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The Path of Agni
(Yoga of the Vedic Rishis)

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

*

Agni fulfilled becomes mighty in his own home — in the Truth, the Right, the Vast. It is thither that he is leading upward the aspiration in humanity, the soul of the Aryan, the head of the cosmic sacrifice.

CWSA 15: 65, 278

Sri Aurobindo

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*Cover Painting: Ms Ritam Upadhyay
'Agni in his flaming chariot'*

“The Flame adorable by the ancient sages is adorable too by the new. He brings here the Gods.”

eha vakśati — iha āvahati: Agni brings the Gods in his own chariot.

Rig Veda: Mandala 1, Sukta 1

Sri Aurobindo: Writings in Bengali: 44

*(Please also note that the paintings on pages: 33, 44 of
November 2016 issue also by Ms. Ritam Upadhyay)*

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THE PATH OF AGNI

(Yoga of the Vedic Rishis)

Matter shall reveal the Spirit's face. — Sri Aurobindo

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Editorial Note: '*... the Vedas are justly called Sruti or revelation. Of these the Rig, Yajur, Sama & Atharvan are the fertilising rain which gave the plant of the Truth nourishment and made it grow, the Brahmanas are the forest in which the plant is found, the Aranyakas are the soil in which it grows, the Upanishads are the plant itself, roots, stalk, leaves, calix and petals, and the flower which manifests itself once and for ever is the great saying So Aham—I am He which is the culmination of the Upanishads.*'

CWSA 17: 102

Sri Aurobindo

Such are the seeds of Truth sown in the human heart at the dawn of civilisation by the great seers of India. This issue is dedicated to the great discoveries of these ancient forefathers. It is impossible to touch upon all aspects of this vast subject. The effort is to give a very brief glimpse and and overview of the yoga and vision of the Vedic Rishis.

Discovering the Vedas

The Age of Mysteries

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

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

CWSA 16: 5 – 6

Vedas are the creations of an intuitive Age of mankind

Veda, then, is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies. In that original epoch thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning and speech accepted modes of expression which in our modern habits would be inadmissible. The wisest then depended on inner experience and the suggestions of the intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind's ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Vedas. The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*draṣṭā*) of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of Veda itself is *Śruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. The words themselves, *dr̥ṣṭi* and *śruti*, sight and hearing, are Vedic expressions; these and cognate words signify, in the esoteric terminology of the hymns, revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration.

CWSA 15: 10

Vedanta: The Upanishads and the Brahmanas

The Brahmanas and the Upanishads are the record of a powerful revival which took the sacred text and ritual as a starting-point for a new statement of spiritual thought and experience. This movement had two complementary aspects, one, the conservation of the forms, another the revelation of the soul of Veda, — the first represented by the Brahmanas, the second by the Upanishads.

The Brahmanas labour to fix and preserve the minutiae of the Vedic ceremony, the conditions of their material effectuality, the symbolic sense and purpose of their different parts, movements, implements, the significance of texts important in the ritual, the drift of obscure allusions, the memory of ancient myths and traditions.....

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

They were seekers of a higher than verbal truth and used words merely as suggestions for the illumination towards which they were striving. ...

Their real work was to found Vedanta rather than to interpret Veda.

For this great movement resulted in a new and more permanently powerful statement of thought and spirituality, Veda culminating in Vedanta.

CWSA 15: 13–15

Shruti and Smriti

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

CWSA 16: 3

An occult and mystic form of Speech

Many of the lines, many whole hymns even of the Veda bear on their face a mystic meaning; they are evidently an occult form of speech, have an inner meaning. When the seer speaks of Agni as “the luminous guardian of the Truth shining out in his own home”, or of Mitra and Varuna or other gods as “in touch with the Truth and making the Truth grow” or as “born in the Truth”, these are words of a mystic poet, who is thinking of that inner Truth behind things of which the early sages were the seekers. He is not thinking of the Nature-Power presiding over the outer element of fire or of the fire of the ceremonial sacrifice. Or he speaks of Saraswati as one who impels the words of Truth and awakes

to right thinkings or as one opulent with the thought: Saraswati awakes to consciousness or makes us conscious of the “Great Ocean and illumines all our thoughts.” It is surely not the River Goddess whom he is thus hymning but the Power, the River if you will, of inspiration, the word of the Truth, bringing its light into our thoughts, building up in us that Truth, an inner knowledge. The Gods constantly stand out in their psychological functions; the sacrifice is the outer symbol of an inner work, an inner interchange between the gods and men,—man giving what he has, the gods giving in return the horses of power, the herds of light, the heroes of Strength to be his retinue, winning for him victory in his battle with the hosts of Darkness, Vritras, Dasyus, Panis. ...the many kinds of wealth, cows, horses and the rest for which the sacrificer prays; evidently this is no material wealth, it is something which Thought, the Thought embodied in the Mantra, can give... A process of divinisation, and of a bringing down of great and luminous riches, treasures won from the Gods by the inner work of sacrifice, is hinted at in terms necessarily covert but still for one who knows how to read these secret words, *niṇyāvacāṁsi*, sufficiently expressive, *kavaye nivacanā*...

CWSA 16: 12-13

The double sense of Vedic Riks

We are in the presence of a great scripture of the mystics with a double significance, one exoteric, the other esoteric; the symbols themselves have a meaning which makes them a part of the esoteric significance, an element in the secret teaching and knowledge. The whole of the Rig Veda, a small number of hymns perhaps excepted, becomes in its inner sense such a Scripture. At the same time the exoteric sense need not be merely a mask; the Riks may have been

regarded by their authors as words of power, powerful not only for internal but for external things. A purely spiritual scripture would concern itself with only spiritual significances, but the ancient mystics were also what we would call occultists, men who believed that by inner means outer as well as inner results could be produced, that thought and words could be so used as to bring about realisations of every kind, — in the phrase common in the Veda itself, — both the human and the divine.

CWSA 16: 10 – 11

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Under pressure of the necessity to mask their meaning with symbols and symbolic words — for secrecy must be observed — the Rishis resorted to fixed double meanings, a device easily manageable in the Sanskrit language where one word often bears several different meanings, but not easy to render in an English translation and very often impossible. Thus the word for cow, *go*, meant also light or a ray of light; this appears in the names of some of the Rishis, Gotama, most radiant, Gavishthira, steadfast in the Light. The cows of the Veda were the Herds of the Sun, familiar in Greek myth and mystery, the rays of the Sun of Truth and Light and Knowledge; this meaning which comes out in some passages can be consistently applied everywhere yielding a coherent sense.

CWSA 16: 13-14

Rishis of the Vedas

It has been the tradition in India from the earliest times that the Rishis, the poet-seers of the Veda, were men of this type, men with a great spiritual and occult knowledge not shared by ordinary human beings, men who handed down this knowledge and their powers by a secret initiation to

their descendants and chosen disciples.....

.....even in the time of the Upanishads the spiritual seekers of the age had to resort to initiation and meditation to penetrate into their secret knowledge, while the scholars afterwards were at sea and had to resort to conjecture and to concentrate on a mental interpretation or to explain by myths, by the legends of the Brahmanas themselves often symbolic and obscure.

The Vedic Rishis believed that their Mantras were inspired from higher hidden planes of consciousness and contained this secret knowledge. The words of the Veda could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic; from others the verses withheld their hidden knowledge.....

CWSA 16: 6-8

Sri Aurobindo

Vedic Rishis were beings from higher regions

Q: Mother, were the Vedic Rishis men who had evolved to that state or were they special manifestations?

What do you mean? Whether they were evolutionary beings or involutory beings?

They were probably... no... they were surely involutory beings. But the body was the result of evolution.

But it is absolutely certain that they were involutory beings, that is, beings who had come down from higher regions and used these bodies, who had identified themselves with these bodies.

This is it, what I said the other day, you know, that what has changed the course of terrestrial and human development totally is bodies becoming perfected enough to be able to serve as instruments for beings of higher regions who have come to incarnate in them in order to use them. And

it seems obvious that the Rishis were of these — if not all at least those who were the leaders, those who were at the head. But very probably they formed a group which must have had its own realisation, very independent of the surroundings.

