

by faith one obtains truth [satya].

iv) The knots at both ends of the sacrifice refer here to the introductory and concluding rites. If one of these rites were missing, the continuity and very existence of the sacrifice would be endangered. The metaphor of the loom is also in the background.

v) Takes firm hold: a-rabhya, from the same root as arambha, beginning, origin (taking firm grasp before undertaking anything). A play on words involving shrad, confidence, the verb dha-, to put, and shraddha.

The Anthropocosmic Sacrifice

Loko 'gnih

26 The more ancient Upanishads make frequent mention of ritual sacrifice and seem to recognize the traditional ritual interpretations. Yet slowly there appears an interiorized and more anthropocentric notion of sacrifice, though its constituent parts remain the same. There is progress toward a more purely spiritual and interior concept.

One of the most important and ancient Upanishads belonging to the Shatapatha Brahmana is the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Its opening verses describe the sacrificial horse as symbol of the universal sacrifice: the head of the horse is the dawn, the eye the sun, the wind the breath, and so on.

We are still in the old order, but already the great leap has begun. Scripture is quoted as supporting the new ideas. Tradition has considered that meditation on the sacrifice is equivalent to the sacrifice itself, and a passage of the Shatapatha Brahmana is quoted which says, "either through knowledge or through work,"²³¹ and reference is made to another text that seems to equate the horse sacrifice with the knowledge of it.²³² Still another text says that the Self-offerer is better than the God-offerer,²³³ which is understood to mean that to sacrifice to the Self is better than to sacrifice to the Gods. We are not interested in analyzing exegetical methods, but only in detecting a new trend leading to such interpretations. It was knowing this, the text of another Upanishad says, that is, realizing the power that faith possesses and recognizing the internal stream as the real one, that the ancients did not perform the sacrifice of the fire.²³⁴

It is possible to distinguish three phases in the Upanishadic treatment of sacrifice. There is, first, the transient phase in which the ancient-style sacrifices still predominate. It may be called the anthropocosmic sacrifice, because the place of Man is becoming central and his dispositions are considered to be of the utmost importance.

The second phase, which we may call the anthropocentric one, stresses less the traditional sacrifices but underlines the meaning of sacrifice for human life, almost identifying the two. Man becomes the center of the sacrificial act.

The third phase, which may be called the sacrifice of the mind, identifies the costly and difficult external sacrifice with the no less costly and difficult internal sacrifice of an undisturbed and perfect mind reenacting within itself the whole dynamism of the outer world, whose existence, if not always denied or doubted, is certainly minimized. We are present here at the birth of another ritual.

We consider these three phases in three separate chapters. In the first of the selected texts the cosmic symbolism of sacrifice is expressed in anthropocosmic terms, and we note here a first step toward the total interiorization of sacrifice. The text is given with very slight variations in the two most important Upanishads.²³⁵ It has a colorful setting and deals with the so-called pancagnividya, or doctrine of the five fires, which teaches the doctrine of the two ways after death: the so-called way of the Gods which leads to the world of Brahman with no return and the so-called way of the ancestors which leads to a return to this world.²³⁶

The setting is a delightful dialogue between different generations (father and son), between different castes (Brahmins and Kshatriyas), and between different spiritualities (the sacred and the secular). The famous Shvetaketu, who has received full instruction from his father Gautama, does not know how to answer the questions of the king; nor does his father know anything about the two ways open to Men when they die, or about the reason why the other world is not filled to capacity, and so on. The old and famous father, great and rich Brahmin though he be, goes humbly to the Kshatriya to be instructed. Our text reports part of the teaching of this member of the warrior class to the highly respected Brahmin, who declares that such a doctrine is unknown to the whole Brahmin brotherhood. Here is perhaps an indication that the Upanishadic trend toward interiorization and secularization of the ritual did not originate in the Brahmanical and priestly class, but in the secular class of ruling princes.

The answer represents a middle way between the ancient cosmic conception and the later purely interiorized and almost theoretical notion of Vedanta. The cosmos as a whole presents the traditional structure of a universal sacrifice, but the different parts of the cosmos are homologized with human destiny. There are five realities: the otherworld, the intermediate rain cloud, this terrestrial world, man, and woman. All of them are Agni, the sacrificial fire, and all of them have their own characteristic five elements for the sacrifice: fuel, smoke, flame, coals, and sparks. On each of the five fires the Gods offer the corresponding sacrifice which thus presents an interesting hierarchical structure, each of the five elements being based on its immediate predecessor. The completion of the circles takes place in Man, who at the end of his life realizes the unity of the cosmic elements with the human. In the funeral pyre the fuel is no longer the sun, the year, the earth, the open mouth, the sexual organ, but simply fuel. The same is true of the other elements of the sacrifice. The circle is complete but the end can be twofold: a Man who has been transformed and has acquired the color of light may enter the eternal world of Brahman with no return to earth, or, failing to reach transformation, he may follow the way of the ancestors and come back to earth under a different form.

It is at the end of a similar homologization that another Upanishad clearly states:

The Sacrifice is fivefold.
An animal is fivefold.
Man is fivefold.
This entire universe,
all that is, is fivefold.
The Man who knows this
obtains this whole world.²³⁷

Sacrifice is the world. The three main fires of sacrifice are given an allegorical interpretation as the sacrificial piles which Prajapati himself erected when he created the cosmos, namely, the earth, the intermediate space, and the sky. Fire is the ruling power in these three regions, that is, the year, the wind, and the sun, and it is by this power that the sacrificer is brought to the experience of Joy Supreme, that is, to the experience of Brahman. In other words, the sacrifice, embracing the three worlds, leads the sacrificer, once he knows the mystery of the person, once he discovers the personalistic structure of reality, toward the supreme Brahman and total plenitude. Prajapati clearly performs here the role of a personal God, the Lord of Creation. The text suggests three lords of creation. In each of them the regeneration is effected by means of sacrifice.

Another text makes this homologization quite explicit. The universal Self, or the vaishvanara atman, is said to have the heaven as his head, the sun as his eye, the wind as his breath, the space as his body, the earth as his feet, and so on.²³⁸

The meaning of these and many other texts is immediately apparent. Man, who has ceased to be a spectator in the cosmic

event, is deeply involved and ontologically committed: he is part and parcel of the cosmic sacrifice itself; he is not only a priest but a partner, not only a performer but a mediator. He is the yardstick by which everything is measured. Yet the anthropocosmic unity is maintained and Man's partnership is ultimately dependent on the objective superhuman order.

Loko 'gnih

BU VI, 2, 9-14

i) 9. Yonder world in truth is Fire, O Gautama; the sun is its fuel, the rays its smoke, the day its flame, the heavenly quarters its coals, the intermediate quarters its sparks. In this Fire the Gods offer faith as libation. From that offering arises king Soma.

10. The God of rain in truth is a sacrificial Fire, O Gautama; its fuel is the year, the clouds are its smoke, lightning is its flame, the thunderbolt its coals, thunder its sparks. In this Fire the Gods offer king Soma. From that offering arises rain.

11. This world in truth is Fire, O Gautama; its fuel is the earth, fire its smoke, night its flame, the moon its coals, the stars its sparks. In this Fire the Gods offer the rain cloud. From that offering arises food.

12. Man in truth is Fire, O Gautama; his open mouth is fuel, his breath the smoke, his speech the flame, his eyes the coals, his ears the sparks. In this Fire the Gods offer food. From that offering arises semen.

13-14. Woman in truth is Fire, O Gautama; the phallus is the fuel, the hairs the smoke, the vulva the flame, penetration the coals, the pleasure the sparks. In this Fire the Gods offer semen. From that offering arises a person. He lives as long as he lives. When he dies, they carry him to the fire. Here his fire becomes Fire, his fuel fuel, his smoke smoke, his flame flame, his coals coals, his sparks sparks. In this Fire the Gods offer a person. From that offering arises the person resplendent as light.

MAIT U VI, 33

ii) Now, this sacrificial fire with its five bricks is the year. The bricks for this fire are these: spring, summer, the rainy season, autumn, winter. It has a head, two wings, a back, and a tail. This sacrificial fire is the earth for the one who knows the Person. It is Prajapati's first sacrificial pile. Its strength lifts up the sacrificer to the middle world and offers him to the wind. The wind is indeed breath.

Now breath is sacrificial fire. Its bricks are the five different kinds of breath. It has a head, two wings, a back, and a tail. This sacrificial fire is the middle world for one who knows the Person. It is Prajapati's second sacrificial pile. Its strength lifts the sacrificer up to the heavens and offers him to Indra. Indra is indeed the sun.

Now, the sun is sacrificial fire. Its bricks are the four Vedas, epic and legend. It has a head, two wings, a back, and a tail. This sacrificial fire is heaven for one who knows the Person. It is Prajapati's third sacrificial pile. Its strength lifts the sacrificer up to the Knower of the Self. Then the Knower of the Self raises him up and offers him to Brahman. There he becomes full of bliss and joy.

i) Cf. CU V, 4, sq., a parallel passage.

1-8. Cf. § V 4.

9. Yonder world: the world beyond, as opposed to this world.

Fire: Agni, the sacrificial fire.

The Gods offer faith: devah shraddham juhvati.

The whole cosmos presents the structure of a universal sacrifice and the different parts of the cosmos are homologized to the cosmic sacrifice.

10. The God of rain: Parjanya.

11. This world: ayam (loka) in contradistinction to asau, that world (of v. 9).

12. Man: purusha, used also in v. 13 in the sense of an embryo and in v. 14 in the sense of a human person.

13-14. In this text "fire," as distinct from "Fire," refers to the funeral pyre.

Resplendent as light: bhasvara-varna, having the color of light. Man has become all fire, passes into the flame.

15-16. Cf. § V 4.

ii) The sacrificial fires referred to are the three traditional fires of garhapatya, dakshina, and ahavaniya.

Its strength: lit. hands.

Fire . . . for the one who knows the Person: esho 'gnih purushavidah. This sentence has been also translated: "This Fire is like a man" (Gonda).

Middle world: antariksha, the atmosphere, the in-between (heaven and earth).

The five different kinds of breath: prana, vyana, apana, samana, and udana.

Sun: aditya.

Four Vedas: Rig-yajuh-samatharvangirasa.

Cf. § III 28.

Epic and legend: itihasa-purana.

Knower of the Self: atma-vid, referring here to Prajapati.

There is a triple equation to be observed: time-sun-brahman: sun-prana-fire; earth-prana-sun.

The Anthropocentric Sacrifice

Sharirayajna

27 The "conscientization" brought about by the Upanishads does not end with the integration of Man into the framework of sacrifice; it centers sacrifice on Man. If Man performs the sacrifice without the necessary knowledge, if he is unconscious of its meaning, it will not be a true sacrifice. Man is an essential element in the sacrificial structure. Moreover, with the exclusion of possible magical interpretations we are led to recognize that sacrifice is not only and one will soon be led to add, not even mainly directed to the maintenance of the physical cosmos, but of the world of Man. A cosmic catastrophe may well occur if Man fails to perform sacrifice, but defection in this regard is difficult to check. Moreover, there are so many Men on earth and the mechanism of the whole procedure is so complex that one cannot be absolutely sure of the function and importance of one particular thread. On the other hand, one thing is sure: that Man cannot lead an authentic human existence if he does not perform sacrifice. Sacrifice becomes more and more centered on Man. Human life is itself a sacrifice and there is an emphasis on both knowledge and Man.

The first text of this selection ends a long passage at the beginning of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which seems to indicate that all sacrifices culminate in the recognition that the all-embracing sacrifice is the sacrifice of, in, or to the Self, and that only by this kind of sacrifice is a worshiper saved from perishing. The dynamism of the whole text is worth pondering, for it gives another clue to this momentous Upanishadic mutation. This fourth brahmana gives a condensed explanation of the divine sacrifice by which the world came into being. It comes to the conclusion that all is the action of the atman. If so, to worship the atman is the way given to Man for collaborating in the world-making sacrifice. The text goes so far as to say that "one should worship the atman alone as loka,"²³⁹ that is, as "world," as the open space of which one can be aware, as the realm of one's own experience, as the world that opens up to a Man. For this reason it is also stated in the same place that "if a Man departs from this world without having seen his own world, that world, being unknown, will be of no avail to him, just as the Veda, if it is not recited, is of no avail."²⁴⁰ It is then obvious that by meditating on such an atman (in the active sense in which to meditate is to become what one meditates upon)²⁴¹ each worshiper obtains the object under which the atman appears to him.²⁴² But this truth has to be known and discovered, otherwise the works are ineffectual.²⁴³ Sacrifice is the human act par excellence, but it entails also the risk of its misuse for personal profit or greed.

