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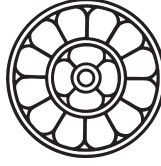
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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute,
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



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MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. LXVIII

No. 9

“Great is Truth and it shall prevail”

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WHO ART THOU THAT CAMEST

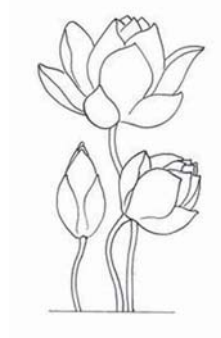
Who art thou that camest
Bearing the occult Name,
Wings of regal darkness,
Eyes of an unborn flame?

Like the august uprising
Of a forgotten sun
Out of the caverned midnight
Fire-trails of wonder run.

Captured the heart renouncing
Tautness of passion-worn strings
Allows the wide-wayed sweetness
Of free supernal things.

SRI AUROBINDO

(Collected Poems, CWSA, Vol. 2, p. 635)



“ . . . I LIE AT THY FEET AND WAIT ”

May 19, 1914

This mental being which throughout my individual existence had the power to set all my faculties working: deep devotion for Thee, infinite compassion for men, ardent aspiration for knowledge, effort for self-perfection — seems to have fallen into a deep sleep and no longer sets anything at all in movement. All the individual faculties slumber and the consciousness is not yet fully awake in the transcendent states; that is, its wakefulness in them is intermittent and in between there is sleep. Something in this being aspires for solitude and absolute silence for a little while, so as to come out of this unsatisfactory transition; and something else knows that it is Thy will that this instrument be consecrated to the service of all, even if this must apparently be harmful to its self-perfecting.

Something in this being tells Thee, O Lord:

“I know nothing,

I am nothing,

I can do nothing,

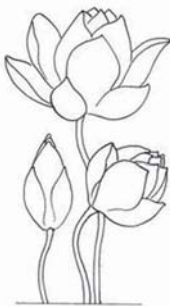
I am in the darkness of inconscience.”

And something else knows that it is Thyself and thus the supreme perfection.

What is going to come out of that? How will such a state come to an end? Whether it is inertia or true patience, I do not know; but without haste or desire I lie at Thy feet and wait. . . .

THE MOTHER

(*Prayers and Meditations*, CWM 2nd Ed., Vol. 1, p. 147)



SRI AUROBINDO AND THE VEDA

Abbé Jules Monchanin, in his long article *La Pensée de Shri Aurobindo* in the Paris periodical *L'Église Vivante*,¹ often shows himself to be a perceptive admirer, especially where “Sri Aurobindo the Philosopher and Prophet” is concerned. But he finds himself completely at odds with Sri Aurobindo over the Veda.

Walking in the steps of Indologists like Louis Renou, he subscribes to the theory that the Veda is, as the mediaeval Indian commentator Sayana held, a manual of ritual practices and that in it natural phenomena are invested with life and worshipped as superhuman powers and that its terms are to be taken literally as part of a primitive hymnal. The mentality behind it is considered as being grossly down-to-earth and preoccupied with purely physical objects, events and relationships.

Monchanin suggests that Sri Aurobindo, when he interpreted the Veda spiritually and symbolically, indulged in loose amateurish fancy, unmindful of historical data and scholarly linguistics. Monchanin does not realise that here was a master of languages. Sri Aurobindo was expert in Greek and Latin, intimate with French, sufficiently familiar with Italian and German, besides being a supreme specialist in English. He was acquainted with several modern Indian tongues, including Tamil. His knowledge of Sanskrit was consummate and was further enlightened by his direct Yogic experience of all that the Sanskrit scriptures of India express of the highest and widest spirituality. Further, his was a most sensitive literary sensorium, capable of insight into the fountainheads of inspiration as well as alert to the various layers of being from which utterance could spring. And the conclusions at which he has arrived about the matter and manner of the Veda are set forth after a scrupulous review of old and current theories and follow a clear chain of philological, historical and psychological arguments.

Sri Aurobindo demands, as a background to the Upanishads and to the later developments of Indian religion and philosophy, an Age of the Mysteries such as preceded in European antiquity the emergence of systematic and discursive thought. The Veda is to him the full articulate scripture of an epoch resembling the one whose failing remnants survived in Greece in practices like the Orphic and Eleusinian Mysteries. In the Age of the Mysteries, “the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated.”² According to Sri Aurobindo the Veda is composed on a double plane of esoteric and exoteric.

1. No. 4, 1952, pp. 312-36.

2. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 6.

On general grounds what we may term the psychologico-historical argument is the strongest in Sri Aurobindo's favour. He³ writes: "Such profound and ultimate thoughts, such systems of subtle and elaborate psychology as are found in the substance of the Upanishads, do not spring out of a previous void. The human mind in its progress marches from knowledge to knowledge, or it renews and enlarges previous knowledge that has been obscured and overlaid, or it seizes on old imperfect clues and is led by them to new discoveries. The thought of the Upanishads supposes great origins anterior to itself, and these in the ordinary theories are lacking. The hypothesis, invented to fill the gap, that these ideas were borrowed by barbarous Aryan invaders from the civilised Dravidians, is a conjecture supported only by other conjectures. It is indeed coming to be doubted whether the whole story of an Aryan invasion through the Punjab is not a myth of the philologists. . . .⁴ Much indeed of the forms and symbols of thought which we find in the Upanishads, much of the substance of the Brahmanas supposes a period in India in which thought took the form or the veil of secret teachings such as those of the Greek mysteries."

The Upanishads are at present regarded as a movement breaking away from Vedism. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan,⁵ they evince "a protest against the externalism of the Vedic practices and an indifference to the sacredness of the Veda". True, a ritualistic cult based on the Veda, a ceremonial of religious Works as distinguished from what the Upanishads came to consider spiritual Knowledge, is an object of strong revulsion in the Upanishadic period. But does not Radhakrishnan⁶ himself tell us that the Upanishads "adopt a double attitude towards Vedic authority"? Here surely is a puzzle. Why should Radhakrishnan⁷ have to go on to say that in places the Upanishads "concede the scriptural origin of the Veda"?

The fact is that these Upanishads, which condemn the form popularly taken by Vedism and which are said to have borrowed their spirituality from "Dravidian" sources, profess again and again to bring out the truth of the Riks, the Mantras, the Verses of the Vedic Rishis. As M. P. Pandit⁸ reminds us, "They quite often quote the Riks as seals of approval for their own findings." As examples⁹ we may pick out: "This is said by the Riks" from the Mundaka Upanishad (III.2.10) — "That is said by the Rishi" from the Aitareya (IV.5) — "So also says the Verse" from the Prashna (1.10) — and "Seeing this the Rishi said . . ." from the Brihadaranayaka (II.5.18).

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

4. Editor's Note: Even fifty-two years after this was penned, the well-known American archaeologist, George F. Dales, familiar with excavations in the Indus Valley, could write in the *Scientific American* (May 1966, p. 95) about the supposed Aryan invaders: "They have not yet been identified archaeologically."

5. *Indian Philosophy* (Indian Edition, 1941), p. 144.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*, p. 149.

8. *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads* (Ganesh & Co., Madras, 1966), p. 110.

9. *Ibid.*

A fact even more directly significant is the clear Upanishadic echoes of Rig-vedic religious figures. Thus the Isha has an appeal to Surya, the Sun, as a god of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest Truth. Sri Aurobindo¹⁰ points out: “This, too, is his function in the sacred Vedic formula of the Gayatri which was for thousands of years repeated by every Brahmin in his daily meditation; and we may note that this formula is a verse from the Rig-veda, from a hymn of the Rishi Vishwamitra” (III.62.10) — and in it “the Sun in its highest light . . . is called upon . . . to impel our thoughts”.¹¹ Actually, as Sri Aurobindo¹² has shown, the very verses of the Isha about Surya are a recasting of an invocation in the Rig-Veda. The Isha (15-16) cries: “The face of the Truth is covered with a golden lid. O Pushan, that remove for the vision of the law of the Truth. O Pushan (Fosterer), Seer, O Yama, O Sun, O Child of the Father of beings, marshal and gather together thy rays; I see the Light which is that fairest (most auspicious) form of thee; he who is this Purusha, He am I.” Sri Aurobindo asks us to mark how the seer of the Upanishad translates into his own later style, keeping the central symbol of the Sun but without any secrecy in sense, a mystic thought or experience in a passage of the Rig-Veda. “Pushan”, “Kavi”, “Yama”, “Prajapati” are also Rig-vedic names though not present in that passage itself. The earlier formulation (V.62.1) runs: “There is a Truth covered by a Truth, where they unyoke the horses of the Sun; the ten hundreds stood together, there was That One. I saw the best of the bodies of the Gods.” The basic parallelism is unmistakable.

Sri Aurobindo¹³ has taken the trouble to elucidate it. “The golden lid is meant to be the same as the inferior covering truth, *ṛtam*, spoken of in the Vedic verse; the ‘best of the bodies of the Gods’ is equivalent to the ‘fairest form of the Sun’, it is the supreme Light which is other and greater than all outer light; the great formula of the Upanishad, ‘He am I’, corresponds to That One, *tad ekam*, of the Rig-vedic verse; the ‘standing together of the ten hundreds’ (the rays of the Sun, says Sayana, and that is evidently the meaning) is reproduced in the prayer to the Sun ‘marshal and mass his rays’ so that the supreme form may be seen. The Sun in both the passages, as constantly in the Veda and frequently in the Upanishad, is the Godhead of the supreme Truth and Knowledge and his rays are the light emanating from that supreme Truth and Knowledge. It is clear from this instance — and there are others — that the seer of the Upanishad had a truer sense of the meaning of the ancient Veda than the mediaeval ritualistic commentator with his gigantic learning, much truer than the modern and very different mind of the European scholars.”

Unlike the opinions of that commentator and these scholars, Sri Aurobindo’s view of a double plane of esoteric and exoteric is not single-tracked but allows the

10. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 5.

11. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 14.

12. *Ibid.*

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

co-existence of several approaches while stressing one of them. He¹⁴ writes: “The ritual system recognised by Sayana may, in its externalities, stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conceptions, be accepted; but behind them there is always the true and still hidden secret of the Veda, — the secret words, *nīṇyā vacāṃsi*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge.” Indeed, Rishi Vamadeva himself, who in the fourth Mandala (3.16) uses these two vocables, follows up with: *Kāvyaṇi kavaye nivacanā* — “seer-wisdoms that utter their inner meaning to the seer.”¹⁵

The very name given to Vamadeva and his likes — Kavi — which subsequently came to mean any poet but has the connotation of “seer” in the Veda is quite evidently connected with messages from a divine source, for the Rishis are described in the Veda itself as *kavayaḥ satyaśrutāḥ*, “seers and hearers of the Truth”.

Pointers to the esoteric plane are not only in this phrase and in that sentence of Vamadeva’s, but also in what Rishi Dirghatamas has to tell us in the very first Mandala. In I.164.46 we have one of the most spiritual declarations of India: “The Existent is One, but the sages express It variously; they say Indra, Varuna, Mitra, Agni . . .” The same hymn (I.164.39) openly speaks of the Riks as “existing in a supreme ether, imperishable and immutable, in which all the Gods are seated”, and Dirghatamas adds: “one who knows not That, what shall he do with the Rik?” (The answer, of course, is: “He will make the mess which Monchanin, following Renou’s lead, approves and encourages.”)

Thus it is not only in the tenth and final Mandala, which is later in time and is acknowledged to have philosophical contents, that we have direct links with the explicit spirituality of the Upanishadic and post-Upanishadic eras. From the earliest Vedic utterances we get support for Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the oldest Indian book of worship. And in the last Mandala itself (X.71) “the Vedic Word is described as that which is supreme and the topmost height of speech, the best and the most faultless. . . . But all cannot enter into its secret meaning. Those who do not know the inner sense are as men who seeing see not, hearing hear not, only to one here and there the Word desiring him like a beautifully robed wife to a husband lays open her body [X.71.4]. Others unable to drink steadily of the milk of the Word, the Vedic cow, move with it as with one that gives no milk, to him the Word is a tree without flowers or fruits. This is quite clear and precise; it results from it beyond doubt that even then while the Rig-veda was being written the Riks were regarded as having a secret sense which was not open to all.”¹⁶

Sri Aurobindo¹⁷ continues: “The tradition, then, was there and it was prolonged after the Vedic times. Yaska speaks of several schools of interpretation of the Veda.

14. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 6.

15. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 5.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

There was a sacrificial or ritualistic interpretation, the historical or rather mythological explanation, an explanation by the grammarians and etymologists, by the logicians, a spiritual interpretation. Yaska himself declares that there is a triple knowledge and therefore a triple meaning of the Vedic hymns, a sacrificial or ritualistic knowledge [*ādhi-yajñika*], a knowledge of the gods [*ādhi-daivika*] and finally a spiritual knowledge [*ādhyātmika*]; but the last is the true sense and when one gets it the others drop or are cut away. It is this spiritual sense that saves and the rest is outward and subordinate. He says further that ‘the Rishis saw the truth, the true law of things, directly by an inner vision’; afterwards the knowledge and the inner sense of the Veda were almost lost and the Rishis who still knew had to save it by handing it down through initiation to disciples and at a last stage outward and mental means had to be used for finding the sense such as Nirukta and other Vedangas. But even then, he says, ‘the true sense of the Veda can be recovered directly by meditation and tapasya’, those who can use these means need no outward aids for this knowledge. This also is sufficiently clear and positive.”

Modern scholarship, which dates the Rig-Veda to c. 1500 B.C., computes that Yaska compiled his *Nirukta* in the period c. 700-400 B.C. His status as an authority is therefore fairly ancient even by the rather over-short modern chronology. Nor is it Yaska alone who has pressed the adhyatmic view. In the 13th century A.D., a hundred years before Sayana, Anandatirtha, more popularly known as Madhwacharya, wrote in a spiritual vein on the first 40 hymns.¹⁸ Sayana himself yields evidence of a spiritual, philosophical or psychological interpretation. “He mentions, for instance, but not to admit it, an old interpretation of Vritra as the Coverer who holds back from man the objects of his desire and his aspirations. For Sayana Vritra is either simply the enemy or the physical cloud-demon who holds back the waters and has to be pierced by the Rain-giver.”¹⁹ After Sayana we have Raghavendra Swami amplifying Madhwacharya and even quoting an ancient Puranic text which declares the Vedas to have three meanings — *trayorthāh sarvavedasu*.²⁰ In our own times Swami Dayananda, founder of the Arya Samaj, made a remarkable attempt to re-establish the Veda as a living religious scripture.

So Sri Aurobindo’s vision of the Veda cannot be looked askance at as quite unnatural or quite new-fangled. It differs from the earliest ones, which are affined to it in principle, by its thoroughness, its flexibility and its insight. He has used penetrative scholarship of the highest order as well as the “meditation and tapasya” recommended by Yaska to reach it.

And it is not only a number of learned commentators who have anticipated Sri Aurobindo in their own inadequate ways. He²¹ has noted about the hymns: “In the

18. *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads*, p. 27.

19. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 19.

20. *Mystic Approach to the Veda and the Upanishads*, pp. 27-28.

21. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 3.

fixed tradition of thousands of years they have been revered as the origin and standard of all that can be held as authoritative and true in Brahmana and Upanishad, in Tantra and Purana, in the doctrines of great philosophical schools and in the teachings of famous saints and sages. The name borne by them was Veda, the knowledge, — the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable.”

Then Sri Aurobindo²² notes a supreme irony: “But if we accept the current interpretations, whether Sayana’s or the modern theory, the whole of this sublime and sacred reputation is a colossal fiction. The hymns are, on the contrary, nothing more than the naïve superstitious fancies of untaught and materialistic barbarians concerned only with the most external gains and enjoyments and ignorant of all but the most elementary moral notions or religious aspirations.”