CWM7: 355–56

The Mother

The Seer-poets

The Vedic poets are masters of a consummate technique, their rhythms are carved like chariots of the gods and borne on divine and ample wings of sound, and are at once concentrated and wide-waved, great in movement and subtle in modulation, their speech lyric by intensity and epic by elevation, an utterance of great power, pure and bold and grand in outline, a speech direct and brief in impact, full to overflowing in sense and suggestion so that each verse exists at once as a strong and sufficient thing in itself and takes its place as a large step between what came before and what comes after. A sacred and hieratic tradition faithfully followed gave them both their form and substance, but this substance consisted of the deepest psychic and spiritual experiences of which the human soul is capable and the forms seldom or never degenerate into a convention, because what they are intended to convey was lived in himself by each poet and made new to his own mind in expression by the subtleties or sublimities of his individual vision. The utterances of the greatest seers, Vishwamitra, Vamadeva, Dirghatamas and many others, touch the most extraordinary heights and amplitudes of a sublime and mystic poetry and there are poems like the Hymn of Creation that move in a powerful clarity on the summits of thought on which the Upanishads lived constantly with a more sustained breathing. The mind of ancient India did not err when it traced back all

its philosophy, religion and essential things of its culture to these seer-poets, for all the future spirituality of her people is contained there in seed or in first expression.

CWSA 20: 326 –27

The Ved-Mantras

What the Vedic poets meant by the Mantra was an inspired and revealed seeing and visioned thinking, attended by a realisation, to use the ponderous but necessary modern word, of some inmost truth of God and self and man and Nature and cosmos and life and thing and thought and experience and deed. It was a thinking that came on the wings of a great soul rhythm, *chandās*. For the seeing could not be separated from the hearing; it was one act. Nor could the living of the truth in oneself which we mean by realisation, be separated from either, for the presence of it in the soul and its possession of the mind must precede or accompany in the creator or human channel that expression of the inner sight and hearing which takes the shape of the luminous word.

CWSA 26: 217-18

The Mantra is born through the heart

The Mantra is born through the heart and shaped or massed by the thinking mind into a chariot of that godhead of the Eternal of whom the truth seen is a face or a form. And in the mind too of the fit outward hearer who listens to the word of the poet-seer, these three must come together, if our word is a real Mantra; the sight of the inmost truth must accompany the hearing, the possession of the inmost spirit of it by the mind and its coming home to the soul must accompany or follow immediately upon the rhythmic message of the Word and the mind's sight of the Truth. That may sound a rather mystic account of the matter, but

substantially there could hardly be a more complete description of the birth and effect of the inspired and revealing word, and it might be applied, though usually on a more lowered scale than was intended by the Vedic Rishis, to all the highest outbursts of a really great poetry. But poetry is the Mantra only when it is the voice of the inmost truth and is couched in the highest power of the very rhythm and speech of that truth. ... The Mantra in other words is a direct and most heightened, an intensest and most divinely burdened rhythmic word which embodies an intuitive and revelatory inspiration and ensouls the mind with the sight and the presence of the very self, the inmost reality of things and with its truth and with the divine soul-forms of it, the Godheads which are born from the living Truth. Or, let us say, it is a supreme rhythmic language which seizes hold upon all that is finite and brings into each the light and voice of its own infinite.

CWSA 26: 218

Sri Aurobindo

True aspiration and the mantra

True aspiration does not come from the head; even when it is formulated by a thought, it springs up like a flame from the heart. I do not know if you have read the articles Sri Aurobindo has written on the Vedas. He explains somewhere that these hymns were not written with the mind; they were not, as one thinks, prayers, but the expression of an aspiration which was an impulse, like a flame coming from the heart (though it is not the "heart" but the psychological centre of the being, to use the exact words). They were not "thought out", words were not set to experiences, the experience came wholly formulated with the precise, exact, inevitable words — they could not be changed. This is the very nature of aspiration: you do not seek to formulate

it, it springs up from you like a ready flame. And if there are words (sometimes there aren't any), they cannot be changed: you cannot replace one word by another, every word is just the right one. When the aspiration is formulated, this is done categorically, absolutely, without any possibility of change.

CWM 4: 136

The Mother

संसमिद् युवसे वृषन्नग्ने विश्वान्यर्य आ ।
इळस्पदे समिध्यसे स नो वसुन्या भर ॥ १॥

O Fire, O strong one, as master thou unitest us with all things and art kindled high in the seat of revelation; do thou bring to us the Riches.

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥ २॥

Join together, speak one word, let your minds arrive at one knowledge even as the ancient gods arriving at one knowledge partake each of his own portion.

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् ।
समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥ ३॥

Common Mantra have all these, a common gathering to union, one mind common to all, they are together in one knowledge; I pronounce for you a common Mantra, I do sacrifice for you with a common offering.

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ ४॥

One and common be your aspiration, united your hearts, common to you be your mind,—so that close companionship may be yours.

Agni Mantras, Mandala Ten, Sukta 191, Samvanana Angirasa

CWSA 16: 446–47

Sri Aurobindo

The Path of Sacrifice

Priest of the Sacrifice

Divine knowledge and divine power are necessary, and it is by the sacrifice alone that they can come and grow perfectly. ... We have to welcome the Divine and install Him on the altar of the sacrifice. Unless the Divine enters the heart of man, manifests and establishes himself there, it is impossible for a human being to attain divinity and immortality. It is also true that before the awakening of the godhead, in order to invoke him the Seers of the Mantra, the Rishis, accept the priesthood on behalf of the sacrificer; Vashishtha and Vishvamitra become vicars of Sudas, Trasadasyu and the son of Bharat. But it is to invite the Divine to accept the place of the priest and the summoner on the altar of the sacrifice that mantras are chanted and offerings made. Unless the Divine awakes in the heart, no one can liberate the being. God is the deliverer: God is the sole priest who can grant the realisation. When the Divine becomes the vicar, he is then known as Agni, the mystic Fire, and he has the form of fire. The priesthood of Agni is the most auspicious beginning and the best means of performing a successful sacrifice perfect in every detail. That is why the priesthood of Agni was established in the first Rik of the first Sukta of the Rigveda.

*

Agni: the omniscient Divine Power

The root ag means power; one who is powerful is Agni. Again the root ag signifies light or burning, the power which is flooded with the burning light of knowledge, the effective force of knowledge; the possessor of that power is like Agni. The root ag has also the sense of priority and predominance, the force which is the primordial element

of the universe, the basic and preeminent force among all the manifested universal forces; the possessor of that force is Agni. The root ag also has the meaning 'nayana', to lead, to direct; one who is the possessor of the primal, eternal, ancient and sovereign force in the universe and leads it by the appointed path towards the appointed destination, the youth who is the general of the army of God, the guide on the path who by his knowledge and power props various forces of Nature in their different activities and keeps them on the right path, that puissance is Agni. All these virtues of Agni have been mentioned and hymned in hundreds of Suktas of the Veda. The original cause of this universe, hidden in all its development, the most fundamental of all forces and paramount among them, stay of all gods, regulator of all dharmas, guardian of the most profound aim and truth of the universe, this Agni is no one else but the omniscient energising power of the Divine, manifest as force, heat and brilliance. The principle of true Existence in the Truth-Consciousness-Bliss contains in itself the Consciousness. That which is the Consciousness of the Existence is also the Force of the Existence. The Consciousness-Force is the sustaining power of the universe, it is the primary cause and creator, the life and the controller of the universe....