The second text from the Chandogya Upanishad takes up and develops the idea of human life as a sacrifice. All existent things are homologized to different sacrifices. By this means the full range of Man's life on earth is sanctified, for everything corresponds to some facet of the life-giving and world-saving sacrifice. In this process of correlation stress is laid on the human element. It is affirmed, for example, that the dakshina or honorarium given to the priest at the time of sacrifice (which in ancient times was considerable and burdensome) cannot simply be reduced to dana or almsgiving; it is not even specifically stated that the priests should be the beneficiaries. More important are the other four gifts mentioned: fervor, uprightness, harmlessness, sincerity.²⁴⁴

Another passage of the same Upanishad (iii) introduces an important act, which also demonstrates the man-centered character of sacrifice. The priest who knows the intricate cosmological origin of the different rites of sacrifice can undo certain mistakes that may have crept in, thus signifying the power Man has over the merely mechanical or blind forces of the sacrifice. The underlying idea is that of an ontological substitution by means of ritualistic identification. Prajapati brooded over the worlds, and their "essences," their "juices," rasah, were extracted. From the earth came forth its essence, fire, and from fire proceeded the Rig Veda. So any mistake in the Rig-Vedic recitation can be rectified by means of the corresponding fire sacrifice. Knowledge here is power.²⁴⁵

The importance of this new idea should not be overlooked. It is the beginning of Man's domination of the cosmic process, not for magical purposes, not for directing the forces of nature for or against other human beings, but for a restructuring of the same cosmos, for changing its course, as it were. The destiny of the world as cosmos begins to fall into human hands. Man emerges now as more than simply a partner in the cosmic process produced by sacrifice; he appears as the rectifying mind, as

the spirit who by his knowledge can correct mistakes that false calculations may have allowed to creep in. One is tempted to say, extending the metaphor, that it resembles the course correction of a spaceship's orbit, needed when the utilization of the energy condensed in matter has not been properly calculated.

The Chandogya Upanishad also contains a homologization between the life of a brahmacarin, that is, of a student of wisdom, and all the different sacrifices and stages of life (iv).

The selection given here from the Mahanarayana (v) and Pranagnihotra (vi) Upanishads elaborates further the same theme: the centrality of Man and his body to the whole concept of sacrifice. The body here is the microcosm, the mirror and representative of the whole universe; it is not, however, the body alone or the body independent of the mind which matters, but the whole Man. The atman, the Self, is the sacrificer. Sacrifice is the integral human act and each act of life is a sacrificial act. Furthermore, in this connection the same Upanishad introduces the idea of death as the supreme purification, as the ultimate human sacrifice. A most significant verse closes this short Upanishad: liberation, moksha, can indeed be the fruit of a cosmological situation, like that of dying in the holy city of Varanasi (and this Upanishad does not appear to deny the traditional belief), but the doctrine has as its main thrust the teaching that there is another way. Knowledge of the doctrine of the pranagnihotra, the intellectual sacrifice, that is, the internal act and its self-knowledge, may also bring about moksha. The internal or inner agnihotra leads to the mental sacrifice, the sacrifice made by the mind, manasa yajna. This text has been used in Yoga and Tantra to justify or explain the emphasis on the body and on body participation in the sacrifice.

The hymn of the Mundaka Upanishad (vii) is a typical specimen of mature Upanishadic spirituality. It begins by extolling the practice of sacrifice and pondering over its benefits, but immediately adds that if sacrifice is regarded as an isolated entity, disconnected from everything else, that is, if we mistake the means for the end, then we are deluded; the hymn even takes a certain pleasure in using strong words to denounce mere ritualism. Moreover, the highest wisdom, which is the supreme stage, cannot be reached by sacrifice. One must go in a proper manner to a guru and discover from him the imperishable Man, the supreme reality.

The Scripture says "Sacrifice is Man," and this statement is eminently true. Sacrifice takes place within Man, through Man, so long as he is a Man of faith who believes, hopes, loves, and has made of his very existence an act of worship. His life is adoration, cooperation, prayer, activity, contemplation, action, and love of God and of all he has made. In worship Man is at one and the same time active and passive, helper and helped, actor and spectator. He forms part of the unique human-divine act that enables him to exist and to be.

Sacrifice in its universal significance is endowed with a twofold dynamism: a downward movement of the Divine toward the world, followed by an upward movement or restoration of the world toward the Divine. These two aspects are inseparable, the cosmic process being an exchange and in continual evolution. Eternity and Time blend in each instant. At each instant the universe is created and at each instant it returns whence it came. At each successive moment there is a new universe which in its turn does not tarry before declining. This new renewed world is the fruit of sacrifice.

Sharirayajna

BU I, 4, 16

i) Now this is the Self, the world of all beings. If a man offers and sacrifices, he will attain the world of the Gods. If he recites [the Vedas]; he will attain the world of the Seers. If he offers libations to the Forefathers and desires offspring, he will attain the world of the Forefathers. If he gives shelter and food to men, he will attain the human world. If he gives grass and water to animals, he will reach the animal world. If beasts and birds, [even] down to the ants, find a place in his house, he will reach their respective worlds. In the same way as a man wishes security for his own world, so all beings wish security to the one who knows thus. This is indeed known and investigated.

CU III, 16-17, 1-6

ii) 16, 1. Man, in truth, is himself a sacrifice. His first twenty-four years correspond to the morning libation. The Gayatri has twenty-four syllables and the morning libation is offered with the Gayatri. With this the Vasus are related. Now the vital breaths are the Vasus, because they cause everything to continue in existence.
 2. If he should be afflicted by sickness at this period of life, he should say: "O vital breaths who are the Vasus, let my morning offering be extended till the midday offering. Let me, who am the sacrifice, not perish in the midst of the vital breaths, the Vasus!" and he gets up and becomes free from his sickness.
 3. His next forty-four years correspond to the midday libation. The Trishtubh has forty-four syllables and the midday libation is offered with the Trishtubh. With this the Rudras are related. Now the vital breaths are the Rudras, because they cause

everything to weep.

4. If he should be afflicted by sickness at this period of life, he should say: "O vital breaths who are the Rudras, let my midday offering be extended till the third offering. Let me, who am the sacrifice, not perish in the midst of the life breaths, the Rudras!" and he gets up and becomes free from his sickness.

5. His next forty-eight years correspond to the third libation. The Jagati has forty-eight syllables and the third libation is offered with the Jagati. To this the Adityas are related. Now the vital breaths are the Adityas, because they take everything to themselves.

6. If he should be afflicted by sickness at this period of life, he should say: "O vital breaths who are the Adityas, let this my third libation be extended till my full life span is accomplished. Let me, who am the sacrifice, not perish in the midst of the vital breaths, the Adityas!" and he gets up and becomes free from his sickness.

7. In truth, it was knowing this that Mahidasa Aitareya used to say [to sickness]: "Why do you torment me like this, me who am not going to die by this affliction?" He lived for a hundred and sixteen years. The one who knows this will also live for a hundred and sixteen years.

17, 1. When a man feels hunger and thirst, when he does not rejoice, then he is undergoing his initiation rite.

2. When he eats and drinks and rejoices, then he is joining in the upasada rituals.

3. When he laughs and eats and has sexual intercourse, then he is taking part in chant and recitation.

4. Asceticism, almsgiving, moral integrity, nonviolence, truthfulness--these are his gifts for the priests.

5. Therefore one says [at the sacrifice]: "He will procreate, he has procreated," for this is his new birth. His death is the ablution after the ceremony.

6. Ghora Angirasa, having told all this to Krishna the son of Devaki, added: "When man is free from desire, in his last hour, he should take refuge in the three following [maxims]:

You are imperishable

You are immovable

You are firm in the breath of life."

CU V, 24, 1-4

iii) 1. If one were to offer the agnihotra without this knowledge, that would be just the same as removing the live coals and pouring the libation on ashes.

2. But if one offers the agnihotra with full knowledge one is offering it in all worlds, in all beings, in all selves.

3. Even as the tip of a reed, if laid upon a fire, would be burned up, so also are burned up all the sins of him who offers the agnihotra with full knowledge.

4. Therefore, if one who knows this offers the leftovers of his food to an outcaste, he is offering it to the universal Self. On this point there is the following verse:

As hungry children here below

sit round about their mother,

even so all beings expectantly

sit round the agnihotra.

CU VIII, 5

iv) 1. Now what people call "sacrifice" is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only by leading such a life does one who is a knower find the Brahman world. Now what people call "the sacrificial offering" is also really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only after sacrificing with the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge does a man find the Self.

2. Now what people call "a long course of sacrifice" is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only by leading such a life does one find the protection of the true atman.

Now what people call "the practice of silence" is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for only by leading such a life does one find the atman and meditate.

3. Now what people call "the practice of fasting" is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, for the atman found by such a life does not decay.

Now what people call "the way of solitude" [aranya] is really the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge. For ara and nya are the two oceans in the Brahman world in the third heaven. There is the lake Airammada and the sacred tree producing Soma; there is the city of Brahman, Aparajita, and the golden hall constructed by the Lord.

4. Only those who, by the disciplined life of a student of sacred knowledge, attain the two oceans ara and nya in the Brahman world are free to move in all the worlds.

MAHANAR U 543-545

YUGANATHA PROBLEM WITH NUMBERS

v) 543. At the sacrifice of one who knows this, the Self is the sacrificer, his wife is his faith, his body the fuel, his breast the altar, his hair the sacrificial grass, his hair tuft the sacrificial broom, his heart the sacrificial post, his love the melted butter,

his anger the victim, his fervor the fire, his self-control which destroys [the passions] the priestly honoraria, his word the priest, his breath the singer, his eye the officiating priest, his mind the Brahman-priest, his ear the fire-kindling priest.

544. Henceforward, as long as he lives, his consecration lasts; whatever he eats is his oblation, whatever he drinks is his Soma-drinking, whatever he enjoys is his upasada celebration; when he moves about, sits down, gets up, this is his pravargya ceremony.

545. His mouth is the Ahavaniya fire, his utterance is the invocation, his understanding [of the procedure] is his offering. What he eats evening and morning is the fuel; what he [drinks] morning, noon, and evening are his three libations.

PRANAGNIH U 22-23; 33-34; 37-38; 40; 44-50

vi) 22. Breath is the sacrificial fire, the Supreme Self which is enveloped by the five winds. May he comfort all beings, may there be no fear for me!

23. You are the universe, you are common to all men, you assume all forms, all things that are born and carried by you. In you are offered all the offerings and they proceed there where you are the immortal Brahman.

33. Of this sacrifice of the body, performed with the sacrificial post and the girdle,

34. Who is the sacrificer? Who is his wife? Who are the priests? Who is the overseer? What are the sacrificial vessels? What are the oblations? What is the altar? What is the northern altar, what is the Soma vessel? What is the chariot? What is the victim?

37. In what consists the recitation of the hymns? In what consists the recitation of the sacred formula? In what consists nonviolence? What is the role of the sacrificer's wife? What is the sacrificial post? What is the girdle? What are the offerings? What is the priestly honorarium? What is the final purification?

38. Of this sacrifice of the body, performed with the sacrificial post and the girdle, the Self is the sacrificer, the intelligence is his wife, the Vedas are the priests, the ego is the subordinate priest and mind is the officiating priest.

40. The body is the main altar, the nose the northern altar, the skull is the vessel, the feet the chariot, the right hand the wooden ladle, the left hand the cauldron.