Surely here is a strange state of affairs but the Veda itself must bear the responsibility for it. And Sri Aurobindo does not ignore whatever lends itself to gross interpretations: references to food, wine, gold, children, servants, cows, horses, travel, forts, enemies, war, plunder on the one hand, and night, dawn, fire, water, rivers, hills, forests on the other. By his double outlook — esoteric and exoteric — he does full justice to the paradox that is the Veda. He is also aware that,²³ even in the past, side by side with the extreme veneration accorded to this manual of Mantras a censorious eye was turned upon it by mystics for its earthy-seeming concerns. Not only the Upanishads but the Gita too criticises the champions of Vedism, saying²⁴ that all their flowery teachings were devoted solely to material wealth, power and enjoyment. Yet, with apparent inconsistency, the Gita,²⁵ like the Upanishads, does not hesitate to regard the Veda always as divine knowledge. Nothing except Sri Aurobindo’s double outlook can have validity. Those who deny the esotericism fly in the face of all indications in its favour and, when despite Sri Aurobindo’s masterly treatment of these clues they cling to their pet prejudices, one despairs of academic qualifications.

Sri Aurobindo has no difficulty in demonstrating that in some cases of reference to external objects the Veda has dropped definite hints of their symbolic usage. “Cows” occurs very frequently. There is no doubt that the Vedic word *gau* means both “cow” and “ray” (or “light”). In the Vedic hymns to the Dawn “Sayana himself is obliged . . . to interpret the word sometimes as cows, sometimes as rays, — careless, as usual of consistency . . .”²⁶ Sri Aurobindo adds that twice the Veda removes the veil of the image entirely. In the one instance a synonym for “rays” is used and the word “*gau*” comes in as a simile, indicating the true Vedic content of this word: *prati bhadraṁ adṛkṣata gavāṁ sargā na raśmayah* (IV.52.5) — “her happy

22. *Ibid.*

23. *Ibid.*, p. 20.

24. Gita, II. 42.

25. Gita, XV. 15.

26. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 119.

rays come into sight like the cows released into movement”.²⁷ Still more conclusive is the verse: *saṁ te gāvas tama ā vartayanti, jyotir yacchanti* (VII.79.2) — “Thy cows (rays) remove the darkness and extend the light”.²⁸ Similarly, the Veda discloses the true sense of *ghṛta* meaning ghee or clarified butter. This word can also mean light, from the root *ghṛi* to shine. In a Vedic expression like *dhiyaṁ ghṛtācīm* the thought is compared to pure clarified butter and we can only speak of “luminous thought”,²⁹ just as *ghṛtapruṣā manasā*, “a mind pouring ghee”, has to be translated a “mind pouring the light”.³⁰ Again, when the Rishi asks Agni (Fire-God) to “hearken to the anthem our thoughts strain out pure to the godhead like pure clarified butter” (VI.10.2), we have in the comparison the clue to the symbol of *ghṛta* in the sacrifice.³¹ *Ghṛta* is “the light-offering”, the labour of the clarity of an enlightened or illumined mind.

Perhaps the easiest way to rout Renou and his tribe of modern expositors, on whom Monchanin leans so confidently, is to employ the argument Sri Aurobindo brings to bear on the nature of the Panis, a certain type of enemy of the aspirants to Aryanism, the cult of Light. The general term for the enemies of Aryanism is Dasa-Dasyu and, as not only Sri Aurobindo but even Western authorities like A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith³² inform us, the Panis are also designated as Dasas and Dasyus in some passages. Hence what Sri Aurobindo says in connection with the Panis must hold throughout the Rig-Veda, and Sri Aurobindo himself intends it to hold when he³³ writes apropos of the Panis: “It is either an uncritical or a disingenuous method to take isolated passages and give them a particular sense which will do well enough there only while ignoring the numerous other passages in which that sense is patently inapplicable.” The situation which arises when we take as a whole all the references in the Veda to the Dasa-Dasyus and adopt the conclusion which issues from all the passages thus taken together — the total situation may be formulated with indications from Western scholarship itself. Macdonell and Keith³⁴ state: “Dasyu, a word of somewhat doubtful origin, is in many passages of the Rig-veda clearly applied to superhuman enemies . . . Dasa, like Dasyu, sometimes denotes enemies of a demoniac character in the Rig-veda.” About the Panis the same savants³⁵ say: “In some passages the Panis definitely appear as mythological figures, demons who withhold the cows or waters of heaven.” With this fact established from non-

27. *Ibid.*, p. 121.

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, SABCL, Vol. 11, p. 12.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*, p. 264.

32. *The Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* (London, 1912), I, pp. 471, 472.

33. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, pp. 215-16.

34. *Op. cit.*, I, pp. 347, 356.

35. *Ibid.*, I, pp. 471, 472.

Aurobindonian expositors about the anti-Aryans, we may quote Sri Aurobindo³⁶ on what the Panis must turn out to be throughout the Veda in consequence of the comprehensive method he has proposed:

“When we follow this method we find that in many of these passages the idea of the Panis as human beings is absolutely impossible and that they are powers either of physical or of spiritual darkness; in others that they cannot at all be powers of physical darkness, but may well be either human enemies of the god-seekers and sacrificers or else enemies of the spiritual Light; in yet others that they cannot be either human enemies or enemies of the physical Light, but are certainly the enemies of the spiritual Light, the Truth and the Thought. From these data there can be only one conclusion, that they are always and only enemies of the spiritual Light.”

Perhaps sympathisers with Monchanin’s stricture on the Aurobindonian attitude may try to make a dent in the latter by asking: “Are there not any passages where the Dasa-Dasyus are definitely something else than demons?” — and then by citing Macdonell and Keith’s³⁷ opinion about their being human: “this may be regarded as certain in those passages where the Dasyu is opposed to the Aryan, who defeats him with the aid of the gods.” But surely if a Dasyu or Dasa is a demon-enemy, he is hostile both to the gods and to the Aryan who worships the gods and is favoured by them: it can make little difference to the enemy’s essential character whether the gods fight him directly in the inner occult world or through the aid they give to the soul of the worshipper fighting him there.

No, Sri Aurobindo’s case is unassailable. And we may well conclude with him:³⁸ “The whole Rig-veda is a triumph-chant of the powers of Light, and their ascent by the force and vision of the Truth to its possession in its source and seat where it is free from the attack of the falsehood.”

(1974)

AMAL KIRAN
(K. D. SETHNA)

(Reprinted from *The Vision and Work of Sri Aurobindo*, 1992 Ed., pp. 198-207.)

36. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 216.

37. *Op. cit.*, I, p. 347.

38. *The Secret of the Veda*, SABCL, Vol. 10, p. 223.

SRI AUROBINDO: LIFE AND TIMES OF THE MAHAYOGI

(Continued from the issue of July 2015)

Chapter: XLV

Inside and Outside the Prison (1)

In the beginning I sought to recognise in Sri Aurobindo the Vedic Agni in its dual aspect — the blazing force of Rudra and the serene force of the Brahmic consciousness, radiant with supernal knowledge. When he started his work in the heaving politics of Bengal, it was the blazing, fiery aspect of Rudra that stood out in front. But those who associated with him in the National College saw his serene figure, glowing with a mellow lustre. These two aspects were fused into one in Sri Aurobindo as in the third eye of Shiva.

Swami Pratyagatmananda¹

While the accused were obliged to shuttle between the prison and the court, the world outside was hot with reactions to the surprising incidents: the attempt on Kingsford's life, the discovery of the Maniktolla centre of youths eager to do and die, the rounding up of a number of people including a veteran aged scholar and, last but not the least, the arrest of Sri Aurobindo. Let us look at a few sample reactions as reflected in the Press. Our focus unfortunately is limited to the English language journals whereas the more authentic public sentiments were no doubt aired by newspapers in different native languages. ("Anglo-Indian" press or opinion then denoted newspapers controlled by the British, not what the term meant subsequently.)

Wrote *The Bengalee*:

There are two sets of opinions which have gathered round the bomb outrage incident, contending for mastery. There is the body of Anglo-Indian opinion of which the *Pioneer* and the *Englishman* are exponents. In better days the *Statesman* assumed an attitude of healthy neutrality, taking up no sides. . . . Unfortunately those days are past and gone; and the *Statesman* today is as keen in its support of Anglo-Indian opinion as the most rabid of Anglo-Indian newspapers. Opposed to the Anglo-Indian journals are the organs of the educated community throughout India. The Anglo-Indian newspapers will not be satisfied with the punishment of the offenders. They want repressive

measures — they want modification of the existing law, so that the hands of the Executive Government may be further strengthened. The Indian section of the Press, on the other hand, is of opinion that the present law is amply sufficient for all purpose.²

The Gujarati quoted an Anglo-Indian newspaper, *The Asian*, which wrote, what may appear childish today but echoed the sentiments of the average Englishman in India of the day:

“Bengal should be treated and governed with the utmost harshness and vigour by a ruler who is not afraid to put his heel down and — keep it there. . . . Mr. Kingsford has a great opportunity and we hope he is a fairly decent shot at short range. We recommend to his notice a Mauser pistol with the nick filed off the nose of the bullets or a Colt’s Automatic which carries a heavy soft bullet and is a hard hitting and punishing weapon. We hope Mr. Kingsford will manage to secure a big ‘bag’ and we envy him his opportunity. He will be more than justified in letting day-light into every strange native approaching his house or his person, and for his own sake we trust he will learn to shoot fairly straight without taking his weapon out of his coat pocket. . . . We wish the one man who has shown that he has a correct view of the necessities of the situation the very best of luck!”³

In the same issue, *The Gujarati* cited an Englishman’s letter published in another Anglo-Indian newspaper, *The Englishman*:

“I submit that powers should be given to the authorities to suppress these agitators by the most ready and simple methods; and were a few of these worthy agitators flogged in public by the town sweepers and their presses confiscated, much of the glamour of the righteousness of their agitation for the people would be destroyed and their dupes would see them as they are, and not in the kaleidoscopic light which they endeavour to attract to themselves.”⁴

The Bengalee wrote:

Of the same type as *The Asian* and its backers in Calcutta is the *Madras Times*, whose Calcutta correspondent had the goodness to telegraph a few days after the Mozefferpore outrage: — “The injuries received in the outrage are too ghastly and painful to describe. If detailed, the narration would produce a feeling of universal horror and angry clamour for lynch law, and would stir every European to some emphatic and active protest, as the feeling of revulsion would be too strong to suppress.” Thereupon the *Madras Times* discoursed

editorially on the “tiger qualities” of the (British) race, and amiable things of that sort! Our only object in referring to these silly effusions is to warn the Government that they should not hesitate to let it be known how they view (such) conduct, so unworthy of Englishmen in a situation of some gravity. It is no answer to say that there are writers in the “native” press who write undiluted nonsense similar to that in the *Asian* and the *Madras Times*. The difference is this: the writers in the “native” press get punished, whereas the superior gentlemen who spout venom in the Anglo-Indian Press are unscathed. The leaders of the “native” community are expected and, indeed, peremptorily called upon to express their abhorrence of undesirable writings in the “native” press; but apparently there is no corresponding obligation upon the leaders of the European community to do likewise as regards similar writings in the Anglo-Indian Press. There is another important difference. These spouters of venom — these inciters to racial feeling — expressly declare that they are voicing the feelings of the entire non-official European community when they say that Indians should be lynched or shot indiscriminately. Their confreres in the “native” press do not profess to speak on behalf of their community. . . . We think it is time that Government taught a lesson to these gentlemen, who prostitute their position for the purpose of stirring up civil strife by deliberately fomenting racial hatred. It would be a reproach to Government if they fail to mark their disapproval of these incitements to racial passion habitually indulged in by Anglo-Indian papers of the gutter press variety.⁵

An extract from the editorial article of an important journal of the time, the *Modern Review*:

In Western countries political assassinations are not condemned by even thoughtful and respectable people as they ought to be. Their perpetrators are looked upon as heroes, and, if caught and executed, as martyrs. They are not branded as murderers. This is evident from what Matthew Arnold says in one of his poems from which we extract the following lines: —

“Murder! — but what is murder? When a wretch
For private gain or hatred takes a life,
We call it murder, crush him, brand his name.
But when, for some great public cause, an arm
Is, without love or hate, austere raised
Against a power exempt from common checks,
Dangerous to all, to be thus annull’d —
Ranks any man with murder such an act?
With grievous deeds, perhaps; with murder, not.”

Such approval of political murders cannot be found in Indian literature. Nor is the justification of political assassination rare in English ephemeral literature. For instance, when in 1906 certain persons were assassinated in the villa of M. Stolypin, the Russian premier, the *Pioneer* wrote in its issue of the 29th August, 1906: — “The horror of such crimes is too great for words, and yet it has to be acknowledged, almost, that they are the only methods of fighting left to a people who are at war with despotic rulers able to command great military forces against which it is impossible for the unarmed populace to make a stand.”⁶

While Sri Aurobindo was locked up alone in a cell, the others were detained in larger rooms, accommodating three each and one of the rooms having space enough — of course according to the calculation of the rulers — to house a full dozen. Needless to say, those prisoners could at least find solace in one another in their rooms, a privilege denied to the “ring leader” as the Lt.-Governor Andrew Fraser designated Sri Aurobindo.

Based on the confessions of Barindra Kumar and the group of his confidants, the police were conducting searches in several places such as Hooghly, Jessore, Khulna, Serampore, Malda and Sylhet (as the places were then spelt) and rounding up new suspects. For the practical reason of keeping an eye on the prisoners en masse — and also because they seemed to be a well-behaving cultured lot and not up for any mischief — they were all shifted to what was known as “Old Hazat Ward” consisting of a spacious dormitory and a pair of wing-rooms. This happened on 13 June 1908.

How did the prisoners look upon the change? Let us read a first-hand record left by Upendranath Bandopadhyay:

Our days were passing through a thousand trifles and inanities when suddenly we had a gay flash of luck. The jail authorities passed orders to the effect that we be penned together in one fold. This sent us into a perfect frenzy of joy, and it took us one good hour to sober down to a sense of our real position. The new quarters consisted of three rooms, more or less opening into one another. The one in the middle was large enough, while the wings were made up of two small cabins. Devabrata and Arabinda were allowed the occupation of the two wings, as they were rather serious sort of people. But the central hall became the den of the entire lot of the frivolous youngsters, who began to raise the devil there of all nights . . .

Ullaskar was with us, and he kept things going in a merry whirl that left us not a single moment to grow glum over the impending fate. But the cup was yet to be filled and it was filled when the Police dragged in a new lot to roost in the sanctum of the Alipur jail. It would have been a repetition of the Black Hole Tragedy to put so many of the “anarchists” into three small rooms. So

once again the kind authorities vacated a big ward and accommodated us all there.

To the joy of happy accommodation were added those of another kind. Repeated complaints about the famous Regulation diet induced the Doctor to allow foodstuffs to be brought from outside. Sushil Sen's father would often send us fruits and sweets. The boys of the "Anusilan Samitee" of Calcutta occasionally presented us meat and things necessary for cooking it. Big Brother Hem, who was a master of all arts, would go to the Hospital ward to cook the thing for us. So often we had right royal dishes. Fruits would often come in such large supplies that we could not use them all up, and had to make playthings of them.

The evenings were the most enjoyable of all hours of the day. After nightfall we had a regular musical *soirée*. Hem, Ullas and Devabrata had good voices. But Devabrata was of a grave turn of mind, and would only occasionally be won over to sing. One of his songs I still remember. It was a thing he had himself composed to celebrate an All-India Revolution . . .