*

Agni is the keeper of the eternal Truth

The external appearance of the world is different; there falsehood, ignorance, evil and failure are predominant. However, behind the mask which frightens the child, the Mother's face is hidden. Inconscience, inertia and suffering are only sorcery. That is why in the Veda our normal consciousness is called night. Even the highest development of our intellect is only a moon-lit and star-bedecked play of the divine night. But within the bosom of this night hides her

sister Usha carrying the infinity-born light of future Divine Knowledge. Even in the night of earth-consciousness, the force of Agni blazes again and again and with the glow of Usha radiates the light. It is the force of Agni which prepares the hour of the birth of Truth-conscious Usha in this blind world. The Supreme has sent the force of Agni into this world and established it there; remaining concealed in the heart of objects and living beings, Agni regulates all the movements of the universe. In the midst of momentary falsehood, this Agni is the keeper of the eternal Truth; in the inconscient and the inert, Agni is the secret consciousness of the inconscient, the formidable dynamic force of matter. Shrouded in ignorance, Agni is the covert knowledge of the Divine; in the ugliness of sin, Agni is the pristine immaculate purity of the Divine; in the gloomy fog of misery and suffering, Agni is His burning delight of universal enjoyment; clad in soiled rags of weakness and torpor, Agni is his all-bearing, all-accomplishing efficient power of action. If we can once pierce this dark envelope, uncover and kindle this Agni in our hearts, release and direct him upwards, he will bring down Divine Usha into the human consciousness, awaken the inner gods, remove the black sheath of falsehood, ignorance, sorrow and failure and make us immortal and divine in nature.

*

Agni is the first living form of the Divine within us

Agni is the first and the supreme living form of the Divine within us. Let us kindle him on the altar of the heart, welcome him as the priest of the sacrifice and in his burning flame of power and knowledge, in his golden and revealing blaze of knowledge, into his all-consuming and purifying blaze of power, offer all our trivial pleasure and pain, all our limited and petty effort and failure, all falsehood and

death. Let the old and the untrue be reduced to ashes; then from the heaven-kissing force of Agni will rise as living Savitri the new and the true. Do not forget that everything is in our heart; Agni is within man; the altar, the offering and the offerer are within and within also the seer, the Word and the deity; the Vedic chant to the Brahman, the anti-divine demons and titans are within; Vritra and the destroyer of Vritra are also within; the battle between the gods and the titans takes place within; Vashishtha, Vishvamitra, Angira, Atri, Bhrigu, Atharva, Sudas, Trasadasyu — these five types of the Aryan seekers of the Brahman and the Dasyus — are also within. The self of man and the universe are one. The near and the far, the ten cardinal points, the two oceans, the seven rivers and the seven worlds are also within him....

*

The path of sacrifice

Can the terrestrial Nature, ensnared in the noose of the finite and untrue ever hope to obtain that limitless Existence, that boundless Consciousness-Force, and that immeasurable Bliss-Consciousness, and if so, by what means? The sacrifice is the means. The sacrifice implies surrender, and self-immolation. What you are, what you have, what you become in future by your own effort or by the divine grace, what you can earn or save in the course of your action, pour all like clarified butter, into the fire of divine energy, as offering to the all-Blissful. By giving a tiny whole you will receive the infinite whole. The Yoga is implicit in the sacrifice. The infinity, the immortality and the divine felicity are legitimate results of the practice of yoga. To follow this path is the means of Nature's salvation.....

The subtle arid material objects constitute the clarified butter used in the sacrifice, the Jiva, the being, is the bound animal. The Nature is constantly immolating the Jiva,

fastened to the slaying post with the triple bond of mind, life and body. The bond of mind is ignorance; the bond of life is suffering, desire and conflict; the bond of body is death. Nature is shown the path of her salvation; by what means can the Jiva in fetters be delivered? By means of sacrifice, self-surrender and self-immolation. Instead of being under the domination of Nature and being offered by her, the Jiva has to rise, become the sacrificer and offer all that it possesses.....

Man has been created to fulfill this secret longing of the Purusha who wants to play the Lila in a human body. Selfhood, immortality, the multiple infinite bliss, unlimited knowledge, boundless force and immeasurable love must be enjoyed in a human body, in a human consciousness. All these forms of delight exist within the Purusha himself and as the Eternal he enjoys them eternally. But creating man, he is actively engaged in relishing the opposite taste of oneness in the multiplicity, the infinite in the finite, the inward in the outward, the suprasensible in the senses and the immortal existence in the terrestrial life.....

The gods mentioned in the Veda under the names Indra, Agni, Varuna are not the inferior small godheads of later days disdained by the common people; they are different forms of the Divine, powerful and luminous. And this immortality is not the puerile heaven described in the Puranas, but the *sva*, the world of Divine Truth desired by the Vedic Rishis, the establishment of the Infinite Existence; the immortality mentioned in the Veda is the infinite Being and Consciousness of the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.¹

Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings*, pp.35-40, 47-48

1. Sacchidananda

The law of sacrifice

Our normal life and consciousness are a dark or at best a starlit Night. Dawn comes by the arising of the Sun of that higher Truth and with Dawn there comes the effective sacrifice. By the sacrifice the Dawn itself and the lost Sun are constantly conquered out of the returning Night and the luminous herds rescued from the darkling cave of the Panis; by the sacrifice the rain of the abundance of heaven is poured out for us and the sevenfold waters of the higher existence descend impetuously upon our earth because the coils of the obscuring Python, the all enfolding and all-withholding Vritra, have been cloven asunder by the God-Mind's flashing lightnings; in the sacrifice the Soma wine is distilled and uplifts us on the stream of its immortalising ecstasy to the highest heavens.

Our sacrifice is the offering of all our gains and works to the powers of the higher existence. The whole world is a dumb and helpless sacrifice in which the soul is bound as a victim self offered to unseen Gods. The liberating Word must be found, the illuminating hymn must be framed in the heart and mind of man and his life must be turned into a conscious and voluntary offering in which the soul is no longer the victim, but the master of the sacrifice. By right sacrifice and by the all-creative and all expressive Word that shall arise out of his depths as a sublime hymn to the Gods man can achieve all things. He shall conquer his perfection; Nature shall come to him as a willing and longing bride; he shall become her seer and rule her as her King.

By the hymn of prayer and God-attraction, by the hymn of praise and God-affirmation, by the hymn of God-attainment and self-expression man can house in himself the Gods, build in this gated house of his being the living image of their deity, grow into divine births, form within himself vast and luminous worlds for his soul to inhabit.

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The Sacrificial march of the seeker of Truth

Our earthly existence is manifested between these two secret oceans. The lower ocean is the concealed infinite consciousness from which, day and night, at each moment, surge up all these emotions and impulses, names and forms, just as the stars and galaxies shine out on the bosom of the goddess Night. In modern language, this is called the Inconscient or the Subconscient, *apra ketam salilam* of the Veda, the subconscious ocean. Though it is subconscious, it is not devoid of consciousness; the transcendent universal is in it, capable of all knowledge, proficient in all action, it diffuses itself in a trance as it were and creates the universe and its movements. Above pervades the secret free infinite consciousness called the Superconscient of which this 'consciousness-unconsciousness' is the shadow. There in that world the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss is fully manifested — in *sat-loka*, the world of true Existence, as infinite Existence; in *tapoloka*, the world of energy of self-conscience, as infinite Consciousness; in *janaloka*, the world of creative Delight, as infinite Felicity; and in *maharloka*, the world of large consciousness, as the vast Truth of the cosmic Self. The intermediate terrestrial consciousness is the Earth mentioned in the Veda. From this earth rises to the skies the climbing mountain of which each plateau is a step in the ascent, one of the seven inner kingdoms. The gods are helpers in our ascent, the titans are enemies who obstruct the path. This mountain climbing is the sacrificial march of the Vedic seeker of the Truth; with the sacrifice, we have to rise to the ocean of light in the supreme ether. Agni is the instrument of this ascent, the leader of the path, the fighter in the battle and the priest of this sacrifice.

Sri Aurobindo, *Bengali Writings: 40 - 41*



God himself is the lord of the sacrifice. God is Shiva, and Nature is Uma. Though she carries the image of Shiva in her heart, still she misses his visible form; she yearns for his tangible body. This yearning is the deep significance of the universal life.