44. Memory, compassion, patience, and nonviolence comprise the role of the sacrificer's wife.

45. The sound OM is the sacrificial post, hope the girdle, the spirit is the chariot, desire the victim, the hair is the grass, the sense organs are the sacrificial vessels, the motor organs the oblations.

46. Nonviolence is all the offerings; renunciation is the priestly honorarium.

47. The final purification is death.

48. Thus all the divinities are established in this body.

49. Whether a man dies in Varanasi or whether he recites this sacred text, he will attain liberation after one single life.

50. He will attain liberation. This is the Upanishad.

MUND U I, 2

vii) 1. This is that truth: The rites of oblation, O lovers of truth, which the sages divined from the sacred verses, were variously expounded in the threefold Veda. Perform them with constant care. This is your path to the world of holy action.

2. When the fire, the purveyor of sacred offerings, is lit and the flame is flickering, then one should place his oblations with faith between the two portions of clarified butter.

3. The man who offers the agnihotra but fails to observe thereafter the rites of full or new moon or the seasonal rites or to offer the first fruits of harvest, who receives no guests and omits the general oblation, who offers in irregular manner or makes no offering--such a man will suffer the loss of all seven worlds.

4. The flickering flames of the sacred fire are seven: the black, the terrible, that which is swift as thought, the bright-red, the smoky, the sparkling, the well-shaped and shining.

5. The man who commences the rite while these flames are burning and receives the oblations at the proper time is conducted by these same oblations, now changed into rays of the sun, to the Lord of the Gods, to the one and only Abode.

6. "Come, come!" these radiant offerings invite the worshiper, conveying him thither on the rays of the sun, addressing him pleasantly with words of praise, "This world of Brahman is yours in its purity, gained by your own good works."

7. How frail, though, those rafts, the eighteen forms of sacrifice, expressions of merely inferior types of action! Deluded men who acclaim this way as the best return again to old age and also to death.

8. They grope in darkest ignorance, those who believe themselves to be wise and learned; they do themselves violence, going round and round in a circle like senseless fools, like blind men led by one who himself is blind.

9. Straying through ignorance in many a diverse path they think in their folly, "Our goal is already achieved." Embroiled as they are in their actions and blinded by passion to actions' effect, they sink overwhelmed. Exhausted is the merit of all their worlds. They decline and fade.

10. Thinking, misguided souls, that almsgiving and oblations are to be preferred, they do not know anything better. Having had the reward of their piety in highest heaven, they reenter this world or even another lower!

11. But those who in penance and faith dwell in the forest, peaceful and wise, living a mendicant's life, free from passion depart through the door of the sun to the place of the immortal Person, the imperishable Self.

12. A Brahmin contemplating the worlds built up by ritual action may well despair. The uncreated will never emerge from that which itself is created. For the sake of this knowledge let him simply approach with fuel in hand to a master who is fully versed in the Scriptures and established in Brahman.

13. Let him approach him properly with mind and senses tranquil and peaceful. Then will this master disclose the essence of the knowledge of Brahman whereby may be known the imperishable Real, the Person.

i) Known and investigated: viditam mimamsitam, i.e., known both by experience or intuition and by reflection.

17. Cf. § I 7.

ii) 16, 1. Man in truth is himself a sacrifice: purusho vava yajnah. Cf. SB I, 3, 2, 1 (§ III 23).

The Gayatri, Trishtubh, and Jagati are the three meters corresponding to morning, midday, and evening, each of them being connected with different deities. They cause everything to continue in existence: sarvam vasayanti, they make everything to dwell. The connection is "etymological," relating the Vasus with the root vas-, to dwell, live.

16, 2. The argument here and in succeeding stanzas is that life should not be cut short before its due completion, because every sacrifice has to be completed. Life, not death, is sacrifice.

16, 3. They cause everything to weep: sarvam rodayanti. Again there is an "etymological" connection between Rudra and the root rud-, to howl, to weep.

16, 5. They take everything to themselves: sarvam adadate, the verb a-da- is related to Aditya.

16, 7. Mahidasa Aitareya: cf. AA II, 1, 8; II, 3, 7. Sayana narrates the story of Mahidasa (the "servant of the earth") who was the son of a Brahmin and a shudra woman. In spite of his low birth he attained to the same wisdom as the rishis. The number $116 = 24 + 44 + 48$ of the three periods mentioned.

17, 1. Initiation rite: diksha, consecration.

17, 2. Upasada: a particular ceremony, involving the offering of milk and some feasting, which takes place before the Soma sacrifice and is characteristically joyful.

17, 3. Chant and recitation: stuta-shastra.

17, 4. Asceticism etc: tapas, dana, arjava, ahimsa, satya-vacana.

17, 5. New birth: punar-utpadanam, the only occurrence of the word in Vedic literature.

17, 6. Desire: a-pipasa, without thirst: in the sense of appetite, eagerness. There are three possible syntactic placings of a-pipasa: (a) it can be put at the end: he who receives or hears this message becomes free of desire; (b) it can be moved so as to be in opposition to Ghora: Ghora had become free of desire; (c) it can be taken as already in its proper place: this is our interpretation.

Imperishable: akshita, unperishable, indestructible.

Immovable: acyuta, imperturbable, stolid.

Firm in the breath of life: prana-samshita.

Some scholars find here the first reference to Shri Krishna.

The v. ends with "On this there are two Rig-Vedic stanzas."

17, 7. Cf. § III 6.

iii) 1. Without this knowledge: idam avidvan, without knowing this (what has just been described), i.e., the homology between the sacrifice and the five breaths: prana, vyana, apana, samana, and udana.

4. Outcaste: candala.

Universal Self: vaishvanara atman.

iv) All the explanations of the different paths in terms of brahmacarya are of an "etymological" nature, which cannot be reproduced in the translation.

1. Sacrifice: yajna. A play on words on yajna and "one who is a knower": yo jnata.

Sacrificial offering: ishta.
 After sacrificing (searching): ishtva.
 Self: atman.

2. A long course of sacrifice: satrayana, a sacrifice lasting several days.
 The practice of silence: mauna, the vow of silence.

3. The practice of fasting: anashakayana. The text seeks to connect this word etymologically with na nashyati, does not decay.

The way of solitude: aranyayana lit. the way of the forest; the life of a hermit.
 Brahman world: cf. the detailed description in KausU I, 3 (§ V 4).

4. Free to move in all the worlds: kamacara, complete freedom.
 For the rest of CU VIII and all the ref. cf. § VI 6 (v) and notes.

v) We follow the notation given by J. Varenne.

540-541. Cf. § VI 12.

543. Who knows this: the one who knows OM, the Upanishad, and the mystery of the Gods; cf. 540-541 (§ VI 12).

Priest: hotr.

Singer: udgatr.

Officiating priest: adhvaryu.

Fire-kindling priest: agnidh.

544. As long as he lives . . . : yavad dhriyate sa diksha; it can also mean: as long as he is in the womb, this is his initiation.
 Whatever he eats . . . drinks . . . enjoys: eating, drinking, being joyful, are for him the oblation, the sacrifice, the celebration.
 Upasada: a joyful offering.

Pravargya: the preparatory ceremony for the Soma sacrifice.

vi) 22. The Supreme Self which is enveloped by the five winds: a definition of the human body.

24-32. Contain prescriptions for ritual ablutions and a speculation on the four fires within man.

33. Sacrificial post: yupa, stands for the stability of the sacrifice.

Girdle: rashana, stands for the internal stability of the sacrificer.

35-36. Continue the queries of v. 34, asking about the various priests and the nature of the offerings.

37. Nonviolence: ahimsa, respect for life, or, according to some interpreters who find this word here rather intriguing, respect or nonviolence to the text.

Cf. AB I, 30, 11 (V, 4); CU III, 17, 4; and here below v. 46.

38. Cf. MahanarU 543 sq. (v) for a more complex elaboration of the same correlations.

Intelligence: buddhi.

Ego: ahamkara.

Subordinate priest: adhvaryu.

Mind: citta.

Officiating priest: hotr.

39. Contains the answer to the queries of v. 35.

40. The body is the main altar: shariram vedir. There follow further homologizations with the human body.

Skull: murdhan, head.

41-43. Contains the answer to the questions of v. 36, following the same order.

44. Memory, compassion, patience, and nonviolence: smrti, daya, kshanti, ahimsa. These are all female virtues.

45. Desire the victim: kamah pashuh.

46. Renunciation is the priestly honorarium: tyago dakshina.

49. A later addition probably.

50. Concludes the U: This is the Upanishad: iti upanishat, this is the secret doctrine, this is the information, the correlation, the teaching.

vii) 1. This is that truth: tad etat satyam. Expounded in the threefold Veda: tretayam . . . santatani, which can also mean "which were extended in the three fires" (garhapatya, ahavaniya, and dakshinagni).
World of holy action: sukrtasya loka the domain of dharma.

3. One variant reading adds, after "in irregular manner," "without faith" (ashraddhaya); cf. shraddhaya "with faith" (v. 2).

4. Flames: lit. tongues.

The well-shaped and shining: or "all-formed divine," according to another reading.

5. The description of the flames in v. 4 is important in view of their identification with the rays of the sun which lead to the world beyond.

Lord of the Gods: devanam patih.

8. Cf. KathU II, 5; MaitU VII, 9.

10. Almsgiving and oblations: ishta and purta, i.e., those pious and secular actions which are done for the sake of reward.

12. Fully versed . . . Brahman: shrotriyam brahma-nishtham, the qualities of the guru.

The Sacrifice of the Mind

Manasayajna

28 We conclude Part VI of this anthology with a series of Upanishadic sayings concerning OM, but we might well have given them a place here. In these sayings, as also in certain other texts, sacrifice is interiorized to such an extent that external works are rendered irrelevant and ultimately disappear. We find here the third step that we have mentioned. Man is no longer the center of the sacrifice. If an excessive cosmological bias leads to sheer magic, an exaggerated anthropological emphasis leads to mere selfishness and to abuse of the sacrifice for petty human ambitions. The sacrifice has to be purified from the alloy of both cosmos and Man. What remains is then the pure sacrifice of the atman, atman referring in this instance not so much to a transcendent principle as to an immanent divine principle which not only performs the sacrifice but is also its recipient.

We may remember that we are at that critical moment in which Man discovers not only that he is an essential part in the sacrifice, but also that the real sacrifice happens within himself, for without his inner participation and faith the external act would be devoid both of sense and of reality. The real sacrifice is that which takes place within Man, the inner agnihotra as we have already seen. Now the mental sacrifice becomes not only the sacrifice imagined or thought, that is, performed by the mind, but the sacrifice of the mind itself. The manasayajna of the preceding stage, which referred to the priestly function of the mind performing the sacrifice, now designates the mind as victim of the sacrifice. Now, finally, it is the mind itself which is immolated. What is cast into the fire is no longer either material things or the thought of them, but thinking itself and all that is contained in the cave of the heart,²⁴⁶ in that hidden recess where all coalesces in a silence of mind and in an explosion of love.²⁴⁷ We note that the mind and the heart are very often mentioned in close association in the Upanishads,²⁴⁸ as also in Vedic tradition in general.²⁴⁹

The small human individualistic self disappears and the universal atman now takes its place. But this atman cannot be known because it is the knower; it cannot be the object of any intentional act, because it is the doer of every act. Individual Man began as a spectator; by a progressive involvement he assumed the role, first, of fellow actor and afterward of sole agent, and now he is swallowed up in the process itself and ceases to be either a doer or a collaborator in the dynamism of reality. The sacrifice is not only perfect but also total; the holocaust leaves no residue.

Shortly after one of our passages given below (iii), the Katha Upanishad uses an expressive metaphor:

The Self-existent pierced holes outward.

Therefore one looks outward and not inside oneself.

Desiring immortality, a certain sage

turned his eyes inward and saw the Self within,²⁵⁰

thus indicating that real internal vision consists not in "visualizing" within oneself external beings or actions but in visualizing vision itself, that is, in discovering no longer the "seen" but the Seer.