For a few seconds we were deluded into the belief that we were free and entirely above all mortal fears. The boys sang popular patriotic songs of the time. They were uncontrollable in their effusions and their energy knew no exhaustion. The most remarkable of the lot was Sachin Sen. He had been once a student of the National College against the better wishes of his parents. But that did not satisfy his inner urge. He gave up studies and joined us. Such spirits were not to be easily let down. His wild ebullience, his songs and oratorical exercises soon became a bit too much even for us, and intolerable for the authorities. The jailor, who was a good soul, was not a little embarrassed by his boisterous charge. He was uncomfortably placed between a long period of service well within sight of a pension and a sense of delicacy in his treatment of us. A fourth wife at an age which might be on the wrong side of fifty and the nightly roaring music of our tuneful boys made life a hell for him. So one morning, he walked up to us and said, "My dear sirs, would you please keep the boys a bit in order? You see I have to sit up all night because of my precious wife, damned mosquitoes, and these musical boys. If this goes on, I clearly see there's no chance of my living a year or so to be pensioned off. Yes, I shall lose the pension." This was a mighty reason for the boys to cry halt. We accordingly rattled out some sage advice to the boys. But they had no stomach for good and profitable things. If they had, would they be smitten by the mischievous intent of fighting for the freedom of India? . . .

A nook had been reserved for Arabinda Babu. He remained engrossed in meditation the whole morning. Even the hell of the noise that the musical boys made did never disturb or affect him. In the afternoons he would pace up and down the room and read the Upanishads or some such works. But he could not

escape mixing with us in the evening at least for half an hour or an hour.

A few of us like Kanailal would have their share of sleep just after it had been dark, and get up at about eleven o'clock in the night, when the others had fallen asleep. Then they would rummage the beddings of all for sweets or fruits or biscuits. If the search failed to bring forth anything, they would fall into a fit of disappointment and end their exploits in some practical jokes. Often the boys would awake to find the tail-end of one's piece of cloth tied round the hands of another, or to see the ear of one bound to the leg of another with a piece of cord.

One night I chanced to awake at about 1 A.M., and found Kanai dancing a waltz in an ecstasy of joy with a tin of biscuits he had managed to rifle out of the beddings of somebody. The joyful demonstrations roused Arabinda Babu who was sleeping close by. But Kanai at once pushed some biscuits into his hands. Arabinda Babu buried his face once again in the blankets and gave no hint of a disturbed sleep. The theft remained undetected.

Sundays were the visiting days, and brought us not only additional joy, but also the news of the great outer world, and presents from friends and relations. Occasionally, the joy was crossed by a deep tragic strain. One day, Sachin's father came to see his child, and asked about the kind of food we had. Sachin replied, "Lapsi"; lest the father feel hurt, he added, "But that is delicious!" The father's eyes were moistened. Turning to the jailor, he commented, "My child would spurn even *polau* at home. And now he certifies Lapsi as delicious!" . . .

Once my relatives came on a visit and had with them my own son just a year and half old. I was possessed with a keen longing to take him in my arms once before I could be lost to him forever. But these iron-bars! They stood mocking at us. I felt in my inmost heart the grim soul-crushing nature of the prisons.

As our trial began, we were driven through the streets along the bustling stream of life. The Court itself was teeming with the men of the bar, and a sense of curiosity seemed to have inspired all men and things. But the trial itself was a sort of huge farce. The varied evidence and depositions full of ugly half-truths sent us laughing home. Never did we have a thought of the mighty seriousness of the case on which our lives hung. When the day's trial was done, we were driven home to the jail like a boisterous pack of boys after the school hours. Then in candle-light Ullas would entertain us with the learned discourse by Mr. Birley in his Anglicised Bengali during cross-examination or on the probability of a mouse or a cockroach having chewed up the ends of the Court Inspector's moustache.

We would laugh heartily, without fully realising what a calamity awaited us.⁷

One of the secret motives of the authorities in keeping all the prisoners together was to enable Naren Gossain, son of a Chandan Nagar landlord who had been arrested on the basis of Barindra Kumar's confessions, to mix with the rest. That was because the young man had meanwhile been persuaded to turn Approver. Maybe, he could identify a few more weaklings and recruit them into his fold. But the lad had hardly any capacity to influence anybody. In fact Sri Aurobindo had developed an unpronounced suspicion of Gossain's nature from his fragile will and vainglorious claims. This was when Sri Aurobindo was in solitary confinement and only occasionally saw other prisoners. We read in his *Karakahini* (Tales of Prison Life):

From time to time the police would bring forward witnesses of different kind, colour and shape and enact the farce of an identification parade. On these occasions we would be made to line up, a long row, in front of the office. The prison authorities would mix up those accused on other charges along with us. But this was only in name. There was such obvious disparity between the two types of the accused; on the one hand the sharp, intelligent features of those involved in the bomb conspiracy; on the other hand, the soiled dress and lustreless visage of the average accused. If looking at them one could not make out the difference, that could only mean that one was a big fool, bereft of the lowest human intelligence. The prisoners were not however averse to the identification parade. It brought a kind of variety in prison life and provided a chance to exchange a few words. After our arrest it was during one of the parades that I could first meet my brother, Barindra, though we did not speak at that time. It was Narendranath Gossain who would often stand by my side, so I had a little more exchange with him. Extremely handsome, tall, strong, plump, but the eyes spoke of his evil propensities, nor did his words reveal any signs of intelligence. In this respect he was quite different from the other younger people. On their lips were often expressed high and pure ideas and their speech showed keen intelligence, above all, knowledge and noble selfless aspirations. But though Gossain's words were those of a fool and a light-hearted person, they expressed vigour and boldness. At that time he fully believed that he would be acquitted. He would say: "My father is an expert in litigations; there the police can never beat him. My evidence too will not go against me for it will be proved that the police had got those statements by torturing me." I asked him, "You have sided with the police. Where are your witnesses?" Gossain answered unabashed: "My father has conducted hundreds of such cases; he knows this game very well. There will be no lack of witnesses." Of such stuff are approvers made.⁸

On the 23rd of June Naren Gossain was officially declared an Approver.

By the 24th of June, Bombay was in the grip of commotion. Bal Gangadhar Tilak was arrested for two of his articles, 'The Country's Misfortune' and 'These Remedies are not lasting', in his newspaper the *Kesari* on the incidents in Bengal and the arrests in Kolkata; he was accused of sedition. The trial began in the High Court on the 13th of July and concluded on the 22nd of the same month. Today, its account reads like a veritable mockery of a judicial trial. The Crown (i.e. the Government) appointed a Jury "from the higher class of citizens of Bombay" which consisted of seven Europeans and two Parsees some of whom had little or dubious social standing. (No Gujarati or Maratha or any other kind of Indian qualified to be considered as a member of "higher class"!)

"It was in Mr. Tilak's own interest", declared Mr. Justice Davar who tried the case — a shamelessly used euphemism for what was the Crown's interest.

There was a rare irony in the situation. Mr. Davar of 1908 who sat as the judge and pronounced Tilak guilty and awarded punishment, the severity of which was condemned by several British leaders and the British Press, had been, as Barrister Davar of 1897, Tilak's lawyer. There was no difference in the nature of arguments for bail in the two cases. But Judge Davar countered and contradicted the very arguments with which he had won his client's case in his earlier incarnation as Barrister Davar.

It may be relevant here to visualise a scene away from Bengal to feel the pulse of the time, as well as for the sake of Sri Aurobindo's dear compatriot, although it would divert our attention from our Alipore saga for a while:

Mr. Tilak finished his address to the Jury at about 12.30 noon on the eighth day which also proved the last day of the trial. The address of Mr. Branson, the Advocate General, was conceived in a satirical spirit and at times he indulged in language to which strong objection could have been taken. This address lasted for about four hours, but was apparently hurried up to a close. At about 5 P.M. mysterious movements and consultations began among the Government party, and the Judge declared his intention of finishing the case that very day though they might have to sit till late at night. Mr. Tilak was taken by surprise and it affected him particularly in this way that he could not hold the consultation with his friends and relations which he had intended to hold that evening and the next morning, in view of the eventuality of his conviction. The net was somewhat surreptitiously woven round his life in the closing vesper hours of that memorable day. After the close of Mr. Branson's speech the Judge delivered a strongly adverse charge. The Jury retired at 8.30 P.M. and returned at 9.20 P.M. On all the three charges they, by a majority of seven to two, found Mr. Tilak guilty, and the Judge, accepting the verdict, sentenced Mr. Tilak to six years' transportation and a fine of one thousand rupees, but not before he

addressed him with bitter words of reproach which Mr. Tilak had a right to regard as only insult added to injury. Mr. Tilak, however, had an occasion to tell the Judge as well as the public what he thought about it all; and when asked whether he had anything to say he uttered in a solemn and piercing tone the following words from the dock: —

“All I wish to say is that in spite of the verdict of the Jury I maintain that I am innocent. There are higher Powers that rule the destiny of things and it may be the will of Providence that the cause which I represent may prosper more by my suffering than by my remaining free.”

For the couple of hours since the Jury retired to consider their verdict the big Court room was possessed by a solemnity of feeling which was marked on every face. The dim gas-light in the hall only added to the effect of the dead silence on the part of the spectators who were looking from the Judge to Mr. Tilak and from Mr. Tilak to the Judge. The whole thing over, Mr. Justice Davar rose at 10 P.M. and all rose with him; and Mr. Tilak was spirited away in the twinkling of an eye.

It was not till about 7 P.M. that evening that the news about the Judge's determination to finish the case that night leaked from the High Court, which was kept specially guarded in all directions. And yet within a couple of hours thousands of people gathered at the entrances to the High Court and were anxiously waiting to know the result of the trial. Heavy showers of rain were at intervals falling, and the dim light in the streets, combined with the murky weather, spread a pall of gloom which could not but affect the minds at least of those who were absorbed in imagining what must be passing in the Court house to which all access was completely prohibited. At about 10 P.M., the secret was out; there was bustle and commotion all round the High Court buildings; the mounted police were galloping in every direction to disperse the crowds: and the sad news of Mr. Tilak's conviction and sentence was conveyed from soul to soul almost by a process of telepathy. The Police and the Judge thus successfully prevented what might have been a monster demonstration. But the next morning when the news of the doings of the previous night spread like wild fire through the city the people felt aggrieved, as it were, at the smartness of the authorities and they commenced demonstrations with a vengeance. The effect of the news of Mr. Tilak's conviction and transportation, especially upon the masses, was something tremendous. The great mill-hand population was determined to strike work in honour of Mr. Tilak and by a spontaneous movement the Bazars in several quarters in the city were closed for business. The streets, however, were kept alive by the cries of newspaper boys, for in the course of that half-week, Mr. Tilak's pictures, newspapers

giving accounts about him and leaflets containing songs composed in his honour were sold by tens of thousands. The popular feeling about Mr. Tilak was manifested in a hundred other ways in private and public places in the great metropolitan city.⁹

(To be continued)

MANOJ DAS

References and Notes

1. Rishabhchand: *Sri Aurobindo: His Life Unique*; Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. Swami Pratyagatmananda was an authority on the Tantric lore and an eminent scholar on Indian philosophy. He collaborated with Sir John Woodroffe on his famous works on Tantra. Then known as Pramathanath Mukhopadhyay, he was on the staff of the National College headed by Sri Aurobindo.
2. *The Bengalee*; Kolkata, 10 May 1908.
3. *The Asian* (Anglo-Indian newspaper) quoted in *The Gujarati* of 31 May 1908.
4. *The Englishman* quoted in *The Gujarati* of 31 May 1908.
5. *The Bengalee*; 13 May 1908.
6. *Modern Review*; Calcutta, June 1908. (These reports, along with many more, are reproduced in *Trial of Tilak*, a Government of India publication.)
7. Upendranath Bandopadhyay: *Nirbasiter Atmakatha* (Bengali); National Publishers, Calcutta, read with the author's *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*.
8. Sri Aurobindo: *Karakahini* (Bengali) translated into English by Sisir Kumar Ghose as *Tales of Prison Life*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.
9. *Trial of Tilak*; Publications Division, Government of India.

RHETORIC IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PROSE

(Continued from the issue of July 2015)

Conclusion

We have had a look at the use of some figures of speech by our author in his prose. Many are the figures which have had to be omitted, and sometimes their use has not been explained effectively enough. Yet it is hoped that the reader will have gained, by now, a fair idea of the pithiness and of the richness and the high quality of his prose even from this very limited point of view. There are a few other rhetorical features, though not exactly figures, which had to be omitted because they do not come under any of the groups discussed. These are: accumulation of figures, combination of figures and tropes. We have already come across some of them in preceding articles in this series.

Longinus, in his chapter on accumulation of figures (*On the Sublime*, chapter 20), treats it as synonymous with the combination of different figures. For our purposes, "accumulation" will mean the use of many figures of speech, one after another, not simultaneously. This latter feature will be called a "combination" of figures. Longinus however uses both "accumulation" and "combination" to mean the same thing, while a distinction is being made here.

The introductory chapter of *The Future Poetry* contains a truly fine example of accumulation of figures. The author is talking about the cultural aspect of India:

... it has been a patch of tilled fields round a lawyer's office and a Government cutcherry, a cross between a little district town and the most rural of villages, at its largest a dried-up bank far away from the great stream of the world's living thought and action, visited with no great force by occasional and belated waves, but for the rest a bare field for sluggish activities . . .¹

The sentence is by no means complete. The first part of it has been omitted as well as the last part. Only the part containing the figures crowding upon each other has been quoted. As such we have no less than four metaphors in quick succession. The metaphors have been accumulated to produce a rich sentence.

Now for combination of figures. This occurs when more than one figure of speech are used simultaneously. Longinus has a very good sentence about this feature:

1. *The Future Poetry* (1953 ed.), p. 3.

A combination of figures for a common purpose usually has a very moving effect — when two or three unite in a kind of partnership to add force, persuasiveness and beauty.²

This occurs many times in our author as has been pointed out previously in our discussion. Let us take the by now familiar example of the divine horse Pegasus:

... it is nothing more than an effective jog-trot of Pegasus, a pleasing canter or a showy gallop.³

This sentence contains, at one and the same time, several figures of speech. There is, first of all, the mythical allusion to Pegasus, then the group of three phrases, “effective jog-trot”, “a pleasing canter”, “a showy gallop” which is a tricolon in particular or isocolon in general, and then there is, of course, the climax — rising from a jog-trot to a gallop. This combination does indeed, to quote Longinus, “add force, persuasiveness and beauty.”

Trope is a figure that has been deliberately avoided till now. This is because it is not applied to just one figure of speech but to several. It means an elaborate use of a word in a slightly different sense from its ordinary meaning. Quintilian defines it as:

The artistic alteration of a word or phrase from its proper meaning to another.⁴

This is far too general a definition and can be applied to many figures of speech. For example, all the figures based on resemblance, difference, indirection, imagination and association and sound can be called tropes. In the eighteenth century, for example, similes, metaphors, personifications and hyperboles all used to be called tropes quite indiscriminately. It would have merely confused the reader had this term been introduced earlier in these pages.

Now that we have come to the end of a long journey, I can do no better than quote Quintilian:

There is no more effective method of exciting the emotions than an apt use of figures.⁵

Let the reader not think, however, that we have made a thorough study of our author's prose. We have not discussed, (a) the poetic quality of his prose (b) his art of sentence-construction (c) his art of paragraph construction. Only a very limited aspect of his prose has been studied here. There are many more treasures waiting to be discovered by the diligent reader.

(Concluded)

RATRI RAY

2. T. S. Dorsch, transl., *Classical Literary Criticism*, Penguin, 1965, p. 129.

3. *The Future Poetry* (1953 ed.), pp. 26-27.