Sri Aurobindo: Bengali Writings: 46 – 47

Some Vedic Symbols

The Offering of clarified butter

....what could possibly be indicated by the “ghritam”, the clarified butter in the sacrifice? ...I found that *ghṛta* was constantly used in connection with the thought or the mind, that heaven in Veda was a symbol of the mind, that Indra represented the illuminated mentality and his two horses double energies of that mentality and even that the Veda sometimes speaks plainly of offering the intellect (*manīṣā*) as purified *ghṛta* to the gods, *ghṛtaṁ na pūtaṁ manīṣām*. The word *ghṛta* counts also among its philological significances the sense of a rich or warm brightness.....

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The gifts of Cows and Horses

The cow and horse, *go* and *aśva*, are constantly associated. Usha, the Dawn, is described as *gomatī aśvavatī*; Dawn gives to the sacrificer horses and cows. As applied to the physical dawn *gomatī* means accompanied by or bringing the rays of light and is an image of the dawn of illumination in the human mind. Therefore *aśvavatī* also cannot refer merely to the physical steed; it must have a psychological significance as well. A study of the Vedic horse led me to the conclusion that *go* and *aśva* represent the two companion ideas of Light and Energy, Consciousness and Force, which to the Vedic and Vedantic mind were the double or twin aspect of all the activities of existence.

It was apparent, therefore, that the two chief fruits of the Vedic sacrifice, wealth of cows and wealth of horses, were symbolic of richness of mental illumination and abundance of vital energy.....

CWSA 15: 42-44

The Secret of Numbers

The number seven plays an exceedingly important part in the Vedic system, as in most very ancient schools of thought. We find it recurring constantly, — the seven delights, *sapta ratnāni*; the seven flames, tongues or rays of Agni, *sapta arciṣaḥ*, *sapta jvālāḥ*; the seven forms of the Thought-principle, *sapta dhītayaḥ*; the seven Rays or Cows, forms of the Cow unslayable, Aditi, mother of the gods, *sapta gāvaḥ*; the seven rivers, the seven mothers or fostering cows, *sapta mātaraḥ*, *sapta dhenavaḥ*, a term applied indifferently to the Rays and to the Rivers. All these sets of seven depend, it seems to me, upon the Vedic classification of the fundamental principles, the *tattvas*, of existence.....

The One was recognised as the basis and continent; in this One there were the two principles divine and human, mortal and immortal. The dual number is also otherwise applied in the two principles, Heaven and Earth, Mind and Body, Soul and Nature, who are regarded as the father and mother of all beings. It is significant, however, that Heaven and Earth, when they symbolise two forms of natural energy, the mental and the physical consciousness, are no longer the father and mother, but the two mothers. The triple principle was doubly recognised, first in the threefold divine principle answering to the later Sachchidananda, the divine existence, consciousness and bliss, and secondly in the threefold mundane principle, Mind, Life, Body, upon which is built the triple world of the Veda and Puranas. But the full number ordinarily recognised is seven. This figure was arrived at by adding the three divine principles to the three mundane and interpolating a seventh or link-principle which is precisely that of the Truth-consciousness, Ritam Brihat, afterwards known as Vijnana or Mahas.

CWSA 15: 97 – 98

The Seven Rivers

The Seven Rivers of the Veda, the Waters, *āpaḥ*, are usually designated in the figured Vedic language as the seven Mothers or the seven fostering Cows, *sapta dhenavaḥ*. The word *āpaḥ* itself has, covertly, a double significance; for the root *apaḥ* meant originally not only to move from which in all probability is derived the sense of waters, but to be or bring into being, as in *apatya*, a child, and the Southern Indian *appā*, father. The seven Waters are the waters of being; they are the Mothers from whom all forms of existence are born. But we meet also another expression, *sapta gāvaḥ*, the seven Cows or the seven Lights, and the epithet *saptagu*, that which has seven rays. *Gu* (*gāvaḥ*) and *go* (*gāvaḥ*) bear throughout the Vedic hymns this double sense of cows and radiances. In the ancient Indian system of thought being and consciousness were aspects of each other, and Aditi, infinite existence from whom the gods are born, described as the Mother with her seven names and seven seats (*dhāmāni*), is also conceived as the infinite consciousness, the Cow, the primal Light manifest in seven Radiances, *sapta gāvaḥ*. The sevenfold principle of existence is therefore imaged from the one point of view in the figure of the Rivers that arise from the ocean, *sapta dhenavaḥ*, from the other in the figure of the Rays of the all-creating Father, Surya Savitri, *sapta gāvaḥ*.

CWSA 15: 123–24

The children of Light and the powers of Darkness

We must remember also that we have in the Veda the expressions *ṛtaṁ jyotiḥ*, *hiraṇyaṁ jyotiḥ*, the true light, the golden light, which give us an additional clue. Now these three epithets of the solar light, *ārya*, *ṛta*, *hiraṇya* are, I suggest, mutually illuminative and almost equivalent. The Sun is the

Lord of Truth, therefore its light is the *ṛtam jyotiḥ*; this light of truth is that which the Aryan, god or mortal, possesses, and which constitutes his Arya-hood; again the epithet golden is constantly applied to the Sun and gold is in Veda probably the symbol of the substance of the truth, for its substance is the light which is the golden wealth found in Surya and in the waters of Swar, *apsūrye*, — therefore we have the epithet *hiranyam jyotiḥ*. This golden or shining light is the hue, *varṇa*, of the truth; it is also the hue of the thoughts full of that illumination won by the Aryan, the cows who are bright in colour, *śukra, śveta*, the colour of Light; while the Dasyu, being a power of darkness, is black in hue. I suggest that the brightness of the light of the truth, *jyotiḥ āryam*, is the Arya *varṇa*, the hue of these Aryans who are *jyotiragrāḥ*; the darkness of the night of the ignorance is the hue of the Panis, the Dāsa *varṇa*. In this way *varṇa* would come to mean almost the nature or else all those of that particular nature, the colour being the symbol of the nature....

CWSA 15: 225–26

The gods I found to be described as children of Light, sons of Aditi, of Infinity; and without exception they are described as increasing man, bringing him light, pouring on him the fullness of the waters, the abundance of the heavens, increasing the truth in him, building up the divine worlds, leading him against all attacks to the great goal, the integral felicity, the perfect bliss. Their separate functions emerged by means of their activities, their epithets, the psychological sense of the legends connected with them, the indications of the Upanishads and Puranas, the occasional side-lights from Greek myth. On the other hand the demons who opposed them, are all powers of division and limitation, Coverers, Tearers, Devourers, Confiners, Dualisers,

Obstructors, as their names indicate, powers that work against the free and unified integrality of the being. These Vritras, Panis, Atris, Rakshasas, Sambara, Vala, Namuchi, are not Dravidian kings and gods, as the modern mind with its exaggerated historic sense would like them to be; they represent a more antique idea better suited to the religious and ethical preoccupations of our forefathers. They represent the struggle between the powers of the higher Good and the lower desire, and this conception of the Rig Veda and the same opposition of good and evil otherwise expressed, with less psychological subtlety, with more ethical directness in the scriptures of the Zoroastrians, our ancient neighbours and kindred, proceeded probably from a common original discipline of the Aryan culture.

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The natural enemy of Truth and Light

... the Dasyu is the natural enemy. These dividers, plunderers, harmful powers, these Danavas, sons of the Mother of division, are spoken of by the Rishis under many general appellations. There are Rakshasas; there are Eaters and Devourers, Wolves and Tearers; there are hurters and haters; there are dualisers; there are confiners or censors. But we are given also many specific names. Vritra, the Serpent, is the grand Adversary; for he obstructs with his coils of darkness all possibility of divine existence and divine action. And even when Vritra is slain by the light, fiercer enemies arise out of him. Shushna afflicts us with his impure and ineffective force, Namuchi fights man by his weaknesses, and others too assail, each with his proper evil. Then there are Vala and the Panis, miser traffickers in the sense-life, stealers and concealers of the higher Light and its illuminations which they can only darken and misuse, — an impious host who are jealous of their store and will not offer sacrifice to the Gods. These and other personalities —

they are much more than personifications — of our ignorance, evil, weakness and many limitations make constant war upon man; they encircle him from near or they shoot their arrows at him from afar or even dwell in his gated house in the place of the Gods and with their shapeless stammering mouths and their insufficient breath of force mar his self-expression. They must be expelled, overpowered, slain, thrust down into their nether darkness by the aid of the mighty and helpful deities.