Herein lies the overcoming of every duality and the perfect sacrifice of the Self. "By what should one know the knower?" is a capital question of the Upanishads.²⁵¹ The perfect sacrifice is not that of sacrificing the known; it is not even the internal sacrifice in which the external object or the external action has been interiorized, but the sacrifice of the knower, who simply "knows," in an ecstatic attitude that defies description because it does not admit any reflective movement. The outcome is total ontological silence.

Therefore one grasps the meaning of that other Upanishad that stresses that it is known by those who do not know and not known by those who know.²⁵² This is not a paradox, but an immediate intuition: knowledge does not exhaust either being or consciousness. The object of consciousness, as such, can never be the subject of it. Those who know that they know, know certainly that they know, but this very knowledge is a shadow in their knowing which no longer purely "knows," but knows also its own knowing. Those who really do not know, do not pretend or dally with this knowledge which is ignorance.

We cannot then escape the conclusion of these reflections, namely, that the true sacrifice is the sacrifice of Brahman (in the double meaning of both subjective and objective genitive). The sacrifice of Brahman is both performed by Reality in toto and that which Men offer to Brahman. Now, this latter conception may easily be misunderstood if we conceive of Brahman as the recipient of the sacrifice, that is, as that to "whom" we offer the sacrifice. It is here that the Upanishadic purification of the mind is required. Brahman is neither the object of the sacrifice nor an object of knowledge. He is the knower, the sacrificer, and not the known, the sacrificed. What is the place of Man here? There is no place for any spectator, or for any other agent. And yet the sacrifice takes place and Man is there, not to witness the sacrifice but to be it and thus to be Brahman. The price if we want to continue this idiom is the sacrifice of the mind, which is something not performed by the mind, but the offering of the mind itself in the fire of Brahman. The sacrifice is thus perfect. It has sacrificed itself by itself. Reality has become transparent.

The very evolution of the meaning of Brahman testifies to the central position of sacrifice. In a certain sense Brahman has throughout been the symbol that stands for the very center and ground of everything, but it has been variously understood. It is, thus, not so much that the word has changed its meaning, so as to mean first one "thing" and then another "thing," as the fact that the very "thing" Brahman has been interpreted in different ways. Brahman, in the first Vedic period, means prayer and even sacrifice; in the Upanishadic period it means absolute Being and Ground, precisely because the sacrifice was considered to be such a Ground. The formal meaning of Brahman has not changed; only the material contents of the concept have been differently "filled." In one instance Brahman was "sacrifice;" in the other, "being."²⁵³ Needless to say, the process was a long and steady one, and the words "being" and "sacrifice" do not render with precision the notion of Brahman in either instance.

The last text, from the Maitri Upanishad, is a passage of extraordinary depth and clarity. The psychological and ontological elements are here harmoniously blended. The ascetic has to burn, to consume, all his thoughts and to overcome all his desires, but not in order to reach a psychological state of stultifying vagueness or a subjective intoxication accompanied by a blank mind. It is because such an asceticism corresponds to the very structure of reality: the sacrifice of the intellect reenacts the primordial sacrifice. This is not a neglect or a jettisoning of the mind and the rules by which it operates but, rather, it is the most serious effort to get to its root, to reach its source. But the roots are not the tree, nor is the source the river. There in the origin, in the primordial stage, the mind is not yet mind; no discrimination is yet needed because reality is not yet split. It is obvious that this existential way cannot be planned or even desired, for to do so would be to nullify it utterly and would be the worst sort of infatuation. For this reason many schools of spirituality speak of a calling, a being chosen, a passive and feminine attitude, and the like.²⁵⁴ In connection with the attainment of Brahman neither perspective nor the distance afforded by reflection is possible; the pretension of the will is likewise unthinkable; neither lies nor conceit has here a place. To those who say that this is not possible there is no counterargument; to those who do not believe there is no answer. To those who believe there is no question. Does not any belief begin where questioning stops?

The sacrifice of the intellect is thus not done out of a particular will to perfection or an intellectual conviction that this is the ultimate act to be done. If any such thoughts or intentions were surreptitiously entertained they would make the whole enterprise futile, or even injurious. It all happens, as the texts say (using an image that is one of the primordial images of the

whole East), just by a "consumption" of all the functions of thought and will. All is "consumed" in a consumption of the entire "material" of human structures: the thoughts are thought up to the very end, the intentions are pursued up to a final point, so that nothing remains to be thought and desired.²⁵⁵ As long as there is some material to be thought or "willed" or desired, we are precluded from speaking of the sacrifice of the intellect; and those who do speak do so as if they were not speaking, acting, communicating anything. Svaha!²⁵⁶

Manasayajna

BU IV, 5, 15

i) Where there is duality, there one sees another, one smells another, one tastes another, one speaks to another, one hears another, one knows another; but where everything has become one's own Self, with what should one see whom, with what should one smell whom, with what should one taste whom, with what should one speak to whom, with what should one hear whom, with what should one think of whom, with what should one touch whom, with what should one know whom? How can He be known by whom all this is made known? He, the Self, is not this, not this. He is ungraspable for He is not grasped. He is indestructible for He cannot be destroyed, He is unattached for He does not cling [to anything], He is unbound, He does not suffer nor is He injured. Indeed, by whom should the Knower be known? By these words, Maitreyi, you have been instructed. Such, in truth, is immortality. Having spoken thus, Yajnavalkya departed.

KAUS U II, 5

ii) Now for the rule of self-restraint as enunciated by Pratardana, the innerfire sacrifice, as it has been called. As long as a person is speaking, he is not able to breathe. Then he sacrifices breath to speech. Further, as long as a person is breathing, he is not able to speak. Then he sacrifices speech to breath. These two are infinite, immortal sacrifices: whether awake or asleep, one is sacrificing continuously. Now, other sacrifices have an end, for they are made of works. Knowing this, the ancients did not offer the fire sacrifice.

KATH U III, 13

iii) The wise Man should surrender his words to his mind;
and this he should surrender to the Knowing Self;
The Knowing Self he should surrender to the Great Self;
and that he should surrender to the Peaceful Self.

MAIT U VI, 9-10

iv) 9. Therefore, one who knows this has these two selves [i.e., breath and the sun] as his Self. He meditates only on the Self, he sacrifices only to the Self. This meditation, when the mind is absorbed in its practice, is praised by the wise. Then a man should purify the impurity of his mind with the verse: "What is defiled by leavings." He recites the verse:

Leavings and what has been defiled by leavings,
or by those who handled them, what has been given
by a sinful Man or polluted by a stillbirth--
this may the rays of Fire and Sun
and the purification of the Vasus cleanse!

May they purify my food and all else that is sinful!

Then he proceeds to rinse [his mouth] with water [before eating]. With the five invocations: "Hail to the Breath! hail to the downward breath! hail to the diffused breath! hail to the distributary breath! hail to the upward breath!" he offers the oblation [the food]. Whatever remains, he eats, restraining his speech. Afterward he again rinses [his mouth] with water. Having rinsed it and having performed the sacrifice to the Self, he should meditate on the Self with these two [verses]: "Breath and Fire" and "You are the All":

As Breath and Fire, as the five Winds,
the Self supreme dwells within me.

May he, pleased, please all, the enjoyer of all things!

You are the All, you belong to all men.

All that is born is supported by you.

Into you may all the offerings enter!

There where you are, All-immortal, are all beings.

He who eats according to this rule will not revert to the condition of food.

10a. Now there is still more to be known. There is a further modification of this sacrifice to the Self . . .

10b. He who knows this is a renouncer and an ascetic, a Self-sacrificer. Just as one who does not touch a sensuous woman entering an empty house, so is he who does not touch the sense objects that have entered into him a renouncer, an ascetic, a Self-sacrificer.

MAIT U VI, 34

- v) 1. Just as fire without fuel is extinguished in its own source, so is the mind extinguished in its own source, when thoughts have ceased.
2. When the mind of a seeker after truth has become extinguished in its own source, he is no longer deluded by the sense objects, which are deceptive and are subservient to karman.
3. The mind indeed is this fleeting world; therefore it should be purified with great effort. One becomes like that which is in one's mind--this is the everlasting secret.
4. Only by a tranquil mind does one destroy all action, good or bad. Once the self is pacified, one abides in the Self and attains everlasting bliss.
5. If the mind becomes as firmly established in Brahman as it is usually attached to the sense objects, who, then, will not be released from bondage?
6. The mind has been declared to be of two kinds: pure and impure. It becomes impure when it is touched by desire, and pure when freed from desire.
7. When a man, having made his mind perfectly stable, free from attachment and confusion, enters upon the mindless state, then he attains the supreme abode.
8. Only so long must the mind be controlled, until it is annihilated in the heart: this truly is knowledge, this is liberation; the rest is nothing but pedantic superfluity.
9. The bliss that arises in the state of highest absorption, when the pure mind has come to rest in the Self, can never be expressed by words! One must experience it directly, one's own self, in one's inner being.
10. If a man's mind is merged in the Self, then he is completely released, just as water is not distinguishable in Water, or fire in Fire, or air in Air.
11. The mind alone is man's cause of bondage or release: it leads to bondage when attached to the sense objects, and to release when freed from them. Thus it is taught.

i) 1-3. Cf. § III 31.

Cf. BU II, 4, 14 (§ VI 4) for a similar passage.

Duality: dvaita.

He, the Self, is not this: sa esha neti nety atma.

The Knower: vijnatr!

Immortality: amrtatva.

Departed: vijahara, i.e., he renounced everything.

ii) Rule of self-restraint: samyamana.

The inner-fire sacrifice: antaragnihotra.

Breath: prana.

Speech: vac.

Made of works: karma-maya, i.e., the ritual actions.

iii) 10-11. Cf. § V 5.

12. Cf. § VI 5.

Many standard versions read also "words 'and' mind."

This: i.e., the mind or "words and mind."

Surrender: from the root yam-, which may also mean to restrain, support, raise, extend, establish, or even suppress. Here, however, it is not a question of a negative restraint, but of an ascent in consciousness. The three atman are the knowing, the great, and the peaceful (jnanatman, mahatman, and shantatman), representing the individual, the cosmic, and the absolute Self, i.e., the conscious, the universal, and the still and absolutely quiet self.

14-15. Cf. § V 5.

iv) 9. The purification of the Vasus: vasoh pavitram, cf. YV I, 2.

Hail: svaha.

"You are the All": vishvo 'si, addressed to Agni; cf. CU V, 24, 1-3 (§ III 27).

Condition of food: annatva.

10a. Cf. § II 11.

10b. We suggest here one possible interpretation of this difficult text. The emphasis here is on the correspondence and correlation between the self-sacrificer (atmayajin), i.e., the performer of the self-sacrifice or sacrifice of the Self, and the renouncer (sannyasin) or ascetic (yogin). In this case the self-sacrificer himself constitutes the sacrifice of the Self; therefore, ascetics and monks do not perform any external sacrifice. The other idea expressed is that the man who performs this self-sacrifice or renunciation is internally untouched by the sense objects (cf. the later idea of renunciation).

v) 33. Cf. § III 26.

34, 1. This passage is IV, 3 of the Southern Version.

Extinguished: upashamyati, upa-sham- means to become quiet, tranquil, or to cease, to be extinguished. Thus it is appropriate both for the fuelless fire and for the tranquil mind. This cannot be rendered adequately in English.

Mind: citta.

In its own source: svayonau, in the place from which it has sprung forth.

2. Seeker after truth: satya-kama, desirous of truth.

3. Fleeting world: samsara.

4. Self: atman, here used first in the sense of individual self and second for the universal, divine Self.

6. Mind: manas. If citta stands for the functioning mind, the thoughtful mind, manas is its underlying organ.

7. Mindless state: amano-bhava, the state where there is no mind (because the mind ceases to exist, so to speak, when its functions are terminated), or the state-beyond-the-mind which no longer belongs to the realm of mind.

8. To be controlled: niroddhavya, to be suppressed. Nirodha is a term used in yoga. Cf. YS I, 2; I, 12; I, 51; III, 9. Pedantic superfluity: grantha-vistarah, bookish proliferation.