4. *Institutes of Oratory*, p. 301.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

AMID THE LEAVES THE INMATE VOICES CALLED

(Continued from the issue of July 2015)

19. Poetry as Satire

Away, away, the muses of romance in Shakespeare, the sublime epic creations of Milton and the attempts to imprison into English verse those transcendent spaces of reality that defy the perception of the mortal! With Dryden and Pope we enter branches we can hold on to and laugh no end at the folly of man. We have poetry here, of course. Dramas too. Even epics. But all with a difference from what we have known so far. So the English language can be made to act as sharp as the rapier thrusts of the day!

John Dryden (1631-1700) gave his name to his Age. An Aurobindonian feels naturally drawn to him for Dryden was also a student of Trinity College, Cambridge. He topped his B.A. class in 1654. He began as a Puritan and gained employment in Oliver Cromwell's administration. He even published a poem, *Heroic Stanzas* to observe the passing of the Lord Protector in 1658. It is a fulsome panegyric:

How shall I then begin, or where conclude,
To draw a fame so truly circular?
For in a round what order can be showed,
Where all the parts so equal perfect are?

But then, the days of the Protectorate were soon over. With the return of Charles II to the throne, Dryden easily glided into the Restoration ethos, something that does not surprise an Indian. Party-hopping is an everyday affair in our democracy! Dryden celebrated the new dispensation with an effusive poem, *Astraea Redux*. The 'saviours' of yesterday are described as the 'rabble' of today and Charles gets an 'all-hail' welcome from Dryden:

Oh happy Prince whom Heaven hath taught the way
By paying Vows to have more Vows to pay!
Oh Happy Age! Oh times like those alone,
By Fate reserved for great *Augustus* throne!
When the joint growth of Arms and Arts foreshow
The World a Monarch, and that Monarch *You*.

Dryden did not look back from then onwards. While he pleased the powers-that-be with his panegyrics, he was also quite successful as a dramatist writing comedies and tragedies, and he remains the master of heroic tragedy with triumphs like *The Indian Empress* and *The Conquest of Granada*. *All for Love* is a notable retelling of the legend of Antony and Cleopatra. It has a lengthy preface and the opening is typically rasping, the style of Dryden, an unflattering message to critics:

What flocks of critics hover here to-day,
As vultures wait on armies for their prey,
All gaping for the carcase of a play!
With croaking notes they bode some dire event,
And follow dying poets by the scent.

He agrees that his hero Antony is not going to be heroic, but there are compensations:

He's somewhat lewd; but a well-meaning mind;
Weeps much; fights little; but is wond'rous kind.
In short, a pattern, and companion fit,
For all the keeping Tonies of the pit.
I could name more: a wife, and mistress too;
Both (to be plain) too good for most of you:
The wife well-natured, and the mistress true.

So we are now quite, quite away, from the Shakespearian moment. However *All for Love* does not disappoint us even today. Sri Aurobindo's deep interest in dramatic poesy would have made Dryden a part of his reading curriculum. When we read his dramas and poetry including *Savitri*, we know that a heavy reading schedule is at the back of such creative endeavour. In Dryden's play there are no phrases like the Shakespearian "immortal longings" as Cleopatra allows the poisonous aspic to bite her, but there is a rare dignity in her farewell:

Already, death, I feel thee in my veins:
I go with such a will to find my lord,
That we shall quickly meet.
A heavy numbness creeps through every limb,
And now 'tis at my head: My eyelids fall,
And my dear love is vanquished in a mist.
Where shall I find him, where? O turn me to him,
And lay me on his breast! — Caesar, thy worst;
Now part us, if thou canst.

However, today we go to Dryden for his brilliant satires like *Mac Flecknoe*, *The Medal* and *Absalom and Achitophel*. Sri Aurobindo found much to admire in the crisp wit and rasping satire of Dryden. Of course, it was a falling off after the brilliances of Shakespeare and sublimity of Milton. When tracing the course of English poetry, Sri Aurobindo says with effective bluntness:

Much greater, initial and essential was the defect in the poetry that followed this strong beginning. Here all is unredeemed intellectuality and even the very first elements of the genuine poetic inspiration are for the most part, one might almost say, entirely absent. Pope and Dryden and their school, except now and then and as if by accident, — Dryden especially has lines sometimes in which he suddenly rises above his method, — are busy only with one aim, with thinking in verse, thinking with a clear force, energy and point or with a certain rhetorical pomp and effectiveness, in a well-turned and well-polished metrical system. That seems to have been their sole idea of “numbers”, of poetry, and it is an idea of unexampled poverty and falsity.¹

“Dryden especially has lines sometimes in which he suddenly rises above his method . . .” Indeed, Sri Aurobindo’s search for Mantra takes him to the sound of the word and he finds that as far as poetic competence is concerned, Dryden is quite good. Taking up two lines from Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*,

Whatever he did was done with so much ease,
In him alone ’twas natural to please,

he says that though this is perhaps no more than an abrupt assertion in prose, it is poetical, “by a certain life and vividness and a rhythmic suggestion touching though not deeply some emotional centre of response just sufficient to make it a thought felt and not merely presented to the conception . . .”² For us, this is inspiration enough to enter the world of Dryden’s satire.

Mac Flecknoe is a satirical portrayal of the English poet and dramatist, Thomas Shadwell, Byron’s contemporary. Both had been friends but were later separated by their political convictions. Shadwell was for the Protestants and was angry about the way the Protestants had been portrayed in Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*. So he wrote *The Medal of John Bayes*. The poem did not bring Shadwell any glory but it made him immortal as the poem caused Dryden to come up with his *Mac Flecknoe*. It is this poem we remember, the portrait of Shadwell as Mac and the channelising of the sublime heroic couplet as an effective tool for lampooning

1. *The Future Poetry*, CWSA, Vol. 26, p. 96.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

pompous personalities. Papa Shadwell is going to make Mac his successor and lists the reasons for his choice, lines I have enjoyed since my College days, for have I not seen it happen in the succession stories of political appointments in Independent India?

Shadwell alone, of all my sons, is he
 Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
 The rest to some faint meaning make pretence,
 But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
 Some beams of wit on other souls may fall,
 Strike through and make a lucid interval;
 But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
 His rising fogs prevail upon the day:
 Besides his goodly fabric fills the eye,
 And seems designed for thoughtless majesty:
 Thoughtless as monarch oaks, that shade the plain,
 And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.

One cannot easily forget the twittery laugh in the classroom and the firm lessons on iambic pentameter used in the heroic couplets, with the Professor counting the syllables as if he were playing an invisible lyre. It is a short poem of 217 lines and contains plenty of examples to understand what mock-heroic poetry is and also, how one can use similes for high effect in heroic poetry and use the same for bringing out the stupidities of the subject. This poem was but a brief introduction to the classic, *Absalom and Achitophel*.

The provocation for *Absalom and Achitophel* was the anti-Catholic frenzy which gripped the Kingdoms of England and Scotland because of the discovery of the Popish Plot. It turned out to be a concoction of Titus Oates, a liar. However, there was harm done, plenty of political confusion and mutual mud-slinging, till Oates was found out. Dryden chose the Biblical tale of Absalom's revolt against his father, David. David represents Charles II, the disgruntled Jews are the Whigs who are trying to make the most of the confusion and crown David's illegitimate son, Absalom. Absalom here is the Duke of Monmouth who was an illegitimate son of King Charles II. Achitophel is the Earl of Shaftesbury who led the Whigs in the anti-Catholic tirade. One of the other characters targeted by Dryden is the unscrupulous Corah (Titus Oates). With this "Who's Who" in hand we listened as carefully as we could, with the examination in mind.

But Sri Aurobindo would have read this poem and other works by Dryden with a critical acumen that would have instantly revealed to him the triumphs of the poet's pen in clear terms. He sees through Dryden's mundane satire and intellectual gymnastics the truly poetic turns giving us full satisfaction. Poets of this age are not

to be dismissed as mere manipulators of language. Sri Aurobindo says in *The Future Poetry*:

Moreover some work was done especially by Dryden which even on the higher levels of poetry can challenge comparison with the work of the Elizabethans and the greater poets of later times. Even the satire of Pope and Dryden rises sometimes into a high poetic value beyond the level they normally reached and they have some great outbursts which have the power not only to please or delight by their force and incisiveness or their weight of thought or their powerful presentation of life, but to move to emotion, as great poetry moves us. It is not necessary here to say more in vindication of the excelling work of these writers; their fame abides and no belittling can successfully depreciate their work or discount its excellence.³

Such were the inputs to Sri Aurobindo's English style which could handle any emotion with quiet enthusiasm. *Absalom and Achitophel* begins with Dryden's brief address to the reader. He is sure about his poetic talents and the poem's reception even from his enemies. "Yet if a poem have a genius, it will force its own reception in the world; for there is a sweetness in good verse, which tickles even while it hurts; and no man can be heartily angry with him who pleases him against his will." After all, it must be remembered that satire is a bitter pill given to a sick man to cure him of his illness, concludes the acerbic author:

The true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction. And he who writes honestly is no more an enemy to the offender than the physician to the patient, when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease; for those are only in order to prevent the surgeon's work of an *Ense rescindendum*, which I wish not to my very enemies. To conclude all; if the body politic have any analogy to the natural, in my weak judgment, an act of oblivion were as necessary in a hot distempered state as an opiate would be in a raging fever.

As I write this essay, the book I used for my classes in the 'fifties is with me, though in tatters. Dear to me still, because of the points jotted down on the pages as we progressed with the poem, as also the meanings for 'difficult' and strange words like 'chirurgion' (surgeon). The poem begins with a flourish paying left-handed compliments to the Jews. Within thirty lines we get the passage that charmed Sri Aurobindo:

3. *Ibid.*, p. 99.

In peace the thoughts of war he could remove
 And seemed as he were only born for love.
 Whatever he did was done with so much ease,
 In him alone 'twas natural to please;
 His motions all accompanied with grace,
 And Paradise was opened in his face.

This is a picture of Monmouth. Dryden walks carefully when touching upon Monmouth's faults, lest he offend his father, the King. The portrait of Achitophel is brilliant:

Of these the false Achitophel was first,
 A name to all succeeding ages curst:
 For close designs and crooked counsels fit,
 Sagacious, bold, and turbulent of wit,
 Restless, unfixed in principles and place,
 In power unpleased, impatient of disgrace;
 A fiery soul, which, working out its way,
 Fretted the pigmy body to decay
 And o'er-informed the tenement of clay.

We underlined the lines that could possibly turn up in our examination paper for detailed explanation with reference to context question; and there were many:

Why then should I, encouraging the bad,
 Turn rebel and run popularly mad? . . .

Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong
 Was everything by starts and nothing long

It was great, studying *Absalom and Achitophel*. But greater was the joy when we studied Dryden's younger contemporary, Alexander Pope. History has seen Dryden and Pope always together, and as we have noted already, Sri Aurobindo was no exception. The heroic couplet attained a perfect perfection with Pope.

Alexander Pope (1688-1744) is the satirist whose every other line has become a quotable quote. He was a Catholic and this seems too have affected his education. Nevertheless he equipped himself well at home and a little bit of schooling was enough for him to blossom into an acerbic, think-tank poet. He learnt several languages and read voraciously. Pope found that the prosecution of Catholics was best recorded in terms of biting satire. Soon that became his natural way of expressing himself. Never robust in health, his short height and deformed stature also contributed

to his acerbity in encountering the world outside. All the same, he had many life-long friendships. Among those close to him were Jonathan Swift, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele and John Arbuthnot.

The first poem of Pope to make an impact upon the public was *Pastorals* (1709) which was followed by *An Essay on Criticism* (1711). The latter work is an attempt to answer the nagging question: must one write as the emotion seizes us, or must we follow the rules set down by the ancient classics? Who is to judge?

It is with our Judgments as our Watches, none
Go just alike, yet each believes his own.

A perfect simile, which holds up the mirror to our egoisms! Puncturing the ego is Pope's passion. How many times have I mused on this passage!

Some have at first for Wits, then Poets past,
Turned Critics next, and proved plain Fools at last;
Some neither can for Wits nor Critics pass,
As heavy Mules are neither Horse or Ass.
Those half-learned Witlings, numerous in our Isle,
As half-formed Insects on the Banks of Nile . . .

It is no use writing about this poem, for how can one stop quoting the finest adventures that the heroic couplet ever made in the realm of literature! Pope speaks in favour of the control imposed by classical prosody and calls for wide and deep reading of the classics before venturing out with opinions. An avowed Prohibition worker like me could never find fault with this mischievously perfect simile of Pope:

A little learning is a dangerous Thing;
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian Spring:
There shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,
And drinking largely sobers us again.

My grateful thanks to the syllabus of those days which made me read line by line Pope's mock-epic, *The Rape of the Lock* (1712). The high society today continues to be as fashion-conscious as described by Pope three centuries ago. Obviously, nothing new under the sun! The trivial quarrel between Arabella Fermor and Lord Petre as the latter had snipped a lock of her hair as a memento is now presented as an epic tragedy. Pope's story-line and language keep us in stitches. The poem begins with the authorial statement:

What dire Offence from amorous Causes springs,
 What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things,
 I sing . . .

We had been studying *Paradise Lost* about the same time and the sublime opening of Milton was not lost upon us:

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
 Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
 Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
 With loss of Eden, till one greater man
 Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
 Sing heavenly muse . . .

We did squirm when the heroine's dressing table came to view:

The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
 Transformed to Combs, the speckled and the white.
 Here Files of Pins extend their shining Rows,
 Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
 Now awful Beauty puts on all its Arms;
 The Fair each moment rises in her Charms,
 Repairs her Smiles, awakens every Grace . . .

There could be no better educative teacher for the English language than Pope's *Dunciad*. Writers past and present walk its pathways and no self-proclaimed genius is spared. Celebrating chaos, night and dullness, these poetasters get away with any writing, we are told. Not one line is free of some caustic remark or other about the writers of his day, and it is no wonder that Pope had to go about in fear for his life after writing this poem.

Finally, Pope's *Essay on Man* (1732) is on a different wavelength and gives us respite for a while. The poet sets aside his mordant pen and goes for some serious thinking. Pleading for a holistic view of the universe as a creation of God, he says that even that which we call evil is but a part of the whole, an inevitable experience the human being goes through as he evolves into the divine, just as he had earlier evolved from the animal species. It is indeed a breath of fresh air, a rationalistic enquiry into the state of mankind.

Oh, blindness to the future! kindly given,
 That each may fill the circle, marked by Heaven:
 Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,

A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,
 Atoms or systems into ruin hurled,
 And now a bubble burst, and now a world.

Of course Pope's philosophy calls for acceptance and reminds us of the Gita, but does not envision the future as Sri Aurobindo. The poem has memorable couplets like:

Hope springs eternal in the human breast:
 Man never is, but always to be blest.

There are also revelatory passages which indicate that Pope's wide reading had taken him to the epics of India. We can be happy with this passage and also remember Yudhishthira reaching heaven with his faithful dog in the Mahaprasthanika Parva:

Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutored mind
 Sees God in clouds, or hears Him in the wind;
 His soul, proud science never taught to stray
 Far as the solar walk, or milky way;
 Yet simple Nature to his hope has given,
 Behind the cloud-topped hill, an humbler heaven;
 Some safer world in depth of woods embraced,
 Some happier island in the watery waste,
 Where slaves once more their native land behold,
 No fiends torment, no Christians thirst for gold.
 To be, contents his natural desire,
 He asks no angel's wing, no seraph's fire;
 But thinks, admitted to that equal sky,
 His faithful dog shall bear him company.