CWSA 15: 46, 379

Sri Aurobindo

It is only the Indian who can believe everything, dare everything, sacrifice everything. First therefore become Indians. Recover the patrimony of your forefathers. Recover the Aryan thought, the Aryan discipline, the Aryan character, the Aryan life. Recover the Vedanta, the Gita, the Yoga. Recover them not only in intellect or sentiment but in your lives. Live them and you will be great and strong, mighty, invincible and fearless. Neither life nor death will have any terrors for you. Difficulty and impossibility will vanish from your vocabularies. For it is in the spirit that strength is eternal and you must win back the kingdom of yourselves, the inner Swaraj, before you can win back your outer empire. There the Mother dwells and She waits for worship that She may give strength. Believe in Her, serve Her, lose your wills in Hers, your egoism in the greater ego of the country, your separate selfishness in the service of humanity. Recover the source of all strength in yourselves and all else will be added to you, social soundness, intellectual preeminence, political freedom, the mastery of human thought, the hegemony of the world.

CWSA 8: 27 – 28

Sri Aurobindo

Gods and Goddesses in the Vedas

The Vedic deities are living realities

The Vedic deities are names, powers, personalities of the universal Godhead and they represent each some essential puissance of the Divine Being. They manifest the cosmos and are manifest in it. Children of Light, Sons of the Infinite, they recognise in the soul of man their brother and ally and desire to help and increase him by themselves increasing in him so as to possess his world with their light, strength and beauty. The Gods call man to a divine companionship and alliance; they attract and uplift him to their luminous fraternity, invite his aid and offer theirs against the Sons of Darkness and Division. Man in return calls the Gods to his sacrifice, offers to them his swiftnesses and his strengths, his clarities and his sweetnesses, — milk and butter of the shining Cow, distilled juices of the Plant of Joy, the Horse of the Sacrifice, the cake and the wine, the grain for the God-Mind's radiant coursers. He receives them into his being and their gifts into his life, increases them by the hymn and the wine and forms perfectly — as a smith forges iron, says the Veda — their great and luminous godheads.

All this Vedic imagery is easy to understand when once we have the key, but it must not be mistaken for mere imagery. The Gods are not simply poetical personifications of abstract ideas or of psychological and physical functions of Nature. To the Vedic seers they are living realities; the vicissitudes of the human soul represent a cosmic struggle not merely of principles and tendencies but of the cosmic Powers which support and embody them. These are the Gods and the Demons. On the world-stage and in the individual soul the same real drama with the same personages is enacted.

CWSA 15: 379

The inner significance of the godheads

All the Vedic godheads have this outer and this inner and inmost function, their known and their secret Names. All are in their external character powers of physical Nature; all have in their inner meaning a psychic function and psychological ascriptions; all too are various powers of some one highest Reality, *ekam sat*, the one infinite Existence. This hardly knowable Supreme is called often in the Veda "That Truth" or "That One", *tat satyam, tad ekam*. This complex character of the Vedic godheads assumes forms which have been wholly misunderstood by those who ascribe to them only their outward physical significance. Each of these gods is in himself a complete and separate cosmic personality of the one Existence and in their combination of powers they form the complete universal power, the cosmic whole, *vaishvadevyam*. Each again, apart from his special function, is one godhead with the others; each holds in himself the universal divinity, each god is all the other gods.

CWSA 20: 201-02

The Cosmic Gods

To what gods shall the sacrifice be offered? Who shall be invoked to manifest and protect in the human being this increasing godhead?

Agni: Agni first, for without him the sacrificial flame cannot burn on the altar of the soul. That flame of Agni is the seven-tongued power of the Will, a Force of God instinct with knowledge. This conscious and forceful will is the immortal guest in our mortality, a pure priest and a divine worker, the mediator between earth and heaven. It carries what we offer to the higher Powers and brings back in return their force and light and joy into our humanity.

Indra: Indra, the Puissant next, who is the power of pure Existence self-manifested as the Divine Mind. As Agni is one pole of Force instinct with knowledge that sends its current upward from earth to heaven, so Indra is the other pole of Light instinct with force which descends from heaven to earth. He comes down into our world as the Hero with the shining horses and slays darkness and division with his lightnings, pours down the life-giving heavenly waters, finds in the trace of the hound, Intuition, the lost or hidden illuminations, makes the Sun of Truth mount high in the heaven of our mentality.

Surya: Surya, the Sun, is the master of that supreme Truth,—truth of being, truth of knowledge, truth of process and act and movement and functioning. He is therefore the creator or rather the manifester of all things—for creation is out-bringing, expression by the Truth and Will—and the father, fosterer, enlightener of our souls. The illuminations we seek are the herds of this Sun who comes to us in the track of the divine Dawn and releases and reveals in us night-hidden world after world up to the highest Beatitude.

Soma: Of that beatitude Soma is the representative deity. The wine of his ecstasy is concealed in the growths of earth, in the waters of existence; even here in our physical being are his immortalising juices and they have to be pressed out and offered to all the gods; for in that strength these shall increase and conquer.

Varuna-Mitra-Aryaman-Bhaga:

For if the truth of Surya is to be established firmly in our mortal nature, there are previous conditions that are indispensable; a vast purity and clear wideness destructive

of all sin and crooked falsehood,—and this is Varuna; a luminous power of love and comprehension leading and forming into harmony all our thoughts, acts and impulses, — this is Mitra; an immortal puissance of clear-discerning aspiration and endeavour,—this is Aryaman; a happy spontaneity of the right enjoyment of all things dispelling the evil dream of sin and error and suffering, — this is Bhaga. These four are powers of the Truth of Surya.

Ashwins: For the whole bliss of Soma to be established perfectly in our nature a happy and enlightened and unmaimed condition of mind, vitality and body are necessary. This condition is given to us by the twin Ashwins; wedded to the daughter of Light, drinkers of honey, bringers of perfect satisfactions, healers of maim and malady they occupy our parts of knowledge and parts of action and prepare our mental, vital and physical being for an easy and victorious ascension.

Ribhus and Maruts: Indra, the Divine Mind, as the shaper of mental forms has for his assistants, his artisans, the Ribhus, human powers who by the work of sacrifice and their brilliant ascension to the high dwelling-place of the Sun have attained to immortality and help mankind to repeat their achievement. They shape by the mind Indra's horses, the Ashwins' chariot, the weapons of the Gods, all the means of the journey and the battle. But as giver of the Light of truth and as Vritra-slayer Indra is aided by the Maruts, who are powers of will and nervous or vital Force that have attained to the light of thought and the voice of self-expression. They are behind all thought and speech as its impellers and they battle towards the Light, Truth and Bliss of the supreme Consciousness.

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The Feminine Energies

There are also female energies; for the Deva is both Male and Female and the gods also are either activating souls or passively executive and methodising energies.

Aditi and Her powers:

Aditi, infinite Mother of the gods, comes first; and there are besides five powers of the Truth consciousness,— Mahi or Bharati, the vast Word that brings us all things out of the divine source; Ila, the strong primal word of the Truth who gives us its active vision; Saraswati, its streaming current and the word of its inspiration; Sarama, the Intuition, hound of heaven who descends into the cavern of the subconscious and finds there the concealed illuminations; Dakshina, whose function is to discern rightly, dispose the action and the offering and distribute in the sacrifice to each godhead its portion. Each god, too, has his female energy.

All this action and struggle and ascension is supported by Heaven our Father and Earth our Mother, Parents of the Gods, who sustain respectively the purely mental and psychic and the physical consciousness.

CWSA 15: 379–82

Aditi and Usha

Usha is described repeatedly as the Mother of the Cows. If then the cow is a Vedic symbol for the physical light or for spiritual illumination the phrase must either bear this sense that she is the mother or source of the physical rays of the daylight or else that she creates the radiances of the supreme Day, the splendour and clarity of the inner illumination. But we see in the Veda that Aditi, the Mother of the Gods, is described both as the Cow and as the general Mother; she is the Supreme Light and all radiances proceed from her.