9. Bliss: sukha.

Absorption: samadhi.

Pure mind: amala cetas.

Inner being: antahkarana, inner organ.

35. Cf. § VI 8.

The Integral Action

Karmayoga

29 In any synthetic view we find the danger of eclecticism, that is, the arbitrary choice of such elements as are found to be common and the ignoring not only of peculiarities, but also of the depths and heights of any human conception. The Bhagavad Gita may not have escaped the influence of its time, when the grandeur of the cosmic sacrifice had already declined, yet it offers an extraordinarily well-integrated conception of sacrifice. It maintains, though a little in the background, the ancient Vedic vision; it accepts the Upanishadic interiorization and it adds the element of love, of bhakti, of personal involvement. This last element, called the bhakti-marga or the path of devotion, is the way of ardent devotion, love, and abandonment to the Lord who is the manifestation of Brahman to Man. The Shvetashvatara Upanishad has already given an indication of this way but it is the Bhagavad Gita that discloses it more fully. To be sure, it appears at first sight a little disconcerting. Lord Krishna teaches his disciple that the way that is most perfect is one of action and knowledge combined, though hitherto the two have been opposed the one to the other. The dilemma, however, disappears when one realizes that, though worship here always means action, it does not mean external acting or intellectual activity. Worship, sacrifice, is above all an essentially loving activity, the loftiest activity in which Man can be engaged: that which employs his whole range of feeling powers, that personal love that makes of human existence a real sacrifice. The essential core of this sacrifice is detachment of spirit and availability; the offering of some material object is merely secondary. It is by his ardent devotion that Man is saved, a devotion, it is to be noted, that is also truth, and that is why it is called the sacrifice of the intellect.

Thus there is no dichotomy, but a harmonious synthesis in which are blended action, knowledge, and love. It is this blending that the Gita calls the way supreme, superior both to the way of Vedic sacrifice and to that of the pure ontological knowledge of the Upanishads. The new path does not reject tradition; it conserves, rather, its essential values while at the same time deepening and purifying them; it brings them within the grasp of the ordinary Man. The verses that follow are grouped in three sections according to the chapters to which they belong.

The performance of ritual sacrifice is the path of action (i). These verses mention the beginning of all things, Prajapati, and the creation. They recall to mind that epoch when sacrifice was for Man the supreme, even the only, means of achieving his destiny.

The path of knowledge is described in Chapter IV (ii). Here sacrifice is still deemed to be action but it is action performed with detachment. Several sorts of sacrifice are mentioned, such as control of the self or the practice of austerities. Furthermore, certain ascetics may offer as a form of sacrifice their knowledge of the scriptures. However it may be performed and whatever may be the nature of the action offered, the Eternal Law of this world and of the world beyond is declared to be undergirded by sacrifice. Thus we arrive at the conclusion asserted so often by the Upanishads: that the highest sacrifice of all consists of wisdom, of real knowledge.

In the new path (iii), sacrifice consists in the offering of oneself to the Lord in love and self-surrender. All actions, even the most ordinary and insignificant ones, are to be offered to the Lord, who Himself will take care of the one whose life is a perpetual oblation and who will lead him to eternal joy.

There is now no longer need, as there was in the sacrifice of olden days, for large sums of money, the mediation of priests, or long and complicated ritual; nor is it any longer essential to retire into the forest or lead an ascetic life as taught in the Upanishads. This way is far less complicated and more compatible with human life, though it is by no means easy of achievement. The way of love, of abandonment of oneself and one's whole life to the Lord, without renunciation of action but with detachment from the fruits of this action, is the new path--a path that has attracted and continues to attract persons of all sorts and conditions of life.

We may recall at this point the three elements of the integral sacrifice--the cosmic, the anthropomorphic, and the theistic by briefly analyzing three key terms used by the Gita.

Action is a human necessity and also a divine need. Man cannot exist without some sort of action nor does the Lord cease for a moment to maintain the world and to sustain human life. Yet, for Man, the real action is ritual action, the action that, in the words of the Gita, contributes to the 'maintenance of the world': lokasamgraha. True liturgical action is that which has a cosmic as well as a social "reverberation," which is performed "having in view" (sampashyan) the welfare and coherence of the world, as the etymology of the word suggests.²⁵⁷ The cosmic repercussion of the sacrifice is affirmed; moreover, Man has to be conscious of this cosmic repercussion and indeed must specifically intend it if the sacrifice is to have any value. But the world does not consist only of the astronomic or geological cosmos; the world is also the loka, the human world, the open space that extends to the utmost limits of our vision, of our experience. This world is our human world and the man who knows performs his actions for the welfare of mankind. Sacrifice thus combines in one the cosmic and anthropocentric aspects, for according to this view those actions are truly human which tend to maintain the cohesion of the world (and here the background of the sacrifice as the threads of the cosmic loom is visible) and to preserve it as an open space, not closed in upon itself. A timely reminder to unbalanced secularisms!

If Men are to undertake so lofty an endeavor, these real human actions must be performed, as the verse immediately preceding emphasizes,²⁵⁸ a-sakta, that is, with detachment.²⁵⁹ A subtle but important distinction should be made here, so that we do not misunderstand the message of the Gita. We may in this connection use different words in order to express two fundamentally different attitudes. The one word is nonattachment (unattached) or noncommitment (uncommitted); the other is detachment (detached, uninvolved). The former is not preached by the Gita; the latter is not only strongly recommended, but affirmed to be a necessary condition for any valuable action. Lord Krishna, in the Gita, certainly does not preach abandonment and neglect of one's duties or the merely mechanical performance of one's actions. He does not preach that we should do things without enthusiasm, passion, and ideals. On the contrary, he permits no flinching or easygoing interpretation of each man's proper dharma. Nevertheless, he insists that all actions must be done with a pure heart and a detached mind, with the sovereign freedom that is the fruit of an uninvolved spirit and preserves the distance which is necessary for a proper perspective. Committed, not as a casual stranger, yet detached and uninvolved, not as a slave: this is how the Lord in the Gita asks that we should perform all human actions.

Thus we have already arrived at the well-known maxim of the Gita concerning the naishkarmya, the action that is performed with renunciation of the fruits that might accrue therefrom to the individual doer. Our emphasis here is not upon a particular aspect of moral philosophy, but upon the connection of this concept with sacrifice. In fact, any appropriation of the fruits of the action by the individual agent would damage the cosmic interrelationship among all the elements of the sacrifice; it would endanger the action itself, and indeed so pervert it as to excommunicate it from the cosmic web of real actions which sustain the world. Disinterested action is required not only for the sake of individual moral purity, but because the maintenance and welfare of the world cannot be realized otherwise. It is in this sense that we can easily understand the statement that sacrifice is born out of work²⁶⁰ and also the nature of the relation between Brahman and sacrifice.²⁶¹

Now, the surrender of all fruits of our work can be justified, practically and theoretically, only if there is a theistic Lord to receive the sacrifices,²⁶² with whom we enter into a relationship of love. The Gita does not inculcate a slavish mentality by demanding from Men work but withholding their wages.²⁶³ On the contrary, it spreads a message of participation and communion, which is the fruit of love. We "renounce" the fruits of "our" works, because we have realized that neither the fruit nor the work is ours. Without love the cosmos would cease to exist and human life would be meaningless and unbearable. To liberate us from the burden of selfishness the message of the Gita combines in this harmonious unity the old and the new insights regarding the nature of sacrifice.

Karmayoga

BG III, 10-26

- i) 10. Prajapati, when he made both sacrifice and men,
said, "By this you shall multiply;
this shall be to you like a bounteous cow,
ever yielding your desires."
11. With sacrifice nourish the Gods; in return
they will nourish you also.
In partnership with them you will thus attain
the highest good.
12. Nourished by your sacrifice, the Gods will grant you
your heart's desires.
What a thief is he who enjoys their gifts
but gives nothing in return!
13. The good who consume the remains of the sacrifice
are absolved from all guilt.
But sinful are they, and sinful their food,
who cook only for themselves.
14. From food beings come into being, while food
is produced from rain;
rain from sacrifice comes into being
and sacrifice from works.
15. Know Brahman to be of all action the origin,
itself sprung from the Imperishable.
Thus Brahman the all-pervading is supported
forever by sacrifice.
16. Whoso in this world fails to help turn
the wheel thus moving
is an evildoer, the senses his pleasure.
His life is worthless.
17. But the man who delights and finds his satisfaction
in the Self alone,
in the Self his contentment--for him there is no work
that needs to be done.
18. What interest has he in works done on earth
or in works undone?
Because he does not depend for gain
on anything at all.
19. Therefore, always perform with detachment
the work you must do;
only by work performed with detachment
does man reach the highest.
20. It was only by working that Janaka and others
attained perfection.
In the same way you in your turn should work
for the maintenance of the world.
21. Whatever a great man does, that others
will also do.
Whatever standard he sets, the same

the world will follow.

22. In all three worlds there is no work whatever
I needs must do,
or anything left that I needs must obtain--
yet in work I am engaged.

23. If ever I were to cease, O Arjuna,
my tireless work,
all men would straightway follow my example
(and cease their own).

24. If I were to cease my work, these worlds
would fall into ruin,
and I would become a creator of chaos,
destroying these creatures.

25. The ignorant act from attachment to work;
the wise, however,
should act, but in a spirit of detachment, with desire
to maintain the world order.

26. The wise should not confuse the minds of the ignorant
who are bound to action.

Let him rather, himself both active and integrated,
foster all works.

BG IV, 12; 23-25; 28; 31-33

ii) 12. Desiring success, they sacrifice to the Gods
with ritual actions,
for from such actions success comes quickly
in the world of men.

23. Liberation achieved, attachments gone,
with a mind fixed on knowledge,
man's whole action becomes a sacrifice, his deeds
melt entirely away.

24. Brahman is all: the act of offering,
the offerer, and the fire!

He who concentrates on Brahman in all his actions
shall surely reach Brahman.

25. There are yogins who offer sacrifice to the Gods
for the Gods' own sake,
while others offer sacrifice by means of sacrifice
in the fire of Brahman.

28. Some offer their wealth or austerities
or the practice of yoga,
while others, men of control and strict vows,
offer study and knowledge.

31. Consuming the immortal food remaining from the sacrifice,
they reach the eternal Brahman;
but a loser is he who makes no oblation
in this world or the next.

32. Many and varied are the sacrifices offered
in the mouth of Brahman.

All these spring from work. If a man knows this,
his deliverance is sure.

33. More precious by far than a sacrifice of wealth
is the sacrifice of knowledge
For knowledge is surely the culmination
of all ritual works.

BG IX, 15-16; 23-27

iii) 15. Others sacrifice with the sacrifice of knowledge,
worshiping Me
as the one and also as the many, facing
in all directions.

16. I am the ritual, I am the sacrifice,
the oblation, and the herb.

I am the Prayer and the melted butter,
the fire and its offering.

23. Even those who are devotees of other Gods,
if they worship with faith,
are sacrificing to Me alone,
though not adhering to the rule.

24. For I am Enjoyer and I am Lord
of all sacrifices,
but men do not know Me in my true nature
and therefore they fall.

25. Worshipers of the Gods will go to the Gods,
of the ancestors to the ancestors.

Worshipers of the spirits will go to the spirits,
but my worshipers to Me.

26. Whoever offers to me with devotion
and purity of heart
leaf, flower, fruit, or water--that offering of love
I accept with joy.

27. Whatever you do, whatever you eat,
whatever your offering,
whatever your alms or your penance, do all
as a sacrifice to Me.

i) 10. Bounteous cow, . . . : kamadhuk, the mythical cow yielding the milk of all (our) desires. Cf. BG X, 28.

11. Partnership: lit. nourishing each other. The verb used throughout is the causative of bhu-, to call to being, to vivify, nourish, sustain.

12. Nourished by your sacrifice: yajna bhavita sustained, made to be by the sacrifice.

13. Sinful their food: bhunjate te tv agham, lit. they eat only sin (cf. Manu III, 118).

14. From food . . . : cf. § II 10 and 11 where we observe the relation of the texts there quoted to this doctrine of the BG, and also its integration into the total vision of sacrifice.