(To be continued)

PREMA NANDAKUMAR

THE REVEALED VEDA

THE PERFECT SUBSTANCE AND EXPRESSION OF ETERNAL TRUTH

(Continued from the issue of August 2015)

NOTE:

S — *Complete Works of Sri Aurobindo*

M — *Collected Works of the Mother*, 2nd Edition

E — *Evening Talks with Sri Aurobindo* by A. B. Purani, 2000 Edition

W — *White Roses Part II* by Huta

For 'S' and 'M' references, the volume number is followed by the page number.

VEDIC CONTINUITY

Towards a widest and highest spiritualising of life on earth

This great effort and achievement which covered all the time between the Vedic age and the decline of Buddhism, was still not the last possibility of religious evolution open to Indian culture. The Vedic training of the physically-minded man made the development possible. But in its turn this raising of the basis of religion to the inner mind and life and psychic nature, this training and bringing out of the psychic man ought to make possible a still larger development and support a greater spiritual movement as the leading power of life. The first stage makes possible the preparation of the natural external man for spirituality; the second takes up his outward life into a deeper mental and psychical living and brings him more directly into contact with the spirit and divinity within him; the third should render him capable of taking up his whole mental, psychical, physical living into a first beginning at least of a generalised spiritual life. This endeavour has manifested itself in the evolution of Indian spirituality and is the significance of the latest philosophies, the great spiritual movements of the saints and bhaktas and an increasing resort to the various paths of Yoga. But unhappily it synchronised with a decline of Indian culture and an increasing collapse of its general power and knowledge, and in these surroundings it could not bear its natural fruit; but at the same time it has done much to prepare such a possibility in the future. If Indian culture is to survive and keep its spiritual basis and innate character, it is in this direction, and not in a mere revival or prolongation of the Puranic system, that its evolution must turn, rising so towards the fulfilment of that which the Vedic seers saw as the aim of man and his life thousands of years ago and the Vedantic sages cast into the clear and immortal forms of their luminous revelation.

Even the psychic-emotional part of man's nature is not the inmost door to religious feeling, nor is his inner mind the highest witness to spiritual experience. There is behind the first the inmost soul of man, in that deepest secret heart, *hṛdaye guhāyām*, in which the ancient seers saw the very tabernacle of the indwelling Godhead and there is above the second a luminous highest mind directly open to a truth of the Spirit to which man's normal nature has as yet only an occasional and momentary access. Religious evolution, spiritual experience can find their true native road only when they open to these hidden powers and make them their support for a lasting change, a divinisation of human life and nature. An effort of this kind was the very force behind the most luminous and vivid of the later movements of India's vast religious cycle. It is the secret of the most powerful forms of Vaishnavism and Tantra and Yoga. The labour of ascent from our half-animal human nature into the

fresh purity of the spiritual consciousness needed to be followed and supplemented by a descent of the light and force of the spirit into man's members and the attempt to transform human into divine nature.

But it could not find its complete way or its fruit because it synchronised with a decline of the life force in India and a lowering of power and knowledge in her general civilisation and culture. Nevertheless here lies the destined force of her survival and renewal, this is the dynamic meaning of her future. A widest and highest spiritualising of life on earth is the last vision of all that vast and unexampled seeking and experiment in a thousand ways of the soul's outermost and innermost experience which is the unique character of her past; this in the end is the mission for which she was born and the meaning of her existence. (S20: 211-13)

Largest freedom of interpretation

Of these scriptures some like the Gita possessed a common and widespread authority, others were peculiar to sects or schools: some like the Vedas were supposed to have an absolute, others a relative binding force. But the very largest freedom of interpretation was allowed, and this prevented any of these authoritative books from being turned into an instrument of ecclesiastical tyranny or a denial of freedom to the human mind and spirit. (S20: 188-89)

Application to life

But the greatest power of the Vedic teaching, that which made it the source of all later Indian philosophies, religions, systems of Yoga, lay in its application to the inner life of man. Man lives in the physical cosmos subject to death and the "much falsehood" of the mortal existence. To rise beyond this death, to become one of the immortals, he has to turn from the falsehood to the Truth; he has to turn to the Light and to battle with and to conquer the powers of the Darkness. This he does by communion with the divine Powers and their aid; the way to call down this aid was the secret of the Vedic mystics. The symbols of the outer sacrifice are given for this purpose in the manner of the Mysteries all over the world an inner meaning; they represent a calling of the gods into the human being, a connecting sacrifice, an intimate interchange, a mutual aid, a communion. There is a building of the powers of the godheads within man and a formation in him of the universality of the divine nature. For the gods are the guardians and increasers of the Truth, the powers of the Immortal, the sons of the infinite Mother; the way to immortality is the upward way of the gods, the way of the Truth, a journey, an ascent by which there is a growth into the law of the Truth, *ṛtasya panthāḥ*. Man arrives at immortality by breaking beyond the limitations not only of his physical self, but of his mental and his ordinary psychic nature into the highest plane and supreme ether of the Truth: for there is the

foundation of immortality and the native seat of the triple Infinite. On these ideas the Vedic sages built up a profound psychological and psychic discipline which led beyond itself to a highest spirituality and contained the nucleus of later Indian Yoga. Already we find in their seed, though not in their full expansion, the most characteristic ideas of Indian spirituality. There is the one Existence, *ekam sat*, supracosmic beyond the individual and the universe. There is the one God who presents to us the many forms, names, powers, personalities of his Godhead. There is the distinction between the Knowledge and the Ignorance,¹ the greater truth of an immortal life opposed to the much falsehood or mixed truth and falsehood of mortal existence. There is the discipline of an inward growth of man from the physical through the psychic to the spiritual existence. There is the conquest of death, the secret of immortality, the perception of a realisable divinity of the human spirit. In an age to which in the insolence of our external knowledge we are accustomed to look back as the childhood of humanity or at best a period of vigorous barbarism, this was the inspired and intuitive psychic and spiritual teaching by which the ancient human fathers, *pūrve pitaraḥ manuṣyāḥ*, founded a great and profound civilisation in India. (S20: 202-03)

Infinite discovery of the All by Himself

. . . some thinkers have postulated that the creation was the result of an error. But one finds all possible concepts: perfect creation, then a “fault” which introduced error; the creation itself as a lower movement which must have an end since it had a beginning; then the Vedic concept, as Sri Aurobindo has explained it, of an unfolding or a progressive and infinite discovery — indefinite and infinite — of the All by Himself. . . . Naturally, all these are human interpretations. For the moment, as long as you express yourself in human terms, it is a human translation. (M4: 214)

AUM the mystic syllable

This syllable OM, O Satyakama, it is the supreme and it is the lower Brahman. Therefore the man of knowledge passeth by this house of the Brahman to the one or the other. And if one meditate on the single letter, he getteth by it knowledge and soon he attaineth on the earth. And him the Riks lead to the world of men and there perfected in Tapas and Brahmacharya and faith he experienceth the greatness of the spirit. Now if by the double letter he is accomplished in the mind, then is he led up by the Yajus to the middle world, to the moon-world of Soma. He in the world of Soma experienceth the majesty of the spirit and returneth again. And he who by the triple letter again, even

1. *Cittim acittim cinavad vi vidvān*. “Let the knower distinguish the Knowledge and the Ignorance.”

this syllable OM, shall meditate on the highest Purusha, is perfected in the light that is the Sun. As a snake putteth off its skin, even so is he released from sin and evil and is led by the Samans to the world of Brahman. He from this dense of living souls seeth the higher than the highest Purusha who lieth in this mansion. The three letters are afflicted by death, but now they are used undivided and united to each other, then are the inner and the outer and the middle action of the spirit made whole in their perfect using and the spirit knows and is not shaken. This world by the Riks, the middle world by the Yajus and by the Samans that which the seers make known to us. The man of knowledge passeth to Him by OM, his house, even to the supreme spirit that is calm and ageless and fearless and immortal.

The symbols here are still obscure to our intelligence, but indications are given which show beyond doubt that they are representations of a psychical experience leading to different states of spiritual realisation and we can see that these are three, outward, mental and supramental, and as the result of the last a supreme perfection, a complete and integral action of the whole being in the tranquil eternity of the immortal Spirit. And later in the Mandukya Upanishad the other symbols are cast aside and we are admitted to the unveiled significance. Then there emerges a knowledge to which modern thought is returning through its own very different intellectual, rational and scientific method, the knowledge that behind the operations of our outward physical consciousness are working the operations of another, subliminal, — another and yet the same, — of which our waking mind is a surface action, and above — perhaps, we still say — is a spiritual superconscience in which can be found, it may well be, the highest state and the whole secret of our being. We shall see, when we look closely at the passage of the Prasna Upanishad, that this knowledge is already there, and I think we can very rationally conclude that these and similar utterances of the ancient sages, however perplexing their form to the rational mind, cannot be dismissed as a childish mysticism, but are the imaged expression, natural to the mentality of the time, of what the reason itself by its own processes is now showing us to be true and a very profound truth and real reality of knowledge. (S20: 337-38)

An experience of the Mother

(A letter sent by the Mother to Sri Aurobindo)

November 26, 1915

The entire consciousness immersed in divine contemplation, the whole being enjoyed a supreme and vast felicity.

Then was the physical body seized, first in its lower members and next the whole of it, by a sacred trembling which made all personal limits fall away little by little even in the most material sensation. The being grew in greatness progressively, methodically, breaking down every barrier, shattering every obstacle, that it might contain and manifest a force and a power which increased ceaselessly in immensity and intensity. It was as a progressive dilatation of the cells until there was a complete identification with the earth: the body of the awakened consciousness was the terrestrial globe moving harmoniously in ethereal space. And the consciousness knew that its global body was thus moving in the arms of the universal Being, and it gave itself, it abandoned itself to It in an ecstasy of peaceful bliss. Then it felt that its body was absorbed in the body of the universe and one with it; the consciousness became the consciousness of the universe, immobile in its totality, moving infinitely in its internal complexity. The consciousness of the universe sprang towards the Divine in an ardent aspiration, a perfect surrender, and it saw in the splendour of the immaculate Light the radiant Being standing on a many-headed serpent whose body coiled infinitely around the universe. The Being in an eternal gesture of triumph mastered and created at one and the same time the serpent and the universe that issued from him; erect on the serpent he dominated it with all his victorious might, and the same gesture that crushed the hydra enveloping the universe gave it eternal birth. Then the consciousness became this Being and perceived that its form was changing once more; it was absorbed into something which was no longer a form and yet contained all forms, something which, immutable, sees, — the Eye, the Witness. And what It sees, is. Then this last vestige of form disappeared and the consciousness itself was absorbed into the Unutterable, the Ineffable.

The return towards the consciousness of the individual body took place very slowly in a constant and invariable splendour of Light and Power and Felicity and Adoration, by successive gradations, but directly, without passing again through the universal and terrestrial forms. And it was as if the modest corporeal form had become the direct and immediate vesture, without any intermediary, of the supreme and eternal Witness.

(Sri Aurobindo answered on 31-12-1915 as follows:)

The experience you have described is Vedic in the real sense, though not one which would easily be recognised by the modern systems of Yoga which call themselves Vedic. It is the union of the “Earth” of the Veda and Purana with the divine Principle, an earth which is said to be above our earth, that is to say, the physical being and consciousness of which the world and the body are only images. But the modern Yogas hardly recognise the possibility of a material union with the Divine.

(M1: 311-12)

Two opposites that are together

For always there are the two, the two opposites are together. And always the best borders on the worst, or the worst borders on the best (it depends on the side you look from). But it is because of the worst that you can find the best and it is because of the best that you can transform the worst — the two act and react upon each other. . . . That was published in the *Bulletin*: the “Evil Persona”. It is always said that there is a dark double of all the stars and a luminous double of all the planets. In the occult way, it is said that there is a luminous earth. All that is the experience of the luminous earth. Sri Aurobindo has described the experience.

What experience?

It is an experience that I had and I wrote about it to Sri Aurobindo. He answered me saying that it was an experience of Vedic times, an experience that happened in the luminous double of the earth. . . . That will come out somewhere one day.

(M5: 275-76)

Evil Persona

What you say about the “Evil Persona” interests me greatly as it answers to my consistent experience that a person greatly endowed for the work has, always or almost always — perhaps one ought not to make a too rigid universal rule about these things — a being attached to him, sometimes appearing like a part of him, which is just the contradiction of the thing he centrally represents in the work to be done. Or, if it is not there at first, not bound to his personality, a force of this kind enters into his environment as soon as he begins his movement to realise. Its business seems to be to oppose, to create stumblings and wrong conditions, in a word, to set before him the whole problem of the work he has started to do. It would seem as if the problem could not, in the occult economy of things, be solved otherwise than by the predestined instrument making the difficulty his own. That would explain many things that seem very disconcerting on the surface. (S31: 648)

“Crookedness”

There is a certain aspect of creation — which may be a very modern one — it is the need to escape from disorder and confusion, from disharmony and confusion: a confusion, a disorder which takes every possible form, which becomes struggle, useless effort, wastage. It depends on the domain you are in, but in the material world, in action, it means useless complications, waste of energy and material, waste of time, incomprehension, misunderstanding, confusion, disorder. This is what used

to be called *crookedness* in the Vedas — I do not know the equivalent of this word, it is something twisted, which instead of going straight to the mark makes sharp, unnecessary zigzags. This is one of the things that is most opposed to the harmony of a purely divine action which has a simplicity. . . that seems childlike. Direct — direct, instead of making absurd and completely useless circumvolutions. Well, it is obviously the same thing: disorder is a way of stimulating the need for the pure divine simplicity.

The body feels very strongly, very strongly that everything could be simple, so simple! (M10: 166-67)

That which must disappear

In fact, no matter what one wants to realise, one must begin by establishing this perfect and immutable peace; it is the basis from which one must work; but unless one is dreaming of an exclusive, personal and egoistic liberation, one cannot stop there. There is another aspect of the divine grace, the aspect of progress which will be victorious over all obstacles, the aspect which will propel humanity to a new realisation, which will open the doors of a new world and make it possible not only for a chosen few to benefit by the divine realisation but for their influence, their example, their power to bring to the rest of mankind new and better conditions.

This opens up roads of realisation into the future, possibilities which are already foreseen, when an entire part of humanity, the one which has opened consciously or unconsciously to the new forces, is lifted up, as it were, into a higher, more harmonious, more perfect life. . . . Even if individual transformation is not always permissible or possible, there will be a kind of general uplifting, a harmonisation of the whole, which will make it possible for a new order, a new harmony to be established and for the anguish of the present disorder and struggle to disappear and be replaced by an order which will allow a harmonious functioning of the whole.

There will be other consequences which will tend to eliminate in an opposite way what the intervention of the mind in life has created, the perversions, the ugliness, the whole mass of distortions which have increased suffering, misery, moral poverty, an entire area of sordid and repulsive misery which makes a whole part of human life into something so frightful. That must disappear. This is what makes humanity in so many ways infinitely worse than animal life in its simplicity and the natural spontaneity and harmony that it has in spite of everything. Suffering in animals is never so miserable and sordid as it is in an entire section of humanity which has been perverted by the use of a mentality exclusively at the service of egoistic needs.

We must rise above, spring up into Light and Harmony or fall back, down into the simplicity of a healthy unperverted animal life.

[When this talk was first published in 1958, Mother added the following note on the “uplifting” of an entire part of humanity by the action of the new forces:]

But those who cannot be lifted up, those who refuse to progress, will automatically lose the use of the mental consciousness and will fall back to a sub-human level.