Psychologically, Aditi is the supreme or infinite Consciousness, mother of the gods, in opposition to Danu or Diti, the divided consciousness, mother of Vritra and the other Danavas — enemies of the gods and of man in his progress. In a more general aspect she is the source of all the cosmic forms of consciousness from the physical upwards; the seven cows, *sapta gāvaḥ*, are her forms and there are, we are told, seven names and seven seats of the Mother. Usha as the mother of the cows can only be a form or power of this supreme Light, of this supreme Consciousness, of Aditi. And in fact, we do find her so described in I.113.19, *mātā devānām aditer anīkam*, “Mother of the gods, form (or, power) of Aditi.”

CWSA 15: 131

The Three Goddesses: Saraswati, Bharati, Ila

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

*Ilā sarasvatī mahī, tisro devīr mayobhuvah;
barhiḥ sīdantvasridhaḥ .*

“May Ila, Saraswati and Mahi, three goddesses who give birth to the bliss, take their place on the sacrificial seat, they who stumble not,” or “who come not to hurt” or “do no hurt.” The epithet means, I think, they in whom there is no false movement with its evil consequences, *duritam*, no

stumbling into pitfalls of sin and error.....

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

CWSA 15: 94–95

Surya Savitri

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

For this Vijnana is a divine and not a human faculty. Man’s mind is not constituted of the self-luminous truth, like the divine mind; it is a sense-mentality, Manas, which can receive and understand Truth, but is not one with it. The light of knowledge has to present itself in this human understanding tempered so as to suit its forms to the capacities and limitations of the physical consciousness. And it has to lead up progressively to its own true nature, to manifest successive evolutionary stages for our mental development. Therefore the rays of Surya, as they labour to form our mental existence, create three successive worlds of mentality one superimposed on the other, — the sensational, aesthetic and emotional mind, the pure intellect and the divine intelligence. The fullness and perfection of these triple worlds of mind exists only in the pure mental plane

of being, where they shine above the three heavens, *tisro divaḥ*, as their three luminosities, *trīṇi rocanāni*. But their light descends upon the physical consciousness and effects the corresponding formations in its realms, the Vedic *pārthivāni rajāmsi*, earthly realms of light. They also are triple, *tisraḥ pṛthivīḥ*, the three earths. And of all these worlds Surya Savitri is the creator.....

CWSA 15: 287

Sri Aurobindo

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

Surya enlightens the mind and the thoughts with the illuminations of the Truth. He is *vipra*, the illumined. It is he who delivers the individual human mind from the circumscribed consciousness of self and environment and enlarges the limited movement which is imposed on it by its preoccupation with its own individuality. Therefore he is *bṛhat*, the Large. But his illumination is not a vague light, nor does his largeness come by a confused and dissolved view of self and object; it holds in itself a clear discernment of things in their totality, their parts and their relations. Therefore he is *vipaścī*, the clear in perception.

CWSA 15: 288-89

Sri Aurobindo

O soul of India, hide thyself no longer with the darkened Pandits of the Kaliyuga in the kitchen & the chapel, veil not thyself with the soulless rite, the obsolete law and the unblessed money of the dakshina; but seek in thy soul, ask of God and recover thy true Brahminhood & Kshatriyahood with the eternal Veda; restore the hidden truth of the Vedic sacrifice, return to the fulfilment of an older & mightier Vedanta.

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The Law is for the bound & those whose eyes are sealed; if they walk not by it, they will stumble; but thou who art free in Krishna or hast seen his living light, walk holding the hand of thy Friend & by the lamp of eternal Veda.

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The Vedanta is God's lamp to lead thee out of this night of bondage & egoism; but when the light of Veda has dawned in thy soul, then even that divine lamp thou needest not, for now thou canst walk freely & surely in a high & eternal sunlight.

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Vedanta says rather, "Man, thou art of one nature & substance with God, one soul with thy fellow-men. Awake & progress then to thy utter divinity, live for God in thyself & in others." This gospel which was given only to the few, must now be offered to all mankind for its deliverance.

CWSA 12: 471-72, 449

Sri Aurobindo



His love has paved the mortal's road to Heaven:
He has given his life and light to balance here
The dark account of mortal ignorance.
It is finished, the dread mysterious sacrifice,
Offered by God's martyred body for the world;...

Savitri: 445

Sri Aurobindo

The soul of man is a world full of beings, a kingdom in which armies clash to help or hinder a supreme conquest, a house where the gods are our guests and which the demons strive to possess; the fullness of its energies and wideness of its being make a seat of sacrifice spread, arranged and purified for a celestial session.

CWSA 15: 384

Sri Aurobindo

Fundamental truths in the Vedas

The world lives in and by Ananda

The world lives in and by Ananda. From Ananda, says the Veda, we were born, by Ananda we live, to Ananda we return, and it adds that no man could even have the strength to draw in his breath and throw it out again if there were not this heaven of Bliss embracing our existence as ether embraces our bodies, nourishing us with its eternal substance and strength and supporting the life and the activity. A world which is essentially a world of bliss — this was the ancient Vedantic vision, the drishti of the Vedic drashta, which differentiates Hinduism in its early virility from the cosmic sorrow of Buddhism and the cosmic disillusionment of Mayavada. But it is possible to fall from this Bliss, not to realise it with the lower nature, in the Aparā Prakriti, not to be able to grasp and possess it. Two things are necessary for the fullness of man's bliss, — the fullness of his being and the fullness of his knowledge creating by their union the fullness of his strength in all its manifestations, viryam, balam, bhrajas, tejas, ojas. For Ananda, Sat & Chit make one reality, and Chit is in its outward working pure force to which our Rishis gave the name of Tapas. To attain even here upon earth this fullness of bliss dependent upon fullness of existence, illumination and force, must always be humanity's drift, man's collective endeavour. To attain it within himself here and beyond, *iha ca amutra ca*, must always be the drift of the human unit, the individual's endeavour. Wherever the knowledge in him thinks it can grasp this bliss, it will fix its heaven.

CWSA 12: 205 – 206

There is a deeper, higher and vaster Truth

The thought around which all is centred is the seeking after Truth, Light, Immortality. There is a Truth deeper and higher than the truth of outward existence, a Light greater and higher than the light of human understanding which comes by revelation and inspiration, an immortality towards which the soul has to rise. We have to find our way to that, to get into touch with this Truth and Immortality, *sapanta ṛtam amṛtam*, to be born into the Truth, to grow in it, to ascend in spirit into the world of Truth and to live in it. To do so is to unite ourselves with the Godhead and to pass from mortality into immortality. ... There is the inferior truth here of this world mixed as it is with much falsehood and error, *amṛtasya bhūreḥ* and there is a world or home of Truth, *sadanam ṛtasya*, the Truth, the Right, the Vast, *satyam ṛtaṁ bṛhat*, where all is Truth-conscious, *ṛtacit*. There are many worlds between up to the triple heavens and their lights but this is the world of the highest Light — the world of the Sun of Truth, *svaḥ*, or the Great Heaven. We have to find the path to this Great Heaven, the path of Truth, *ṛtasya panthāḥ*, or as it is sometimes called the way of the gods.

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Ekam Sat, - the One Reality

As the doctrine of the Rig Veda is the seed of the teaching of the Vedanta, so is its inner practice and discipline a seed of the later practice and discipline of Yoga. Finally, as the summit of the teaching of the Vedic mystics comes the secret of the one Reality, *ekam sat*, or *tad ekam*, which became the central word of the Upanishads. The Gods, the powers of Light and Truth are powers and names of the One, each God is himself all the Gods or carries them in him: there is the one Truth, *tat satyam*, and one bliss to which we must rise.