15. Imperishable: akshara, which commentators consider to be the primal syllable OM.

16. The wheel thus moving: pravartitam cakram, the wheel of sacrifice and of "creative" action in general.
His life is worthless: mogham . . . sa jivati, he lives in vain.

17. Who delights . . . in the Self alone: atmarati, cf. CU VII, 25, 2 (§ VI 8): MundU III, 1, 4.

19. With detachment: a-sakta detached, or not intercepted, free from ties, independent, without obstacle or resistance. From the root sanj-, to cling or stick, adhere, be attached or engaged. Cf. BG IV, 14.

20. Janaka: the King of Mithila, father of Sita.

Maintenance of the world: lokasamgraha, from loka, open space, room, place, scope, free motion, world, wide space, the realm of the secular, saeculum, the temporal; and sam-graha, holding together, grasping, taking, gathering.

21. A great man: a superior man, the best. The actions of the best man have exemplary value.
Standard: pramana, measure.

25. From attachment: sakta.

In a spirit of detachment: asakta. To be detached should be distinguished from an inhuman nonattachment.

Maintain the world order: loka-samgraha, to "hold the world together" (which otherwise would fall apart).

26. Confuse the minds: buddhi-bheda, a term that could almost be translated as "schizophrenia."

Bound to action: karma-sangin, tied to works, attached, in bondage.

Integrated: yukta, the internal harmony created through yoga, the opposte of buddhi-bheda.

ii) 12. Ritual actions: karman.

Stanzas 14 to 23 speak of the "vanity" of work and the need to renounce its fruits, describing in 23 the perfect "mystique" of work.

23. Man's whole action . . . : i.e., all the actions of the man who works as if sacrificing.

24. He who concentrates . . . : he who realizes brahman, "sinking into" him.

Cf. § III 28 Introduction for the ultimate identity of the different elements of the sacrifice: the act of offering, the thing offered, the one who offers and, that in which the oblation is offered.

25. Sacrifice by means of sacrifice: yajnam yajnena. Cf. § III 15 and RV I, 164, 50; X, 90, 16 (§ I 5). The "fire of Brahman," and indeed the whole verse, have been variously interpreted. Now follows a list of men's offerings: hearing, sounds, actions, breath, etc.

28. Offer their wealth . . . : dravya-yajna, tapo-yajna, yoga-yajna.

31. Eternal: sanatana, everlasting, primeval.

36-38. Cf. § IV 22.

39-40. Cf. § I 38.

iii) 15. Sacrifice with the sacrifice of knowledge: jnana-yajnena . . . yajantah. Cf. BG IV 33 (ii) for the sacrifice of the intellect as explained in § III 28.

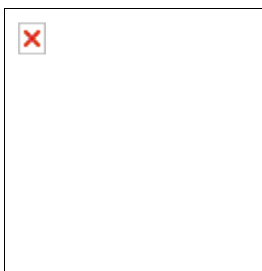
One and . . . many: ekatvena prthaktvena, lit. by the oneness (and) by the manifoldness.

16. Herb: according to Shankara, aushadha stands here for the food of animals, but it may refer to medicinal herbs. Prayer mantra, the hymn, the sacred formula.

23. Not adhering to the rule: a-vidhi-purvakam, not in conformity with the Vedic injunctions.

24. Enjoyer: bhoktr. Cf. the correlation of food and sacrifice. The Lord is the receiver (enjoyer) of every sacrifice.

25. Spirits: bhutani, superior beings, intermediary between men and Gods.



C. BREAKING THE BOUNDARIES

Sannyasa

To give up all acts that are prompted by desire
the wise call abandonment.
The surrender of the fruits of all works they aver

to be renunciation.
BG XVIII, 2

The price to be paid for the perfect performance of the sacrifice is nothing less than one's own life. The only fitting way of permitting the sacrifice to unfold itself fully and to realize all its potentialities is to remove all the obstacles that might hinder the eruption of the internal power residing in the sacrifice itself, obstacles that may come either from the object or from the subject. In order to accomplish the perfect sacrifice and thus to actualize the universe, Man has to offer his own individuality on the altar; he has to renounce everything and to transcend himself. Renunciation is the culmination of the sacrifice.

He who has realized that the true sacrifice is that of the Self in the Self to the Self or, in other words, of the Spirit in the Spirit to the Spirit, he who has discovered that ultimately the subject and the object of the sacrifice coincide, no longer desires to perform any sacrifice. Both external and internal actions of the sacrifice become meaningless for him, for he, his ego, and his individuality in society cease to exist. He not only renounces everything, he renounces his own self and even renunciation itself. For this reason the traditional ashramas indicate two stages of renunciation, while some saints and traditions even speak of a "stageless stage" beyond these two: atyashrama.²⁶⁴ Ultimately he really does not renounce anything, for what he renounces is nothing and he renounces only nothingness.

A total transparency is the ideal, but history and experience teach us that the way is long and that nobody can hope to short-cut all the twists and turns he has to negotiate before leaping into unlimited reality. There grows within us the intuition that the perfect renouncer has simply become the groundless consciousness in which the existence-giving sacrifice unfolds itself.

This is not true simply on the existential level of human life; it is equally so at the level of human thinking. Many misunderstandings and accusations regarding pantheism and monism would disappear if the texts that speak of the all-pervasiveness of God and the unity of the universe were viewed in their proper context, that is, in the context of an ultimate spiritual experience that has already eliminated the individual as spectator or subject. Sacrifice leads not only to the immolation of the victim, but also to the holocaust of the subject, even in his thinking capacity, as we have already seen.

It now becomes clear why we feel impelled to include the texts on renunciation precisely here, after the doctrine on sacrifice.

The holy ascetic of Indian religiousness does not represent exclusively, and often not even mainly, an ideal of moral renunciation but rather that of an authentic, naked, and pure Life. His body is no longer the medium and container of (his) life, but he "exists" in the purity of the atman, in the transparency of Brahman, in the baffling Presence, of which the witnesses of the life of a "saint" are aware, according to their own degrees of awakening.

Having said that the way is long and that the severest temptation of "holy men" is to practice the subtle idolatry of considering themselves as already realized persons, we now describe some of the features of the way.

There is a constitutive dissatisfaction in human life. Even if one has done one's best, other possible actions have remained undone. Disillusionment, is, according to Indian tradition, the beginning of philosophy.²⁶⁵ It may also be said to initiate the process of transcending the human condition. The well-balanced ashramic system of India allows the husband and eventually the wife also to retire to the forest, once their obligation to society has been fulfilled, and to adopt a life of renunciation in search of the ultimate, for it seems that this ultimate is not reached in married life. There is a whole philosophy devoted to the so-called third ashrama, that of the vanaprastha, the forest dweller.²⁶⁶

There has, however, always been the option of a shortcut for the man who does not feel he must pass through the three earlier stages but who enters straightway into the life of the monk, the sannyasin, the renouncer. His yearning is to merge into the One; he longs for total liberation from the temporal and spatial condition of human existence; he gives up his body, its care, and even all thought of it. A whole literature has flourished on this subject, which has been variously considered as a jewel and as a reproach to Indian culture. However this renunciatory aspect of Vedic spirituality may be viewed, we may take note of three of its features. They may be said to characterize the three main phases of the Scripture: the Vedic period, the Upanishadic intuition, and the interpretation of the Gita.

The first feature is the relative absence of an ascetic spirituality, though asceticism was tolerated because it was already in existence and was considered a specialized human experience which some members of the community should be allowed to undertake. It would be completely wrong to characterize the Vedic Revelation as an ascetic spirituality. The present anthology is perhaps sufficient proof of this fact.

The second feature may be summarized in the famous saying of Yajnavalkya to his dear wife Maitreyi, before he enters upon the life of a vanaprastha, an anchorite or forest dweller, that the ultimate object of our desire and of our love is not the immediate object before our senses, but the atman, the underlying Self present and effective everywhere: "It is rather for love

of the Self that [all] beings are held so dear."²⁶⁷ Thus renunciation is considered to be a means to an end, a way to reach the supreme goal, not by escapism or repression but by interiorization and overcoming. The husband, the wife, and all other things are dearly loved and rightly so, but the underlying reason and the ultimate object of this love lie deeper than the outward appearance of things.

This position is further emphasized by the third feature, which could be said to form the cornerstone of asceticism as found in the Vedic Revelation. There are two ways of understanding renunciation: as a giving up of a positive value for the sake of a higher one, or as a giving up of that same value because you have discovered that for you that "value" is not a value at all, so that the renunciation only appears as such from the outside. For the tyagin, the "renouncer," there is no renunciation; there is true renunciation only where it does not appear as such. As long as you desire something you should not renounce it. It is only when the desire has faded away that you may do so. This may explain the emphasis on right vision and the proper perspective in order to see things as they really are. Only "on knowing Him does one become an ascetic."²⁶⁸ You truly renounce something only when you discover that for you this "something" was only a pseudo value, a would-be positive thing; otherwise you would do well not to incur the risk that such a repression would entail. Authentic renunciation renounces renouncement, the ultimate reason being not only the psychological fact that the desire of anything, even of renunciation, entangles you more and more, but the theological fact that the ultimate goal of Man is not to be attained by any "human" means because it is the result of a choice on the part of the absolute itself.²⁶⁹ Moreover, some will say, there is also an ontological reason why the desire can only be overcome by letting the desire subside in its own source, and not by eliminating the object of the desire; that is because every desire is nothing but the projection outside of a "thirst" that is only within us.²⁷⁰ You really become a sannyasin the moment you discover that there is "no-thing" to renounce, not because there are no things "out there" but because you are "no-thing." Or, to quote the terse statement of one Upanishad:

On the very day one is disillusioned,
on the same day one becomes a renouncer.²⁷¹
At Home in Both Seas, East and West
Muni

³⁰ It is probably an ascetic "clothed with the wind," as were the Jaina ascetics, who is described in this vivid hymn of the Rig. Veda. He has acquired powers of the highest order, though his way of life does not constitute one of the recognized stages or ashramas. His function is to collaborate directly with the Gods; he is their associate. His external appearance reveals his vocation and the sincerity of his way of life. He lives everywhere, his home is in both East and West, he is the universal Man. But the price he has to pay for this station is that he perhaps ceases to be a normal man. He, the keshin, the long-haired, is a muni or silent one.²⁷² He does not speak, not because he has many things to say yet forces himself into silence (which would be hypocrisy), but simply because he has nothing to say. He does not cut his hair; he is engrossed, rather, in "cutting" his thoughts and he intends also to cut the knot of time and space. Will he succeed?

Muni

RV X, 136

1. Within him is fire, within him is drink,
within him both earth and heaven.
He is the Sun which views the whole world,
he is indeed Light itself--
the long-haired ascetic.
2. Girded with the wind, they have donned ocher mud
for a garment. So soon as the Gods
have entered within them, they follow the wings
of the wind, these silent ascetics.
3. Intoxicated, they say, by our austerities,
we have taken the winds for our steeds.
You ordinary mortals here below
see nothing except our bodies.
4. He flies through midair, the silent ascetic,
beholding the forms of all things.
To every God he has made himself
a friend and collaborator.
5. Ridden by the wind, companion of its blowing,
pushed along by the Gods,

he is at home in both seas, the East
and the West--this silent ascetic.
6. He follows the track of all the spirits,
of nymphs and the deer of the forest.
Understanding their thoughts, bubbling with ecstasies,
their appealing friend is he--
the long-haired ascetic.
7. The wind has prepared and mixed him a drink;
it is pressed by Kunamnama.
Together with Rudra he has drunk from the cup
of poison--the long-haired ascetic.

1. Fire: agni.

Drink: visha, poison, poisonous drink, or, as here, intoxicating liquor that burns inside like a fire (as is confirmed in v. 7). He "carries" earth and heaven, like Prajapati to whom he approximates by divinization.

Long-haired ascetic: keshin, the wearer of loose long hair. Cf. the interesting explanation of SB V, 4, 1, 2 for long-haired man.