I shall tell you about an experience I had which will help you to understand better. It was shortly after the supramental experience of the third of February, and I was still in the state in which things of the physical world seemed so far off, so absurd. A group of visitors had asked permission to come to me and one evening they came to the Playground. They were rich people, that is, they had more money than they needed to live on. Among them there was a woman in a sari; she was very fat, her sari was arranged so as to hide her body. As she was bending down to receive my blessings, one corner of the sari came open, uncovering a part of her body, a naked belly — an enormous one. I felt a real shock. . . . There are corpulent people who have nothing repugnant about them, but I suddenly saw the perversion, the rottenness that this belly concealed, it was like a huge abscess, expressing greed, vice, depraved taste, sordid desire, which finds its satisfaction as no animal would, in grossness and especially in perversity. I saw the perversion of a depraved mind at the service of the lowest appetites. Then, all of a sudden, something sprang up from me, a prayer, like a Veda: “O Lord, this is what must disappear!”

One understands very well that physical misery, the unequal distribution of the goods of this world could be changed, one can imagine economic and social solutions which could remedy this, but it is that misery, the mental misery, the vital perversion, it is that which cannot change, doesn’t want to change. And those who belong to this type of humanity are condemned in advance to disintegration.

That is the meaning of original sin: the perversion which began with the mind.

That part of humanity, of human consciousness, which is capable of uniting with the supermind and liberating itself, will be completely transformed — it is advancing towards a future reality which is not yet expressed in its outer form; the part which is closest to Nature, to animal simplicity, will be reabsorbed into Nature and thoroughly assimilated. But the corrupted part of human consciousness which allows perversion through its misuse of the mind will be abolished.

This type of humanity is part of an unfruitful attempt — which must be eliminated — just as there have been other abortive species which have disappeared in the course of universal history.

Certain prophets in the past have had this apocalyptic vision but, as usual, things were mixed, and they did not have together with their vision of the apocalypse the vision of the supramental world which will come to raise up the part of humanity which consents and to transform this physical world. So, to give hope to those who have been born into it, into this perverted part of human consciousness, they have taught redemption through faith: those who have faith in the sacrifice of the Divine

in Matter will be automatically saved, in another world — by faith alone, without understanding, without intelligence. They have not seen the supramental world nor that the great Sacrifice of the Divine in Matter is the sacrifice of involution which must culminate in the total revelation of the Divine in Matter itself. (M9: 298-301)

The Vedic Age — a promise

“The process of Yoga is a turning of the human soul from the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances . . .”

The Synthesis of Yoga

I did not quite understand “the egoistic state of consciousness absorbed in the outward appearances . . .”

People are occupied with outward things. That means that the consciousness is turned towards external things — that is, all the things of life which one sees, knows, does — instead of being turned inwards in order to find the deeper truth, the divine Presence. This is the first movement. You are busy with all that you do, with the people around you, the things you use; and then with life: sleeping, eating, talking, working a little, having a little fun also; and then beginning over again: sleeping, eating, etc., etc., and then it begins again. And then what this one has said, what that one has done, what one ought to do, the lesson one ought to learn, the exercise one ought to prepare; and then again whether one is keeping well, whether one is feeling fit, etc. This is what one usually thinks about.

So the first movement — and it is not so easy — is to make all that pass to the background, and let one thing come inside and in front of the consciousness as *the* important thing: the discovery of the very purpose of existence and life, to learn what one is, why one lives, and what there is behind all this. This is the first step: to be interested more in the cause and goal than in the manifestation. That is, the first movement is a withdrawal of the consciousness from this total identification with outward and apparent things, and a kind of inward concentration on what one wants to discover, the Truth one wants to discover. This is the first movement.

Many people who are here forget one thing. They want to begin by the end. They think that they are ready to express in their life what they call the supramental Force or Consciousness, and they want to infuse this in their actions, their movements, their daily life. But the trouble is that they don't at all know what the supramental Force or Consciousness is and that first of all it is necessary to take the reverse path, the way of interiorisation and of withdrawal from life, in order to find within oneself this Truth which has to be expressed.

For as long as one has not found it, there is nothing to express. And by imagining that one is living an exceptional life, one lives only in the illusion of one's exceptional

state. Therefore, at first not only must one find one's soul and the Divine who possesses it, but one must identify oneself with it. And then later, one may begin to come back to outward activities, and then transform them; because then one knows in what direction to turn them, into what to transform them.

One can't jump over this stage. One must first find one's soul, this is absolutely indispensable, and identify oneself with it. Later one can come to the transformation. Sri Aurobindo has written somewhere: "Our Yoga begins where the others end." Usually yoga leads precisely to this identification, this union with the Divine — that is why it is called "yoga". And when people reach this, well, they are at the end of their path and are satisfied. But Sri Aurobindo has written: we begin when they finish; you have found the Divine but instead of sitting down in contemplation and waiting for the Divine to take you out of your body which has become useless, on the contrary, with this consciousness you turn to the body and to life and begin the work of transformation — which is very hard labour. It's here that he compares it with cutting one's way through a virgin forest; because as nobody has done it before, one must make one's path where there was none. But to try to do this without having the indispensable directive of the union with the Divine within, within one's soul, is childishness. There.

I am speaking of yoga. I am not speaking of your life, of you all, you children here. That's different. You are here to develop yourselves. And when you are developed and have a precise thought of your own, a vision of your own, when you have enough knowledge to be able to choose freely what life you want to lead, then at that time you will take a decision.

But those who have already taken the decision, well for them it is first of all indispensable to find their soul and unite with their psychic being, and with the Divine who is within it. This is an absolutely indispensable beginning. One can't leap over that bridge; it is not possible. It can be done very quickly if you know how to use the help that's given to you; but it has to be done. . . .

Mother, here Sri Aurobindo says: "... the same problem has to be approached from a new starting-point."

Yes. That's exactly what I have just said. The problem remains the same . . .

The problem . . .

The problem is to find one's soul and unite with the Divine.

But, Mother, was it the same during the Vedic times also?

To find their soul and the Divine? Of course.

But they did not succeed?

No, Sri Aurobindo says that in the Vedic age they tried to bring the spiritual life into the physical life, but he says that the means they employed, the paths they followed at that time are no longer any good now. Just imagine us before an altar making a *puja*! . . . It won't do now, it is not suitable.

Is their goal and ours the same?

I think so.

In any case, there were several ages in the earth's history in which there was given a kind of example, as a promise, of what would be there one day. These were called the golden ages. But certainly there were times in which a more or less complete representation of what had to be was as though lived out. Only it was just a demonstration, an example, which the world was completely unfit to take up as a realisation.

It was only to say: you see, this is how it will be, but not like this in all its details, like this in essence. And I think it did not last very long. In any case the memory of the thing is very limited, very localised and extremely short. There was an intensity, there was a great beauty in the expression, but it was something as though altogether independent of the whole of terrestrial life: an example. . . almost an example which is not to be followed, which cannot be followed, and which was always accompanied by a promise: "It will be like this". . . a promise which has been repeated in very different words, of the New Earth or the Divine World or a New Creation, etc.

And I think it was perhaps at the beginning . . . not exactly the beginning of humanity but the beginning of the conscious evolution of humanity towards a realisation. We said last time that for a very long time humanity was very static and as though undergoing a preparation so slow, so invisible that it has taken perhaps millions of years. But these promises and examples were like starting-points, like the first push given to begin the evolution of the consciousness towards a higher realisation.

I think the Vedic age was the latest. There were others before it, but of a very short duration.

Something over there? A question? . . . Is that all?

. . .

Mother, you said that the Vedic age was like a promise. A promise to whom?

To the Earth and men.

They left a kind of oral document of their experience. It was transmitted — and this was the promise.

They used an imaged language. Some people say that it was because they wanted it to be an initiation which would be understood only by the initiates. But it could also be an absolutely spontaneous expression without a precise aim to veil things, but which could not be understood except by those who had the experience. For it is quite obviously something that is not mental, which came spontaneously — as though it sprang from the heart and the aspiration — which was the completely spontaneous expression of an experience or knowledge, and naturally, an expression which was poetic, which had its own rhythm, its own beauty and could be accessible only to those who had an identical experience. So it was veiled of itself, there was no need to add a veil upon it. It is more than likely that it happened like that.

When one has a true experience which is not the result of a preliminary thought constructing and obtaining the experience by a special effort, when it is a direct and spontaneous experience, an experience that comes from the very intensity of the aspiration, it is spontaneously formulated into words. When it is total and complete enough, it is formulated into words . . . which are not thought out, which are spontaneous, which come out spontaneously from the consciousness. Well, it is more than likely that the Vedas were like that. But only those who have had the experience, had the same state of consciousness, can understand what it means.

There are those sentences which seem absolutely banal and ordinary, in which things seem to be said in an almost childish way and which are written out or heard and then noted down, like that. Well, when read with an ordinary consciousness, they seem sometimes even altogether banal. But if one has the experience, one sees that there is a power of realisation and a truth of expression which give you the key to the experience itself.

But it seems obvious that the modern equivalent, at present, of the Rishi of the olden days . . . even his spontaneous Vedic expression will be very different in its formulation. For the terrestrial development and human development change the conditions of expression. The way of saying of those times and the way of saying today cannot be the same; and yet the experience can be the same experience of something which cannot be thought about but comes as its living expression.

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 involutionary beings?

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

But it is absolutely certain that they were involutionary 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. They lived, besides, quite isolated, if what is reported is correct.

(Silence)

That's all? . . . Nothing more? No?

Mother, will the evolution continue or will it be replaced by involution? That is . . .

Yes, I understand . . . But what I don't understand is the point of your question — whether the process of terrestrial development will continue by an evolution . . .

. . . or whether it will be replaced by an involution.

Yes . . . but there is one thing you forget. That Sri Aurobindo has said that each new species which appeared upon earth was the result of an involution. So there has always been the combination of the two. A double work: a work that goes from below upward, and an answer which comes from above downward.

Mother, isn't the evolution the inherent Divine manifesting himself? Then why is it necessary?

Involution or evolution?

Evolution. That is, for example, there was first the evolution of the animal mind. So it was said that the mind was already . . .

In principle . . .

Hidden, in principle.

In principle, yes. And what prepares it is this: you see, it has been called by all kinds of names: a divine spark, a Presence, etc., which is infused in the darkness of matter in order to start the evolution. But there is something else: there is a descent and

identification of beings, of conscious beings, individualities, in the forms produced by the evolution — and so there is a union which takes place between beings of higher regions and the forms evolved by this divine Presence. And the identification takes place between this immanent godhead and this being which comes down. You see, it is when the psychic being, for instance, identifies itself with a personality of a higher order, a divine emanation, a *vibhuti* who comes to get identified with a psychic being — that is it, this is the thing. But it is not just this one or the other. One does a work of this kind, as I say, a work of development from within outwards; and the other is something which comes down and takes possession of what the first has prepared.

Usually these are individual phenomena. These identifications are individual phenomena. Usually. I don't say that it is impossible for it to be a collective phenomenon; but still, usually they are individual phenomena.

However, it is enough to have the experience and one understands. It becomes very clear.

So, one must not speak, one must act.

There we are. (M7: 349-57)

Have the Vedic rishis taken birth this time?

I don't know of any [*Vedic Rishis*] that have taken birth this time. According to the Puranic stories there must have been many Rishis who were far from being *jitendriya*, *jitakrodha*. But also there are many Yogis who are satisfied with having the inner experience of the Self but allow movements of a rajasic or tamasic nature on the surface, holding that these will fall off with the body. (S29: 417)

Mystics of the ancient type

The Vedic Rishis were mystics of the ancient type who everywhere, in India, Greece, Egypt and elsewhere, held the secret truths and methods of which they were in possession as very sacred and secret things not to be disclosed to the unfit who would misunderstand, misapply, misuse and degrade the knowledge. Their writings were therefore so couched as only to be intelligible in their secret meaning to the initiated, *nīnyā vacāṃsi nivacanāni kavaye* — secret words that carry their significance only to the seer. They were equipped with an apparent meaning exoteric and religious for the people, esoteric, occult and spiritual for the initiates. That the people should not find out the real Truth was their intention; they wanted them only to know the outward truths for which they were fit. (S29: 417-18)

Picture of Vedic society

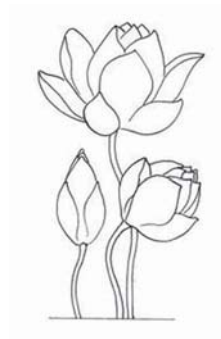
This picture of Vedic society [*a completely pastoral life, without priests or warriors*] could easily be challenged. The householder may have lit daily the fire on the household altar, but when he wanted to offer a sacrifice he did it with the aid of sacrificial priests who knew the ritual. Sometimes the Rishi himself performed the sacrifice for the householder. He was not a priest by profession, however, for he might have any occupation in the society. Besides, in a large sacrifice there were many versed in the Vedic rites who performed different functions. In the very first verse of the Rig Veda Agni is described as being himself the Purohit, the priest representative of the householder sacrificer, Yajamana, as the Ritwik, the one who saw to the arrangement of the rites, the Hota who invoked the Gods and gave the offering, and in other hymns he is spoken of as the priest of the purification, the priest of the lustration etc. All this has obviously an esoteric sense but it testifies to the habitual presence of a number of priests at any large sacrifice. So we cannot say that there were no priests in the Vedic age. There does not seem to have been any priestly caste until later times when the four castes came definitely into being. But the Brahmins were not predominantly priests but rather scholars and intellectuals with a religious authority derived from birth and from knowledge of the scriptures and the books of the social law, Shashtra. The function of priesthood has never been highly honoured in India and it would therefore be incorrect to speak of priestcraft or any rule by priests or ecclesiastics at any time in Indian history.

As for the warriors, there are in the Rig Veda two or three hymns describing a great battle which the scholars declare to have been the fight of one king against ten allied kings, and besides that, the hymns are full of images of war and battle. These too have an esoteric meaning, but they indicate a state of things in which war and battle must have been frequent; so we cannot say that there were no warriors.

Again, your description seems to indicate that all the householders were initiated in the knowledge held by the Rishis. But this was a secret knowledge imparted by the Rishi to his family and to disciples whom he found to be fit, it was not given to everyone. The language of the Veda was also veiled and mystic, “secret words of seer-wisdom which yielded their meaning to the seer” as one of the Rishis described them, but understood in an outward sense by the ordinary uninitiated man. This principle of secrecy was common to all the mysteries in every country and it was maintained also in ancient India. The religious worship practised by the common man and any communion it might bring with the gods was only a preliminary preparation and not the deeper knowledge.

It was always held in ancient India that religion, life and society should be so arranged that every man should have the opportunity to grow spiritually by whatever means is suitable to his capacity, *adhikāra*. Everywhere there was a system of gradations by which this purpose could be served. It provided for a continual contact

of man at every step with what was behind and beyond the material life. In Vedic times meditation, worship and sacrifice were the means by which this connection with the Unseen was sought to be established and maintained. The sacrifice was symbolic in its ritual and the symbols were supposed to have an occult power to create a relation between the unseen powers worshipped and the worshipper; by it they were called in to preside over and help all the action and life of the human being. Worship was for establishing a more inner relation and meditation the means of spiritual experience, development and knowledge. The institutions which grew up in later Vedic times, such as the four Asramas and the four Varnas, the fourfold arrangement of society originally had the same intention and are so recognised in the Gita. So trained a man could develop until he was ready for a deeper knowledge and receive the initiation. In the Vedic times this deeper knowledge was the mystic doctrine and practice of the Vedic Rishis; it was that that afterwards developed on a hundred branching lines into the later systems of Yoga. (S29: 418-20)



AN OLDER TRADITION

A very old tradition

In the very, very old traditions — there was a tradition more ancient than the Vedic and the Chaldean which must have been the source of both — in that ancient tradition there is already mention of a “glorious body” which would be plastic enough to be transformed at every moment by the deeper consciousness: it would express that consciousness, it would have no fixity of form. It mentioned luminosity: the constituent matter could become luminous at will. It mentioned a sort of possibility of weightlessness which would allow the body to move about in the air only by the action of will-power and by certain processes of control of the inner energy, and so on. Much has been said about these things. (M9: 86)

A tradition older than the Vedic

There was a very old tradition, very, very old, even older than the Vedic tradition here, which said, “If twelve men of goodwill unite and call the Divine, the Divine is obliged to come.” Well, perhaps this is a truth, perhaps a superstition. Perhaps it depends on the twelve men of goodwill and what they are. Perhaps it depends on other things also. If you ask me, I think that it probably happened like this, that in the beginning twelve men gathered together — there happened to be twelve, perhaps they didn’t even know why — and they were so united in their aspiration, an aspiration so intense and powerful, that they received the response. But to say, “If twelve men of goodwill unite in an aspiration, they are sure to make the Divine descend” is a superstition.