CWSA 16: 19 – 21

The One Existence with many Names

The doctrine of the Mystics recognises an Unknowable, Timeless and Unnameable behind and above all things and not seizable by the studious pursuit of the mind. Impersonally, it is That, the One Existence; to the pursuit of our personality it reveals itself out of the secrecy of things as the God or Deva, — nameless though he has many names, immeasurable and beyond description, though he holds in himself all description of name and knowledge and all measures of form and substance, force and activity.

The Deva or Godhead is both the original cause and the final result. Divine Existent, builder of the worlds, lord and begetter of all things, Male and Female, Being and Consciousness, Father and Mother of the Worlds and their inhabitants, he is also their Son and ours: for he is the Divine Child born into the Worlds Who manifests himself in the growth of the creature. He is Rudra and Vishnu, Prajapati and Hiranyagarbha, Surya, Agni, Indra, Vayu, Soma, Brihaspati, — Varuna and Mitra and Bhaga and Aryaman, all the gods. He is the wise, mighty and liberating Son born from our works and our sacrifice, the Hero in our warfare and Seer of our knowledge, the White Steed in the front of our days who gallops towards the upper Ocean.

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Journey of the soul of man

The soul of man soars as the Bird, the Hansa,¹ past the shining firmaments of physical and mental consciousness, climbs as the traveller and fighter beyond earth of body and heaven of mind by the ascending path of the Truth to find this Godhead waiting for us, leaning down to us from the secrecy of the highest supreme where it is seated in the triple divine Principle and the source of the Beatitude. The

1. Swan

Deva is indeed, whether attracting and exalted there or here helpful to us in the person of the greater Gods, always the Friend and Lover of man, the pastoral Master of the Herds who gives us the sweet milk and the clarified butter from the udder of the shining Cow of the infinitude. He is the source and outpurer of the ambrosial Wine of divine delight and we drink it drawn from the sevenfold waters of existence or pressed out from the luminous plant on the hill of being and uplifted by its raptures we become immortal.

CWSA 16: 20

Principle Worlds of the Vedic Seers

1. Pure Existence—Sat, World of the highest truth of being (Satyaloka)
2. Pure Consciousness— Chit, World of infinite Will or conscious force (Tapoloka)
3. Pure Bliss— Ananda, World of creative delight of existence (Janaloka)
4. Knowledge or Truth— Vijnana, World of the Vastness (Maharloka)
5. Mind - World of light (Swar)
6. Life - (nervous being) Worlds of various becoming (Bhuvar)
7. Matter - The material world (Bhur)

CWSA 15: 372

Our life is a battle

... our life is a battle between the powers of Light and Truth, the Gods who are the Immortals and the powers of Darkness. These are spoken of under various names as Vritra and Vritras, Vala and the Panis, the Dasyus and their kings. We have to call in the aid of the Gods to destroy the opposition of these powers of Darkness who conceal the Light from us or rob us of it, who obstruct the flowing of the streams of

Truth, *ṛtasya dhārāḥ*, the streams of Heaven and obstruct in every way the soul's ascent. We have to invoke the Gods by the inner sacrifice, and by the Word call them into us, — that is the specific power of the Mantra, — to offer to them the gifts of the sacrifice and by that giving secure their gifts, so that by this process we may build the way of our ascent to the goal. The elements of the outer sacrifice in the Veda are used as symbols of the inner sacrifice and self-offering; we give what we are and what we have in order that the riches of the divine Truth and Light may descend into our life and become the elements of our inner birth into the Truth,— a right thinking, a right understanding, a right action must develop in us which is the thinking, impulsion and action of that higher Truth, *ṛtasya preṣā*, *ṛtasya dhīti*, and by this we must build up ourselves in that Truth. Our sacrifice is a journey, a pilgrimage and a battle,—a travel towards the Gods and we also make that journey with Agni, the inner Flame, as our path-finder and leader. Our human things are raised up by the mystic Fire into the immortal being, into the Great Heaven, and the things divine come down into us.

CWSA 15: 372

Man, — a miniature universe

Man dwells in the bosom of the Earth-Mother and is aware of this world of mortality only; but there is a super-conscious high beyond where the divine worlds are seated in a luminous secrecy; there is a subconscious or inconscient below his surface waking impressions and from that pregnant Night the worlds as he sees them are born. And these other worlds between the luminous upper and the tenebrous lower ocean? They are here. Man draws from the life-world his vital being, from the mind world his mentality; he is ever in secret communication with them; he can consciously enter

into them, be born into them, if he will. Even into the solar worlds of the Truth he can rise, enter the portals of the Superconscient, cross the threshold of the Supreme. The divine doors shall swing open to his increasing soul.

This human ascension is possible because every being really holds in himself all that his outward vision perceives as if external to him. We have subjective faculties hidden in us which correspond to all the tiers and strata of the objective cosmic system and these form for us so many planes of our possible existence. This material life and our narrowly limited consciousness of the physical world are far from being the sole experience permitted to man, — be he a thousand times the Son of Earth. If maternal Earth bore him and retains him in her arms, yet is Heaven also one of his parents and has a claim on his being. It is open to him to become awake to profounder depths and higher heights within and such awakening is his intended progress. And as he mounts thus to higher and ever higher planes of himself, new worlds open to his life and his vision and become the field of his experience and the home of his spirit. He lives in contact and union with their powers and godheads and remoulds himself in their image. Each ascent is thus a new birth of the soul...

CWSA 15: 373-74

A march and a battle and a pilgrimage

The image of this sacrifice is sometimes that of a journey or voyage; for it travels, it ascends; it has a goal — the vastness, the true existence, the light, the felicity—and it is called upon to discover and keep the good, the straight and the happy path to the goal, the arduous, yet joyful road of the Truth. It has to climb, led by the flaming strength of the divine Will, from plateau to plateau as of a mountain, it has to cross as in a ship the waters of existence, traverse its rivers, overcome their deep pits and rapid currents; its aim is to

arrive at the far-off ocean of light and infinity.

And this is no easy or peaceful march; it is for long seasons a fierce and relentless battle. Constantly the Aryan man has to labour and to fight and conquer; he must be a tireless toiler and traveller and a stern warrior, he must force open and storm and sack city after city, win kingdom after kingdom, overthrow and tread down ruthlessly enemy after enemy. His whole progress is a warring of Gods and Titans, Gods and Giants, Indra and the Python, Aryan and Dasyu. Aryan adversaries even he has to face in the open field; for old friends and helpers turn into enemies; the kings of Aryan states he would conquer and overpass join themselves to the Dasyus and are leagued against him in supreme battle to prevent his free and utter passing on.

CWSA 15: 376-78

Sri Aurobindo

Goal of the Vedic Rishis

The self-luminous One is the goal of the Aryan-minded; therefore the seers worshipped him in the image of the Sun. One existent, him have the seers called by various names, Indra, Agni, Yama, Matarishwan. The phrases "That One", "That Truth", occur constantly in the Veda in connection with the Highest and with the image of His workings here, the Sun. In one sublime and mystic chant the refrain returns perpetually, "The vast mightiness of the Gods, — That One." There is the goal of that journey of the Sun by the path of the Truth which we have seen to be also the journey of the awakened and illumined soul. "Concealed by this truth is that Truth of you," of Mitra and Varuna, "where they unyoke the horses of the Sun. The ten hundreds meet there together, — That One, I have seen the supreme God of the embodied gods." But in itself the One is timeless and our mind and being exist in Time. "It is neither today nor to-

morrow; who knoweth That which is transcendent? When it is approached, it vanishes from us." Therefore we have to grow towards it by giving birth to the gods in ourselves, increasing their strong and radiant forms, building up their divine bodies, and this new birth and self-building is the true nature of the sacrifice,—the sacrifice through which there is the awakening of our consciousness to immortality.

CWSA 15: 492 – 493

The central idea of the Vedic Rishis

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

CWSA 15: 45 – 46

The central conception of the Veda is the conquest of the Truth out of the darkness of Ignorance and by the conquest of the Truth the conquest also of Immortality. For the Vedic Ritam is a spiritual as well as a psychological conception. It is the true being, the true consciousness, the true delight of existence beyond this earth of body, this mid-region of vital force, this ordinary sky or heaven of mind. We have to cross beyond all these planes in order to arrive at the higher plane of that superconscious Truth which is the own home of the gods and the foundation of Immortality.