2. Silent ascetics: munis.

3. This stanza is put into the mouths of the munis themselves.

4. Beholding the forms of all things: here is a double meaning, a spatial one, owing to the association with the sun (seeing all things from above) and a more spiritual one (from a higher perspective).

5. The wind: vata.

Companion of its blowing: vayu, the divinity of the wind.

6. Spirits . . . nymphs: Gandharvas and Apsaras.

7. Wind: vayu.

Kunamnama: possibly a female spirit, connected with vayu.

Cup of poison: vishasya patra. Cf. the later myth of Siva drinking the poison.

Without Urge and without Identity

Vairagya

31 The process of interiorization set in motion by the Upanishads led subsequently to the resolute removal and abandonment of all the cloaks in which the real is shrouded. Two strands combine in the idea of the sannyasin, the monk, the acosmic ascetic who has renounced everything.²⁷³ First, the personal perfection of a Man who always speaks the truth, who has perfect control over all his passions and urges, who is full of compassion and love indeed, whatever human ideal we may have in mind, the holy Man is its embodiment. Second, a total transcendence and overcoming of the human condition. The sadhu, the man who goes straight to the goal, is beyond all the limitations of human creatures, moral and social, physical and intellectual. He is no longer a citizen of this world but already lives on the other shore, bearing his witness not as a preacher but as a reminder to the rest of mankind who are still enmeshed in the clutches of samsara, this phenomenal world. The balance has not always been kept, but in the Upanishads these two elements are strongly present.²⁷⁴

Perhaps one of the most striking expressions of this mature balance is the famous line of the Isha Upanishad: "Find enjoyment by renunciation."²⁷⁵ True asceticism is not narcissistic complacency, but the discovery that liberation from the bonds of desire allows us really to enjoy things, without being haunted by the fear of losing them or by the anxiety of not getting them. The ascetic is totally free.²⁷⁶

Vairagya

BU III, 5B

i) The sages who have come to know this Self overcome the desire for sons, the desire for riches, the desire for worlds, and set forth on a mendicant's life. For desire for sons is desire for wealth, and desire for wealth is desire for worlds; both are

nothing but desires. Therefore, let a sage go beyond learning and lead the life of a child. When he has gone beyond both childlike life and learning, then he becomes a silent sage. Only when he goes beyond asceticism and nonasceticism does he become truly a knower of Brahman. What makes him a true Brahmin, though? That through which he becomes such! All the rest is irrelevant.

BU IV, 5, 1-3

- ii) 1. Now Yajnavalkya had two wives, Maitreyi and Katyayani. Of these two, Maitreyi had understanding of Brahman, whereas Katyayani possessed only the common knowledge of women. Now Yajnavalkya wished to prepare for another way of life.
2. "Listen, Maitreyi," said Yajnavalkya, "I am about to depart from this state. Come, let me make an arrangement between you and Katyayani."
3. Maitreyi said to him: "My Lord, if even the whole earth filled with treasures were mine, would I become immortal by this, or not?"
- "[Certainly] not," replied Yajnavalkya; "your life would be just like that of people possessing everything, but in riches there is no hope of immortality."

MAHANAR U 505-517; 530-531; 537-538

YUGANATHA PROBLEM WITH NUMBERS

- iii) 505. Truth is the supreme, the supreme is truth. Through truth men never fall from the heavenly world, because truth belongs to the saints. Therefore they rejoice in truth.
506. Ardor, they say, [is the supreme], but there is no higher ardor than fasting, because the supreme ardor is difficult to attain. Therefore they rejoice in ardor.
507. Self-control [is the supreme], say the Brahman-students constantly. Therefore they rejoice in self-control.
508. Peace [is the supreme], say the silent monks in the forest. Therefore they rejoice in peace.
509. Almsgiving all beings praise. Nothing is more difficult than almsgiving. Therefore they rejoice in almsgiving.
510. Order [is the supreme], they say, for all this [universe] is encompassed by order. Nothing is more difficult than to abide by order. Therefore they rejoice in order.
511. Procreation [is the supreme], the majority [of people] think. Therefore a large number [of children] are born. Therefore most people rejoice in procreation.
512. The [three] fires [are the supreme], they say. Therefore the fires are to be established.
513. The agnihotra [is the supreme], they say. Therefore they rejoice in the agnihotra.
514. Sacrifice [is the supreme], they say, for by means of sacrifice the Gods have attained heaven. Therefore they rejoice in sacrifice.
515. The spiritual [is the supreme], so say the wise. Therefore the wise rejoice in the spiritual.
- 516-517. Renunciation [is the supreme], says Brahma, for Brahma is the supreme, the supreme is Brahma. In truth, all these lower achievements are transcended by renunciation. [This is true for] him who knows this. This is the secret teaching.
530. The sages call Brahma renunciation.
531. Brahma is the universe, the supreme joy; he is self-existent; he is [what they call] "Prajapati is the year."
537. Having realized [Brahman] with mind and heart, having become wise, you will no longer move on the path of death.
538. Therefore they call renunciation the ardor surpassing all others.

MAIT U VI, 28

iv) There is still another saying: "Having passed beyond the elements, the senses, and their objects, and having next seized the bow whose string is the life of renunciation and whose stick is steadfastness, he pierces with the arrow of unselfishness through the door of Brahman that obstructing defender who wears delusion as his crown, greed and envy as his earrings, whose staff consists of impurity and sin, and who, guided by self-conceit and wielding the bow whose string is anger and whose stick is lust, kills people with the arrow of desire. Having destroyed him, he crosses over in the boat of the sound OM to the other shore of the space within the heart and enters slowly, even as a miner in search of minerals, the inner space that is [thus] revealed. Thus he enters the hall of Brahman, thrusting away the fourfold sheath of Brahman, by the instruction of his master. Then he is pure, purified, empty, peaceful, breathless, selfless, infinite, indestructible, stable, eternal, unborn, free; he is established in his own glory. Having seen [the Self] who is established in his own glory, he looks upon the wheel of life as a wheel that rolls on." Thus it is said:

If for six months a man practices yoga, eternally liberated he achieves the infinite, the highest, the mysterious, and the complete yoga. But a man who is full of passion and inertia, though he may be otherwise enlightened, and who is attached to son, wife, and family, can never achieve it, never at all!

JAB U 4-6

- v) 4. Janaka, King of Videha, once approached Yajnavalkya and said: "Reverend Sir, teach me, I pray, about renunciation." Yajnavalkya replied: "After completing the life of a student, let a man become a householder. After completing the life of a

householder, let him become a forest dweller, let him renounce all things. Or he may renounce all things directly from the student state or from the house-holder's state as well as from that of the forest dweller. Whether one has completed the vows or not, whether one is a student or not, even if one has not completed the rites, on the very day when one becomes indifferent [to the world], on the same day should one leave and become an ascetic . . ."

5. Once Atri asked Yajnavalkya: "I ask you, Yajnavalkya, how can one who does not wear the sacred thread [as the sign of initiation] be a Brahmin?"

"Yajnavalkya replied: "This alone is the sacred thread of him who observes the purification with water after eating. This rite is to be observed in order to leave the world and become an ascetic. One may die as a hero, or by fasting, or by entering water or fire, or by the great departure. Now the ascetic who wears discolored robes, whose head is shaved, who does not possess anything, who is pure and free from hatred, who lives on alms, he becomes absorbed in Brahman. If he is physically unfit, he may practice renunciation in spirit and word. This is the way found by Brahman, on which he moves. The ascetic becomes a knower of Brahman." Thus spoke the venerable Yajnavalkya.

6. The following are called parama-hamsas: Samvartaka, Aruni, Shvetaketu, Durvasa, Rbhu, Nidagha, Jada-Bharata, Dattatreya, Raivataka, and others. Their nature is unmanifest, their way of life is unmanifest; though they are not mad, they appear to behave as if they were. By saying, bhu svaha! they renounce the trident, the begging bowl, the hair tuft, the sacred thread, throwing all into water, and then search for the atman alone. Unencumbered as at birth, with no ties or possessions, they set foot resolutely on the path of Brahman. In purity of mind, in order to maintain life, they go out for alms at prescribed times with no other vessel than their stomachs, maintaining equanimity whether they get something or nothing. They may inhabit a deserted house, a temple, a bush, or an anthill, the root of a tree, a potter's hut, a fireplace, or a sandbank in a river, a hill, a cave, the hollow of a tree, a waterfall, or simply the ground without a home of any sort. Without regard for themselves, without urges and efforts, absorbed in contemplation and established in the higher Self, they endeavor to remove evil deeds and surrender their bodies by renunciation. Such is a parama-hamsa; such indeed is a parama-hamsa!

PAING U IV, 9

vi) With his mind purified, with his consciousness purified, with patience, thinking "I am He," and with patience when he has attained the consciousness of "I am He," he is established by wisdom in the supreme atman who is to be known in the heart, and when his body has attained the state of peace, then the spirit with its light, the mind, becomes void. For what is the use of milk for one who is filled with nectar? What is the use of the study of the Vedas for one who has seen the Self? For the yogin who is filled with the nectar of knowledge there is nothing left to be achieved. If there still remains something, then he is not a man who has realized truth. He remains aloof, but not aloof, in the body, but not in the body; his inmost Self becomes the all-pervading. Having purified his heart and accomplished his perfect thinking, the yogin sees: I am the all, the highest bliss.

KAIV U 2-6

vii) 2. Know this [Brahman] by the practice of faith, love, and concentration. Not through actions, not through offspring or wealth, but only by renunciation does one attain life eternal.

3. The ascetics enter into this shining [mystery] in the cave [of the heart] and beyond the heavens.

4. The ascetics who have well understood the end of the Vedas have become pure by the practice of renunciation. At the end of time they dwell in the worlds of Brahman and, having overcome death, they are all liberated.

5. [Having reached] the last order of life, [one should sit] in a solitary place, in a relaxed posture, with pure heart, with head, neck, and body straight, controlling all the sense organs, having bowed with devotion to the master.

6. Meditating on the heart-lotus in the center, which is free from passion, pure, inconceivable, beyond sorrow, unthinkable, unmanifest, of eternal form, benevolent, peaceful, immortal, the source of Brahma.

i) 5a. Cf. § IV 6. Cf. BU IV, 4, 22 (§ VI 6) where the same idea appears.

Sages: brahmanah Brahmins.

Desire for worlds: lokaishana, ambition for superior states of being (in the realm of the sacred and also perhaps in that of the secular).

Go beyond: lit. overcome, do away with, put away, or despise.

A sage is neither a pandit nor a child: balyam ca pandityam ca nirvidya.

ii) BU IV, 5 is identical with BU II, 4. Yajnavalkya is a classical example of one who renounces all and retires to the forest. The text shows that it was left to the wife to choose whether or not she would follow her husband on the path of renunciation.

The element of choice is illustrated in the different attitudes of the two wives, whose decisions depended on whether their desire for immortality was stronger than worldly attachments.

1. Another way of life: anyad vrttam.

2. Depart: pra-vraj-, the technical term for taking up the life of a wandering monk.

State: sthana.

Cf. BU II, 4, 4-14 (§§ VI 5; VI 4).

15. Cf. § III 28. Yuganatha problem. There is no number 15 in the verses number 3 instead.

iii) 505-517. The series of terms declared to be the highest (para) by different groups of people includes satya, tapas, dama, shama, dana, dharma, prajana, agnayah, agnihotra, yajna, manasa (spiritual or mental worship), and nyasa.

518-530. The same ideas are repeated and expanded.

531. "Prajapati is the year" is a formula for the totality (in the Brahmanas). All the previously enumerated terms are different forms of tapas, the highest of which is renunciation (nyasa).

iv) Life of renunciation: pravrajya.

Unselfishness: an-abhimana, without self-conceit.

Door of Brahman: brahma-dvara, probably referring to the yogic experience of the "opening" of the skull (brahmarandhra) as the last gate on the road to illumination.

That obstructing defender: referring to ahamkara, the ego sense. The ego has to be killed before one can enter the "inner chamber" of the heart, which is the "hall of Brahman."