In fact, things must have happened like that, and the person who noted it put it down carefully: “If twelve men of goodwill unite their aspiration, the Divine is obliged to come.” And since then, I can tell you that a considerable number of groups of twelve men have united in a common aspiration . . . and they did not bring down the Divine! But all the same the tradition has been left intact.

There we are.

We are many more than twelve this evening. (*Laughter*) Shall we try it once and see if we succeed!

(*Meditation*)

(M8: 93)

Seers more ancient than the Vedic sages

And now once more in the revolutions of human thought these depths have to be sounded; modern psychology will be led perforce, by the compulsion of the truth that it is seeking, on to the path that was followed by the ancient. The new dawns, treading the eternal path of the Truth, follow it to the goal of the dawns that have gone before, — how many, who shall say?

For this knowledge was not first discovered in the comparatively late antiquity that gave us the Upanishads which we now possess. It is already there in the dateless verses of the Rig Veda, and the Vedic sages speak of it as the discovery of yet more ancient seers besides whom they themselves were new and modern. Emerging from the periods of eclipse and the nights of ignorance which overtake humanity, we assume always that we are instituting a new knowledge. In reality, we are continually rediscovering the knowledge and repeating the achievement of the ages that have gone before us, — receiving again out of the “Inconscient” the light that it had drawn back into its secrecies and now releases once more for a new day and another march of the great journey. (S13: 182-83)

The Avatar — from a very old tradition

Today I have been asked to speak to you about the Avatar.

The first thing I have to say is that Sri Aurobindo has written on this subject and the person who has asked me the question would do well to begin by reading what Sri Aurobindo has written.

I shall not speak to you about that, for it is better to read it for yourself.

But I could speak to you of a very old tradition, more ancient than the two known lines of spiritual and occult tradition, that is, the Vedic and Chaldean lines; a tradition which seems to have been at the origin of these two known traditions, in which it is said that when, as a result of the action of the adverse forces — known in the Hindu tradition as the Asuras — the world, instead of developing according to its law of Light and inherent consciousness, was plunged into the darkness, inconscience and ignorance that we know, the Creative Power implored the Supreme Origin, asking him for a special intervention which could save this corrupted universe; and in reply to this prayer there was emanated from the Supreme Origin a special Entity, of Love and Consciousness, who cast himself directly into the most inconscient matter to begin there the work of awakening it to the original Consciousness and Love.

In the old narratives this Being is described as stretched out in a deep sleep at the bottom of a very dark cave, and in his sleep there emanated from him prismatic rays of light which gradually spread into the Inconscience and embedded themselves in all the elements of this Inconscience to begin there the work of Awakening.

If one consciously enters into this Inconscient, one can still see there this same marvellous Being, still in deep sleep, continuing his work of emanation, spreading his Light; and he will continue to do it until the Inconscience is no longer inconscient, until Darkness disappears from the world — and the whole creation awakens to the Supramental Consciousness.

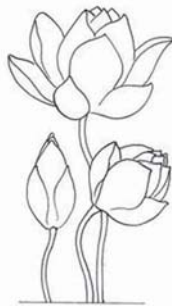
And it is remarkable that this wonderful Being strangely resembles the one whom I saw in vision one day, the Being who is at the other extremity, at the confines of form and the Formless. But that one was in a golden, crimson glory, whereas in his sleep the other Being was of a shining diamond whiteness emanating opalescent rays.

In fact, this is the origin of all Avatars. He is, so to say, the first universal Avatar who, gradually, has assumed more and more conscious bodies and finally manifested in a kind of recognised line of Beings who have descended *directly* from the Supreme to perfect this work of preparing the universe so that, through a continuous progression, it may become ready to receive and manifest the supramental Light in its entirety.

In every country, every tradition, the event has been presented in a special way, with different limitations, different details, particular features, but truly speaking, the origin of all these stories is the same, and that is what we could call a direct, conscious intervention of the Supreme in the darkest matter, without going through all the intermediaries, in order to awaken this Matter to the receptivity of the Divine Forces.

The intervals separating these various incarnations seem to become shorter and shorter, as if, to the extent that Matter became more and more ready, the action could accelerate and become more and more rapid in its movement, more and more conscious too, more and more effective and decisive.

And it will go on multiplying and intensifying until the entire universe becomes the total Avatar of the Supreme. (M9: 332-34)



THE NEW LIGHT

In consonance with the Vedas . . .

Is the whole teaching based perfectly upon Hinduism?

No sectarian religion is the basis; orthodox Hinduism and its caste rules are not followed; but the spiritual Truth recognised here is in consonance with the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita while not limited by any Scripture. (S35: 596)

Sri Aurobindo has already answered many of our questions

Now, since the end of February, I have received a considerable number of questions on:

How is the Supermind going to act? What should be done to receive it? In what form will it manifest? . . .

I have answered as best I could. But it so happens that in Sri Aurobindo's book *On the Veda* there is a note on a certain page, and in this note he answers these questions. I always tell people: if you were to take a little trouble to read what Sri Aurobindo has written, many of your questions would become useless, for Sri Aurobindo has already answered them. However, people probably have neither the time nor the patience nor the will, nor all that is needed, and they don't read. The books are published, they are even, I believe, generously distributed, but few read them. Anyway, here is Sri Aurobindo's answer. Try to think, and if you have a special question to ask I shall answer it.

Listen:

*"The supramental world has to be formed or created in us by the Divine Will as the result of a constant expansion and self-perfecting."*¹

That is to say, to hope to receive, use and form in oneself a supramental being, and consequently a supramental world, there must first of all be an expansion of con-

1. This note occurs in Sri Aurobindo's commentary on the fourth hymn to Agni in the fifth Mandala of the Rig Veda, "The Divine Will, Priest, Warrior and Leader of Our Journey": "O Knower of the Births, the man perfect in his works for whom thou createst that other blissful world, reaches a felicity that is peopled happily with his life's swiftesses, his herds of Light, the children of his soul, the armies of his energy." *The Secret of the Veda*, (S15: 408)

sciousness and a *constant* personal progress: not to have sudden flights, a little aspiration, a little effort, and then fall back into somnolence. This must be the *constant* idea of the being, the *constant* will of the being, the *constant* effort of the being, the *constant* preoccupation of the being.

If for five minutes in the day you happen to remember that there is something in the universe like the supramental Force, and that, after all, “it would be nice if it manifested in me”, and then all the rest of the time you are thinking of something else and are busy with other things, there is not much chance that it would come and do any serious work in you. Sri Aurobindo says this quite clearly and precisely. He does not tell you that *you* will do it, he says it is the Divine Will. So don’t come and say, “Ah! I can’t.” No one is asking you to do it. But there *must be* enough aspiration and adhesion in the being to make the expansion of the being, the expansion of consciousness possible. For, to tell the truth, everybody is small, small, small, so small that there is not enough room to put any supramental in! It is so small that it is already quite filled up with all the ordinary little human movements. There must be a great widening to make room for the movements of the Supermind.

And then there must also be an aspiration for progress: not to be satisfied with what one is, how one is, what one does, what one knows or thinks one knows; but to have a constant aspiration for something more, something better, for a greater light, a vaster consciousness, a truer truth and a more universal goodness. And over and above all this, a goodwill which never fails.

That can’t be done in a few days.

Moreover, I believe that I had taken my precautions in this matter and that, when I announced that it had been granted to the earth to receive the supramental Force in order to manifest it, this did not mean that the manifestation would be instantaneously apparent, and that everybody would suddenly find himself transported to a peak of light and of possibilities and realisation, without any effort. I said immediately that it would not be like that. I even said that it would take quite a long time. But still, people have complained that its advent has not made things easier, and that even, in some cases, they have become more difficult. I am very sorry, but I can do nothing about it. For it is not the fault of the supramental Force, the fault lies in the way in which it was received. I know instances in which truly the aspiration was sincere and the collaboration complete, and in which many things that had seemed very difficult in the past at once became infinitely easier.

However, there is a very great difference, always, between a kind of mental curiosity which plays with words and ideas, and a true aspiration of the being which means that truly, really, it is *that* which counts, essentially, and nothing else — that aspiration, that inner will because of which nothing has any value except *that*, that realisation; nothing counts except *that*; there is no other reason for existence, for living, than *that*.

And yet it is this that’s needed if one wants the Supramental to become visible

to the naked eye.

And mark that I am not speaking of a physical transformation, for this everyone knows: you don't expect to become luminous and plastic overnight, to lose your weight, be able to displace yourself freely, appear in a dozen places at the same time and what not. . . . No, I believe you are reasonable enough not to expect this to happen right away. It will take some time.

But still, simply, the working of the consciousness, simply a certain self-mastery, a control over one's body, a direct knowledge of things, a capacity of identification and a clear vision — instead of that hazy and vague sight which sees only the mere appearances that are so deceptive, so unreal, so fossilised — a more direct perception, an inner perception, this ought to be able to come and come quickly if one has prepared oneself.

Simply to have that feeling that the air one breathes is more living, the strength one has more lasting. And instead of always groping like a blind man to know what should be done, to have a clear, precise, inner intimation: it is this — not that: *this*.

These are things one can acquire immediately if one is ready. (M8: 203-06)

Restore the hidden truth of the Vedic sacrifice

362 – O soul of India, hide thyself no longer with the darkened Pandits of the Kaliyuga in the kitchen and 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 and Kshatriyahood with the eternal Veda; restore the hidden truth of the Vedic sacrifice, return to the fulfilment of an older and mightier Vedanta.

This is to free us from so-called religious conventions which tell us what to do and what not to do. We must recover the true wisdom and receive directly from the Divine the precise indications for living in and for the Truth. (M10: 314-15)

Sri Aurobindo does not belong to history

You were trying to show the continuity of history, with Sri Aurobindo as the outcome, the culmination. It is false entirely.

Sri Aurobindo does not belong to history; he is outside and beyond history.

Till the birth of Sri Aurobindo, religions and spiritualities were always centred on past figures, and they were showing as “the goal” the negation of life upon earth. So, you had a choice between two alternatives: either

— a life *in* this world with its round of petty pleasures and pains, joys and sufferings, threatened by hell if you were not behaving properly, or

— an escape *into* another world, heaven, nirvana, moksha. . . .

Between these two there is nothing much to choose, they are equally bad.

Sri Aurobindo has told us that this was a fundamental mistake which accounts for the weakness and degradation of India. Buddhism, Jainism, Illusionism were sufficient to sap all energy out of the country.

True, India is the only place in the world which is still aware that something else than Matter exists. The other countries have quite forgotten it: Europe, America and elsewhere. . . . That is why she still has a message to preserve and deliver to the world. But at present she is splashing and floundering in the muddle.

Sri Aurobindo has shown that the truth does not lie in running away from earthly life but in remaining *in* it, to *transform it*, *divinise it*, so that the Divine can manifest HERE, in this PHYSICAL WORLD.

You should say all this at the first sitting. You should be square and frank . . . like that! (*With her hands Mother makes a big square sign on the table.*)

Then, when this is told, strongly, squarely, and there is no doubt about it — and then only — you can go on and amuse them with the history of religions and religious or spiritual leaders.

Then — and then only — you will be able to show the seed of weakness and falsehood that they have harboured and proclaimed.

Then — and then only — you will be able to discern, from time to time, from place to place, an “intuition” that something else is possible; in the Vedas, for instance (the injunction to descend deep into the cave of the Panis); in the Tantras also . . . a little light is burning.§ (M12: 210-11)

[§ Report of comments by the Mother noted down by a disciple and later approved by her for publication.]

Our relation with the gods

[*This short talk was given on 15 August 1958, a Friday, the day on which the Dhammapada was usually read.*]

As today is Sri Aurobindo’s birthday I thought that instead of reading the Dhammapada I could read to you something which will both interest you and show you how Sri Aurobindo visualised our relation with the gods.

You know, don’t you, that in India especially, there are countless categories of gods, who are all on different planes, some very close to man, others very close to the Supreme, with many intermediaries.

You will understand better what I want to tell you if I mention the gods of the Puranas — like those we saw the other day in the film — who in many ways are, I must say, inferior to man (!) although they have infinitely more power.

There are gods of the Overmind who are the great creators of the earth — until

now. There are the gods of the Vedas who are mentioned in everything that has come down from the Rishis. And there are the gods of the Supermind, those who are going to manifest on earth, although of course they exist from all eternity on their own plane.

Here Sri Aurobindo is speaking mostly about the Vedic gods, but not exclusively nor in a very definite way. At any rate these gods are higher than the gods of the Puranas.

Here is what Sri Aurobindo tells us.

In fact, it is a prayer:

Be wide in me, O Varuna;
 be mighty in me, O Indra;
 O Sun, be very bright and luminous;
 O Moon, be full of charm and sweetness.
 Be fierce and terrible, O Rudra;
 be impetuous and swift, O Maruts;
 be strong and bold, O Aryama;
 be voluptuous and pleasurable, O Bhaga;
 be tender and kind and loving and passionate, O Mitra.
 Be bright and revealing, O Dawn;
 O Night, be solemn and pregnant.
 O Life, be full, ready and buoyant;
 O Death, lead my steps from mansion to mansion.
 Harmonise all these, O Brahmanaspati.
 Let me not be subject to these gods, O Kali.

So Sri Aurobindo makes Kali the great liberating power who ardently impels you towards progress and leaves no ties within you which would hinder you from progressing.

I think this will be a good subject for meditation.

(Meditation)

(M9: 376-77)

Avatars still come

All the Rishis do not belong to the past; the Avatars still come; revelation still continues. (S12: 50)

The Path of the Vedic Rishis

In an article written by a Swami on your book The Riddle of This World, he remarks that you have the boldness to say that you have done what the Vedic Rishis could not do.

It is not I only who have done what the Vedic Rishis did not do. Chaitanya and others developed an intensity of Bhakti which is absent in the Veda and many other instances can be given. Why should the past be the limit of spiritual experience?
(S35: 301)

A Vedic mantra

The Mother gave the following message personally [to Huta] and said: “Child, the sentence in Sanskrit is from the Veda — it is a mantra — repeat it.”

आयाहि सत्य आविर्भव

ĀYĀHI SATYA ĀVIRBHAVA

[Below which she added in her own hand:]

O Truth, come,
Manifest.

With Eternal
LOVE

(Signature)

(W: 94)

Conception of the Truth

The Vedic Rishis had the conception of the Truth but in the prevailing conditions it could not be brought down for humanity. (E: 312)

In the formula of the Veda

Heaven we have possessed, but not the earth; but the fullness of the yoga is to make, in the formula of the Veda, “Heaven and Earth equal and one”. (S36: 286)

Idea of the Supermind in the Veda

Q. Is this idea of the Supermind present in the Veda?

Yes, it is very clear, though the emphasis of the Vedic Rishis is more on going above, ascending, than on the return movement of conquering and transforming the lower nature. (E: 506)

Ascent of the Rishis

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. We need not bother about the rebirth of the Rishis — they will come along if they are needed, I suppose.