CWSA 15: 241 – 242

The Supramental Vastness

This supramental vastness is also the fundamental truth of being, satyam, out of which its active truth wells out naturally and without strife of effort into a perfect and faultless movement because there is upon those heights no division, no gulf between consciousness and force, no divorce of knowledge and will, no disharmonising of our being and its action; everything there is the “straight” and there is no least possibility of crookedness. Therefore this supramental plane of vastness and true being is also Ritam, the true activity of things; it is a supreme truth of movement, action, manifestation, an infallible truth of will and heart and knowledge, a perfect truth of thought and word and emotion; it is the spontaneous Right, the free Law, the original divine order of things untouched by the falsehoods of the divided and separative consciousness. It is the vast divine and self-luminous synthesis born of a fundamental unity, of which our petty existence is only the poor, partial, broken and perverted cutting up and analysis. Such was the Sun of the Vedic worship, the paradise of light to which the Fathers aspired, the world, the body of Surya son of Aditi.

CWSA 15: 475

Vipra: the wise and tranquil one

The word vipra does not mean a brahmin; the root vi signifies to manifest, to illumine and the root vip means the play or vibration or full flooding of manifestation, illumination; one in whose mind the knowledge has dawned, the door of whose mind is open for the mighty play of knowledge, he is verily the *vipra*. The root *mā* signifies ‘to hold’. The mother holds the child in her womb, that is why she is known as *mātā*. The founder and life of all action, the god Vayu, is known as Matarisvan, “he who extends himself in the Mother

or the container, the sky” — the sky which holds in its womb the birth, the play and the death of all creatures and beings and yet remains for ever serene and unperturbed. One who is patient like the sky that has the power to contain and endure the wild play and remain silently plunged in its happiness even when the violent cyclone cleaves the horizon with lightnings and roaring madly smites down trees, animals and houses in a furious and destructive dance of divine rapture, one who can turn his own body into an open space for the play of unbearable physical and vital pain and yet remain impassive, full of self-delight, capable of withstanding it like a witness, he, indeed, is a *māvān*. When such a *māvān* is *vipra*, (illumined), when such a serene knower offers his body as the altar of sacrifice and calls on the gods, then Indra and Varuna move freely in it, sometimes they come even of their own accord, protect the oblation, become the support and foundation, *dhartārā carṣaṇīnām* (‘You are indeed the upholders of all action’), of all his desired actions and bestow upon him great felicity, power and illumination of knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo, Bengali writings, pp. 52-53

I can't say whether any of them [the Vedic Rishis] attained the supramental plane, but the ascent to it was their object. Swar is evidently the illumined regions of Mind, between the supramental and the human intelligence formed by the rays of the Sun. According to the Upanishads those who ascend into the rays of the Sun return, but those who ascend into the Sun itself do not come back. That is because the ascent to supermind was envisaged, but the descent and organisation of the supermind here (as apart from the descent of the Rays) was not.

CWSA 29: 417

Sri Aurobindo

First Hymn of the Rig Veda

1. अग्निमेळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्वजं होतारं रत्नघातम् ॥ १ ॥

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

2. अग्निः पूर्वेभिर्ऋषिभिरीड्यो नूतनैरुत । स देवानेह वक्षति ॥ २ ॥

Agni, adorable to the former sages, adorable to those of today, he brings here the gods.

3. अग्निना रसिमश्वत्पोषमेव दिवे । यशसं वीरवत्तमं ॥ ३ ॥

By Agni one getteth delight (or force) and increase too day by day, & widest victory (or most manifest or most forceful).

4. अग्ने यं यज्ञमध्वरं विश्वतः परिभूरसि । स इहेवेषु गच्छति ॥ ४ ॥

O Agni, the Yajna here below which thou encompasseth on every side is that that moveth in the gods (or goeth to the gods).

5. अग्निर्होता कविऋतुरु सत्यश्चित्रश्रवस्तमरु । देवो देवेभिरागमत् ॥ ५ ॥

Agni, the Hota, the strong in wisdom, the true, the varied in inspired knowledge, comes a god with the gods.

6. यदंग दाशुषे त्वमग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि । तवेत्सत्यमङ्गिरः ॥ ६ ॥

That thou, O beloved, doest good to the giver, O Agni, this is the truth in thee, O lord of love.

7. उप त्वाग्ने दिवे दोषावस्तार्धिया वयं । नमो भरन्त एमसि ॥ ७ ॥

To thee, O Agni, day by day because thou protectest in the dimness, we with the understanding (come) bearing salutation and thou growest to thy strength.

8. राजन्तमध्वराणां गोपामृतस्य दीदिविं । र्धमानं स्वे दमे ॥ ८ ॥

Ruling over things below, O protector of immortality, a splendour increasing in its home.

9. स नः पितेव सूनुवे अग्ने सूपायनो भव । सचस्वा नः स्वस्तये ॥ ९ ॥

Therefore do thou, O Agni, be accessible to us as a father to his child, cleave to us for our bliss.

CWSA 16: 452–53

Sri Aurobindo

yasmin vijñate sarvam vijñatam

I seek a light that shall be new, yet old, the oldest indeed of all lights. I seek an authority that accepting, illuminating and reconciling all human truth, shall yet reject and get rid of by explaining it all mere human error. I seek a text and a Shastra that is not subject to interpolation, modification and replacement, that moth and white ant cannot destroy, that the earth cannot bury nor Time mutilate. I seek an asceticism that shall give me purity and deliverance from self and from ignorance without stultifying God and His universe. I seek a scepticism that shall question everything but shall have the patience to deny nothing that may possibly be true. I seek a rationalism not proceeding on the untenable supposition that all the centuries of man's history except the nineteenth were centuries of folly and superstition, but bent on discovering truth instead of limiting inquiry by a new dogmatism, obscurantism and furious intolerance which it chooses to call common sense and enlightenment; I seek a materialism that shall recognise matter and use it without being its slave. I seek an occultism that shall bring out all its processes and proofs into the light of day, without mystery, without jugglery, without the old stupid call to humanity, "Be blind, O man, and see!" In short, I seek not science, not religion, not Theosophy, but Veda — the truth about Brahman, not only about His essentiality, but about His manifestation, not a lamp on the way to the forest, but a light and a guide to joy and action in the world, the truth which is beyond opinion, the knowledge which all thought strives after — *yasmin vijñate sarvam vijñatam*.¹

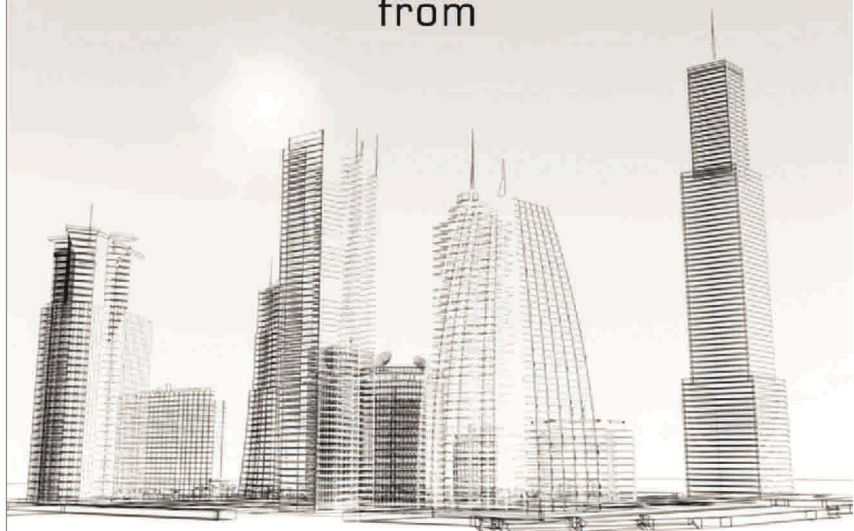
CWSA 12: 61 - 62

Sri Aurobindo

1. knowing which all is known



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