Space within the heart: hridayakasha.

Hall of Brahman: brahma-shala, the inner sanctuary.

The fourfold sheath of [i.e., covering] Brahman: caturjalama brahma-kosham. Cf. the doctrine of the koshas or sheaths in which the Self is enveloped and which have to be removed gradually.

Master: guru.

Wheel of life: sancara-cakra, the wheel of transmigration, of which he becomes simply a spectator.

Eternally liberated: nityamukta, referring to the belief that bondage is not real and that therefore the object of yoga is simply to reveal again that state of liberation which is eternal.

Passion and inertia: rajas and tamas, those qualities (guna) of nature (prakrti) which constitute an obstacle to the spiritual path.

v) 4. Renunciation: sannyasa.

Life of a student: brahmacarya.

Vows: vrata, the Vedic injunctions.

Student: snataka.

Cf. also MundU I, 2, 11 (§ III 27).

The rest of this passage deals with some other kinds of sacrifices.

5. Yajnavalkya here gives his interpretation of what it means to be a Brahmin, i.e., one who renounces everything. The different kinds of death or religious suicide mentioned here seem to identify renunciation with death.

Great departure: mahaprasthana, perhaps meaning natural death.

Practice renunciation in spirit and word: manasa vaca samnyaset, i.e., he need not perform physical acts of asceticism.

This is the way . . . : esha pantha brahmana hanuvittas; this phrase is not clear.

Knower of Brahman: brahmaavid; i.e., the Brahmin mentioned by the questioner. Cf. BU IV, 4, 9.

6. Parama-hamsa: lit. "highest swan," the category of a saint or a realized person.

For Shvetaketu cf. CU VI, 8 sq. (§ VI 10).

Unmanifest: avyakta, hidden.

Bhu svaha: a sacrificial exclamation. Renunciation is again shown as the culmination of sacrifice.

Trident, etc.: the insignia of a religious man.

vi) "I am He": so 'ham asmi, cf. IsU 16 (§ VII 31); BU IV, 4, 12 (§ VI 9).

Void: shunya, a Buddhist term. As is clear from the following sentence, shunya is here equal to purna, fullness.

Filled with the nectar of knowledge: jnanamrta-trpta.

vii) 2. Not through actions: na karmana, not by works or actions, or spiritual exercises and rituals, but through renunciation: tyagena. Karman implies merit, which secures prosperity in the "worlds," whereas offspring and wealth are goods of this world. Cf. MundU III, 2, 3 sq (§ VI 11) for a theology of renunciation.

2b-3. Cf. MahanarU 227-228 for the same text.

Ascetics: yatayah; yati is derived from the root yat-, to strive, to tend toward, to be eager, to persevere, to be watchful, to be prepared: all these are qualities of a seeker after truth, a renouncer.

4. Cf. SU VI, 22, for the end of the Veda (Vedanta). Cf. also PaingU IV, 9 (vi). This text, given in MundU III, 2, 6 (§ VI 11) and MahanarU 229-230, is always recited as an address of welcome when ocher-robed sannyasins arrive.

Practice: yoga.

By the practice of renunciation: sannyasa-yogat. It may be understood that they dwell in the brahmaloka until the end of time when they will be completely liberated (parimucyanti).

6. Heart-lotus: hrt-pundarika. Cf. CU VIII, 1 (§ VI 6).

Source of Brahma: brahma-yoni. The pure center is even the origin of the creator.

7-10. Cf. § VI 11.

11. Cf. § VI 12.

The True Yogin

Yukta vimukta

32 We shall not discuss the polarity and tension between action and contemplation, works and renunciation, engagement and withdrawal, which occupy the attention of post-Vedic spirituality. As early as the Gita, however, all the elements of this fundamental human problem are in a fairly developed stage. The Bhagavad Gita tries to put forward a synthesis by saying that pure inaction is not possible,²⁷⁷ that action without the core or soul of contemplation is useless,²⁷⁸ that, therefore, acts should be performed as a sacrifice²⁷⁹ and even the acts of the spirit as intellectual sacrifices.²⁸⁰

The true yogin is not the Man who does not act but the Man who acts with detachment, that is, without hankering for the results of his actions, not only on a moral but also on an ontological plane.²⁸¹ The true ascetic not only has perfect control over himself²⁸² and total equanimity,²⁸³ but he is also liberated from all desires,²⁸⁴ sees the Lord everywhere and everything in the Lord,²⁸⁵ and is ready for action when it is required and seen as his duty.²⁵⁶

The message of the Bhagavad Gita is still fundamentally the same as that of the Upanishads and yet it introduces fresh melodies. The Gita restores the balance by readjusting lopsided interpretations. The authentic yogin, the truly integrated Man, is not the acosmic monk striving for an altogether impossible ideal of inaction and unattachment. The Gita certainly preaches total "detachment" from the works done and from their fruits,²⁵⁷ but this detachment should not be confused with unattachment, either ontological, as if values could exist in isolation, or psychological, as if commitment were evil in itself. The Gita recognizes that there are actions that have to be done and that not to perform them would be wrong. The integrated Man is both yukta, yoked to the whole of reality, involved in the net of relationships, and vimukta, free, liberated. He is committed but not concerned, he is detached but not unattached, he is involved but not entangled. Hence derives his "holy indifference," his serenity, his peace, which is not one of having taken refuge in an ivory tower or an inaccessible aerie but is the result of being situated in the very heart of reality.

Yukta vimukta

BG V, 2-3

i) 2. Both renunciation of works and also their practice
lead to the Supreme.

But of these to act rather than to renounce
is the better path.

3. The heart of the man of true renunciation
neither hates nor desires.

He is easily released from bondage, being free
from all dualities.

BG VI, 1-16;18-23

ii) 1. He who acts as he should, yet is unconcerned
for the fruits of his action,

is a true renouncer, true yogin, not the riteless
man who does not worship.

2. Know, Arjuna, that what men call renunciation
is the authentic yoga;

for without renouncing all desire

- no man becomes a yogin.
3. The silent sage climbing toward yoga
uses work as a means.
Quiescence and serenity are the proper course
for one who has attained.
4. When a man does not cling to the objects of sense
or to his own achievements,
but surrenders his will, then he scales, it is said,
the heights of yoga.
5. Let a man lift himself by the Self and not allow
himself to sink down,
For the Self alone is self's friend and the Self
may be also self's foe.
6. To him who has conquered his self by the Self
the Self is a friend,
but to him who has no such mastery the Self
becomes hostile, like a foe.
7. In the one who has conquered his self and is peaceful,
the Supreme Self,
in heat or cold, joy or pain, honor or disgrace,
abides in serenity.
8. He who is full of wisdom and understanding,
calm and controlled,
to whom a clod, a stone, and gold are the same,
is in truth a yogin.
9. He whose heart is impartial to foes, friends, companions,
to the indifferent and neutral,
to hateful people, relatives, saints and sinners,
has indeed succeeded.
10. The yogin shall abide in secret and solitude,
united to the Self,
his thoughts, his whole self, well-controlled, free from
striving, stripped of possessions.
11. Let him set a firm seat in a place wholly pure,
not too high or too low,
and cover it with sacred grass, with a deerskin,
and, finally, with a cloth.
12. Let him, seated thereon, make his mind one-pointed,
controlling his thought
and his senses. Thus let him concentrate on yoga
to purify his being.
13. Motionless, holding his body erect,
his head and his neck,
let him fix his gaze on the tip of his nose,
his eyes held steady.
14. Tranquil and fearless, steadfast in chastity,
with mind controlled,
let him sit, his thought on Me, absorbed in Me,
integrated within.
15. Ever keeping himself in discipline and harmony,
his mind controlled,
the yogin reaches peace and the Goal Supreme
abiding in Me.
16. Yoga is not for the one who overeats
or who eats too little;
nor is it for the one who sleeps too much
or for him who is too wakeful.
18. When thought, disciplined, is focused on the Self
and on the Self alone,
free from the assault of longings, he is said
to be integrated.

19. To a lamp in a windless place, unflickering,
is likened in a simile
the yogin whose thought is controlled, who practices
integration of the Self.

20. That in which thought, mastered by the practice
of yoga, is at rest,
that in which one sees the self in the Self
and finds peace and content.

21. When he knows with his mind the joy supreme
beyond the reach of the senses,
then, perceiving, he stands still, adhering
firmly to Reality.

22. Having laid hold on Reality he avers it
a matchless prize.
Established therein, he is unmoved even by
the direst sorrow.

23. Let that be known as true yoga.

i) 2. Renunciation: sannyasa.

Practice [of works]: karmayoga, way of action.

3. The man of true renunciation: nityasannyasin, true renouncer, eternal renouncer.
Free from all dualities: nirdvandva. Dvandva: pair of opposites, dualities.

ii) 1. Renouncer: sannyasin.

The "fruit" of the action, karma-phala should not be confused with the "intrinsic goal" of the action.
Does not worship: lit. does not light the fire (of sacrifice).

2. Yoga: practice, performance of the prescribed works, diciplined action.

Desires: samkalpa, intention, will, resolution. Asamnyastasamkalpa: one who has not renounced all purposes, selfish desires,
preplanned "wishful" thinking.

3. Quiescence and serenity: shama, equanimity, sameness, "holy indifference."
Who has attained: Yogarudhasya, of one who has attained yoga, union, integration,

4. His own achievements: karmasu, his deeds, works.
Surrenders his will: samkalpa-sannyasi, renounces his ideas and ambitions.

5. Self's friend: atmano bandhur.

6. Who has no such mastery [of the self]: anatman, who is left without a self, whose self is unconquered.
This "self" may be either the material or the spiritual self.

7. Supreme Self: paramatman.

Serenity: samahita, concentrated, quietened, steadfast.

9. Impartial: sama-buddhi, equal minded, one whose mind is even, calm, serene, and endowed with "holy indifference."

10. His thoughts, his whole self (taken as two separate terms): cittatma, conscious Self.
Stripped of Possessions: aparigraha Cf. IsU 1 (§ VII 6).

12. Mind one-pointed: ekagram manah; single-pointedness is one of the elements of yoga (cf. YS II, 41).
To purify his being: atma-vishuddhaye, for the purification of his soul.

13. His eyes held steady: lit. not looking around.

15. Goal Supreme: nirvanaparama, which culmrnates in nirvana.

16. The middle path.

17. Cf. § IV 7.

18. Integrated: yukta, one who has bound together in himself all human qualities; yoked, joined, united, from the verb yuj-, to yoke.

19. Lamp in a windless place: a classic simile for a peaceful mind. Integration of the Self: yunjato yogam atmanah, or union with the Self.

20. Sees the self in the Self: atmanatmanam pashyann atmani tushyati, seeing the self by means of the self, (he) is satisfied in the self. Two interpretations are possible: self-reflection or reflecting oneself in the Self. Cf. BU IV, 4, 23 (§ VI 6) for the same idea.

21. Adhering firmly to reality: lit. no moving from Reality (tattvatah), cleaving to it. Cf. the idea of no "return" of the one who has become realized.

22. A matchless prize: lit. there is no other gain.

23. Cf. § IV 7.

[Part IV - Fall and Decay](#)
[Chapter A - Sorrow and Suffering](#)
 Chapter B - Sin and Mercy

[MORE](#)

Part V - Death and Dissolution
 Chapter A - The Great Departure
 Chapter B - The Other World

Part VI - New Life and Freedom
 Chapter A - The Ascending Way
 Chapter B - The Internal Way
 Chapter C - The Encounter

Part VII - Twilight
 Chapter A - At Sunrise
 Chapter B - At Sunset

Last Mantra Part IV - Fall and Decay
 Chapter A - Sorrow and Suffering
 Chapter B - Sin and Mercy

Part V - Death and Dissolution
 Chapter A - The Great Departure
 Chapter B - The Other World

Part VI - New Life and Freedom
 Chapter A - The Ascending Way
 Chapter B - The Internal Way

Chapter C - The Encounter

Part VII - Twilight
Chapter A - At Sunrise
Chapter B - At Sunset
Last Mantra

[HOME](#)