(S29: 417)

Higher realms

. . . there would be still yet higher levels within the supramental realm, as the old Vedic poets knew when they spoke of the spiritual life as a constant ascent, —

*brahmāṇas tvā śatakrato
ud vaṁśam iva yemire;
yat sānoḥ sānum āruhat,
bhūri aspaṣṭa kartvam, —*

The priests of the word climb thee like a ladder, O
hundred-powered. As one ascends from peak to peak,
there is made clear the much that has still to be done.

But once the foundation has been secured, the rest develops by a progressive self-unfolding and the soul is sure of its way. As again it is phrased by the ancient Vedic singers, —

*abhyavasthāḥ pra jāyante,
pra vavrer vavriś ciketa;
upasthe mātur vi caṣṭe, —*

State is born upon state; covering after covering becomes conscious of knowledge; in the lap of the Mother the soul sees.

This at least is the highest hope, the possible destiny that opens out before the human view, and it is a possibility which the progress of the human mind seems on the way to redevelop. If the light that is being born increases, if the number of individuals who seek to realise the possibility in themselves and in the world grows large and they get nearer the right way, then the Spirit who is here in man, now a concealed divinity, a developing light and power, will descend more fully as the Avatar of a yet unseen and unguessed Godhead from above into the soul of mankind and into the great individualities in whom the light and power are the strongest. There will then be fulfilled the change that will prepare the transition of human life from its present limits into those larger and purer horizons; the earthly evolution will have taken its grand impetus upward and accomplished the revealing step in a divine progression of which the birth of thinking and aspiring man from the animal nature was only an obscure preparation and a far-off promise. (S25: 268-69)

The sense of solidity

... you form an abstract idea in the mind about the Supermind. When you get to the Supermind you find it is not an abstraction at all. It is more intensely concrete than Matter, something quite overwhelming in its concreteness. That is why I called it the Real-Idea and not an abstract idea. In that sense there is nothing more concrete than God. If we were on the pure mental plane we would find Mind quite concrete and real. But as we are on the physical plane we always think that mind is abstract.

Before the Supermind Matter dwindles into a shadow!

Q. What is that concreteness like?

The sense of solidity, mass. That is perhaps what the Veda meant when it said, "Agni is wider of light, and concrete of body." You can say that the Supermind is harder than diamond and yet more fluid than gas. (E: 497-98)

Experience and expression

... one who attains the Supermind does not sit down to write philosophy about it. That is just like using poetry to teach grammar, so as to take all poetry out of it. Even when Supermind finds expression it would carry its meaning only to the man who knows; as the Veda puts it, "Words of the Seer which reveal their mystery only to the Seer." (E: 234)

Digging the earth

I am at present engaged in bringing the Supermind into the physical consciousness, down even to the very sub-material. The physical is by nature inert and does not want to be rendered conscient. It offers much greater resistance as it is unwilling to change.

One feels as if “digging the earth”, as the Veda says. It is literally digging from Supermind above to Supermind below. The being has become conscious and there is constant movement up and down. The Veda calls it “the two ends” — the head and the tail of the dragon completing and compassing the consciousness. I find that so long as Matter is not supramentalised, the mental and the vital also cannot be fully supramentalised. . . . It is this birth after birth on every plane that makes the process complex. I am trying to bring the highest layer of the Supermind into the physical consciousness. (E: 504)

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri

The tale of Satyavan and Savitri is recited in the Mahabharata as a story of conjugal love conquering death. But this legend is, as shown by many features of the human tale, one of the many symbolic myths of the Vedic cycle. (S33: xvii)

A Veda-knower of the unwritten book

Out of the ignorant eager toil of the years
 Abandoning man's loud drama he had come
 Led by the wisdom of an adverse Fate
 To meet the ancient Mother in her groves.
 In her divine communion he had grown
 A foster-child of beauty and solitude,
 Heir to the centuries of the lonely wise,
 A brother of the sunshine and the sky,
 A wanderer communing with depth and marge.
 A Veda-knower of the unwritten book
 Perusing the mystic scripture of her forms,
 He had caught her hierophant significances,
 Her sphered immense imaginations learned,
 Taught by sublimities of stream and wood
 And voices of the sun and star and flame
 And chant of the magic singers on the boughs
 And the dumb teaching of four-footed things.
 Helping with confident steps her slow great hands

He leaned to her influence like a flower to rain
 And, like the flower and tree a natural growth,
 Widened with the touches of her shaping hours.
 The mastery free natures have was his
 And their assent to joy and spacious calm;
 One with the single Spirit inhabiting all,
 He laid experience at the Godhead's feet;
 His mind was open to her infinite mind,
 His acts were rhythmic with her primal force;
 He had subdued his mortal thought to hers.
 That day he had turned from his accustomed paths;
 For One who, knowing every moment's load,
 Can move in all our studied or careless steps,
 Had laid the spell of destiny on his feet
 And drawn him to the forest's flowering verge. (S34: 393-94)

The text and glossary of the Vedic truth

There in a hidden chamber closed and mute
 Are kept the record graphs of the cosmic scribe,
 And there the tables of the sacred Law,
 There is the Book of Being's index page;
 The text and glossary of the Vedic truth
 Are there; the rhythms and metres of the stars
 Significant of the movements of our fate:
 The symbol powers of number and of form,
 And the secret code of the history of the world
 And Nature's correspondence with the soul
 Are written in the mystic heart of Life.
 In the glow of the spirit's room of memories
 He could recover the luminous marginal notes
 Dotting with light the crabbed ambiguous scroll,
 Rescue the preamble and the saving clause
 Of the dark Agreement by which all is ruled
 That rises from material Nature's sleep
 To clothe the Everlasting in new shapes.
 He could re-read now and interpret new
 Its strange symbol letters, scattered abstruse signs,
 Resolve its oracle and its paradox,
 Its riddling phrases and its blindfold terms,
 The deep oxymoron of its truth's repliques,

And recognise as a just necessity
 Its hard conditions for the mighty work, —
 Nature's impossible Herculean toil
 Only her warlock-wisecraft could enforce,
 Its law of the opposition of the gods,
 Its list of inseparable contraries. (S33: 74-75)

Vedic Truth-Consciousness and Supermind

The process of evolution has been the development from and in inconscient Matter of a subconscious and then a conscious Life, of conscious mind first in animal life and then fully in conscious and thinking man, the highest present achievement of evolutionary Nature. The achievement of mental being is at present her highest and tends to be regarded as her final work; but it is possible to conceive a still further step of the evolution: Nature may have in view beyond the imperfect mind of man a consciousness that passes out of the mind's ignorance and possesses truth as its inherent right and nature. There is a truth-consciousness as it is called in the Veda, a supermind, as I have termed it, possessing Knowledge, not having to seek after it and constantly miss it. In one of the Upanishads a being of knowledge is stated to be the next step above the mental being; into that the soul has to rise and through it to attain the perfect bliss of spiritual existence. If that could be achieved as the next evolutionary step of Nature here, then she would be fulfilled and we could conceive of the perfection of life even here, its attainment of a full spiritual living even in this body or it may be in a perfected body. We could even speak of a divine life on earth; our human dream of perfectibility would be accomplished and at the same time the aspiration to a heaven on earth common to several religions and spiritual seers and thinkers.

The ascent of the human soul to the supreme Spirit is that soul's highest aim and necessity, for that is the supreme reality; but there can be too the descent of the Spirit and its powers into the world and that would justify the existence of the material world also, give a meaning, a divine purpose to the creation and solve its riddle. East and West could be reconciled in the pursuit of the highest and largest ideal, Spirit embrace Matter and Matter find its own true reality and the hidden Reality in all things in the Spirit. (S36: 553)

No Incarnation of the Vedic Gods

In the Veda there is no idea or experience of a personal emanation or incarnation of any of the Vedic gods. When the Rishis speak of Indra or Agni or Soma in men, they are speaking of the god in his cosmic presence, power or function. This is evident from the very language when they speak of Agni as the immortal in mortals,

the immortal Light in man, the inner Warrior, the Guest in human beings. It is the same with Indra or Soma. The building of the gods in man means a creation of the divine Powers, Indra the Power of the Light, Soma the Power of the Ananda in the human nature.

No doubt, the Rishis felt the actual presence of the gods above, near, around or in them, but this was a common experience of all, not special and personal, not an emanation or incarnation. One may see or feel the presence of the Divine or a divine Power above the head or in the heart or in any or all of the centres, feel the presence, see the form living there; one may be governed in all one's actions, thoughts and feelings by it; one may lose one's separate personality in it, may identify and merge. But all that does not constitute an incarnation or emanation of the Divine or of the Power. These things are universal experiences to which any Yogin may arrive; to reach this condition with relation to the Divine is indeed a common object of Yoga.

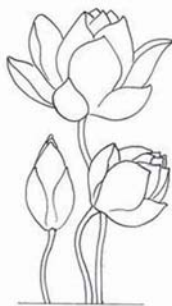
An incarnation is something more, something special and individual to the individual being. It is the substitution of the Person of a divine being for the human person and an infiltration of it into all the movements so that there is a dynamic personal change in all of them and in the whole nature; not merely a change of the character of the consciousness or a general surrender into its hands, but a subtle intimate personal change. Even when there is an incarnation from the birth, the human elements have to be taken up, but when there is a descent, there is a total conscious substitution.

This is a long, subtle and persistent process. The incarnating Person first overshadows as an influence, then enters into the centres one after the other, sometimes in the same form, sometimes in different forms, then takes up all the nature and its actions. What you describe does not correspond to this process; it seems to be an endeavour to build the gods in yourself in the Vedic sense and the Vedic manner. That can bring, if it succeeds, their powers and a sense of their presence; it cannot bring about an incarnation. An incarnation is destined, is chosen for you; the human person cannot choose or create an incarnation for himself by his own personal will. To attempt it is to invite a spiritual disaster.

One thing must be said — that an incarnation is not the object of this Yoga; it is only a condition or means towards the object. The one and only aim we have before us is to bring down the supramental consciousness and the supramental Truth into the world; the Truth and nothing but the Truth is our aim, and if we cannot embody this Truth, a hundred incarnations do not matter. But to bring down the true supramental and nothing but the true supramental, to escape from all mental mixture is not an easy matter. The mere descent of the suns into the centres, even of all the seven suns into all the seven centres is only the seed; it is not the thing itself done and finished. One may feel the descent of suns, one may have the attempt, the beginning of an incarnation, and yet in the end one may fail if there is a flaw in the

nature or a failure to pass through all the ordeals and satisfy all the hard conditions of the perfect spiritual success. Not only the whole mental, vital and physical nature of the ignorant human being has to be overcome and transformed, but also the three states of mental consciousness which intervene between the human and the supramental and like all mind are capable of admitting great and capital errors. Till then there may be descents of supramental influence, light, power, Ananda, but the supramental Truth cannot be possessed, organised, put in possession of the whole nature. One must not think before that that one possesses the supermind; for that is a delusion which would prevent the fulfilment.

One thing more. The more intense the experiences that come, the higher the forces that descend, the greater become the possibilities of deviation and error. For the very intensity and the very height of the force excites and aggrandises the movements of the lower nature and raises up in it all the opposing elements in their full force, but often in the disguise of truth, wearing a mask of plausible justification. There is needed a great patience, calm, sobriety, balance, an impersonal detachment and sincerity free from all taint of ego or personal human desire. There must be no attachment to any idea of one's own, to any experience, to any kind of imagination, mental building or vital demand; the light of discrimination must always play to detect these things, however fair or plausible they may seem. Otherwise the Truth will have no chance of establishing itself in its purity in the nature. (S29: 420-23)



THE DOCTRINE OF THE MYSTICS

The Veda possesses the high spiritual substance of the Upanishads, but lacks their phraseology; it is an inspired knowledge as yet insufficiently equipped with intellectual and philosophical terms. We find a language of poets and illuminates to whom all experience is real, vivid, sensible, even concrete, not yet of thinkers and systematisers to whom the realities of the mind and soul have become abstractions. Yet a system, a doctrine there is; but its structure is supple, its terms are concrete, the cast of its thought is practical and experimental, but in the accomplished type of an old and sure experience, not of one that is crude and uncertain because yet in the making. Here we have the ancient psychological science and the art of spiritual living of which the Upanishads are the philosophical outcome and modification and Vedanta, Sankhya and Yoga the late intellectual result and logical dogma. But like all life, like all science that is still vital, it is free from the armoured rigidities of the reasoning intellect; in spite of its established symbols and sacred formulae it is still large, free, flexible, fluid, supple and subtle. It has the movement of life and the large breath of the soul. And while the later philosophies are books of Knowledge and make liberation the one supreme good, the Veda is a Book of Works and the hope for which it spurns our present bonds and littleness is perfection, self-achievement, immortality.

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.

The soul of man soars as the Bird, the Hansa, 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 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 outpourer 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.

Such are some of the images of this ancient mystic adoration.

The Godhead has built this universe in a complex system of worlds which we find both within us and without, subjectively cognised and objectively sensed. It is a rising tier of earths and heavens; it is a stream of diverse waters; it is a Light of seven rays, or of eight or nine or ten; it is a Hill of many plateaus. The seers often image it in a series of trios; there are three earths and three heavens. More, there is a triple world below, — Heaven, Earth and the intervening mid-region; a triple world between, the shining heavens of the Sun; a triple world above, the supreme and rapturous abodes of the Godhead.

But other principles intervene and make the order of the worlds yet more complex. These principles are psychological; for since all creation is a formation of the Spirit, every external system of worlds must in each of its planes be in material correspondence with some power or rising degree of consciousness of which it is the objective symbol and must house a kindred internal order of things. To understand the Veda we must seize this Vedic parallelism and distinguish the cosmic gradations to which it leads. We rediscover the same system behind the later Puranic symbols and it is thence that we can derive its tabulated series most simply and clearly. For there are seven principles of existence and the seven Puranic worlds correspond to them with sufficient precision, thus: —

<i>Principle</i>	<i>World</i>
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)

Now this system which in the Purana is simple enough, is a good deal more intricate in the Veda. There the three highest worlds are classed together as the triple divine Principle, — for they dwell always together in a Trinity; infinity is their scope, bliss is their foundation. They are supported by the vast regions of the Truth whence a divine Light radiates out towards our mentality in the three heavenly luminous worlds of Swar, the domain of Indra. Below is ranked the triple system in which we live.

We have the same cosmic gradations as in the Puranas but they are differently grouped, — seven worlds in principle, five in practice, three in their general groupings:

1. The Supreme Sat-Chit- Ananda	The triple divine worlds
2. The Link-World Supermind	The Truth, Right, Vast, manifested in Swar, with its three luminous heavens
3. The triple lower world	
Pure Mind	Heaven (Dyaus, the three heavens)
Life-force	The Mid-Region (Antariksha)
Matter	Earth (the three earths)

And as each principle can be modified by the subordinate manifestation of the others within it, each world is divisible into several provinces according to different arrangements and self-orderings of its creative light of consciousness. Into this framework, then, we must place all the complexities of the subtle vision and fertile imagery of the seers down to the hundred cities which are now in the possession of the hostile kings, the Lords of division and evil. But the gods shall break them open and give them for his free possession to the Aryan worshipper!

But where are these worlds and whence are they created? Here we have one of the profoundest ideas of the Vedic sages. Man dwells in the bosom of the Earth-Mother and is aware of this world of mortality only; but there is a superconscient high beyond where the divine worlds are seated in a luminous secrecy; there is a subconscient 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, and the Veda calls the worlds “births” as well as seats and dwelling-places.

For as the Gods have built the series of the cosmic worlds, even so they labour to build up the same series of ordered states and ascending degrees in man’s consciousness from the mortal condition to the crowning immortality. They raise him from the limited material state of being in which our lowest manhood dwells contented and subject to the Lords of Division, give him a life rich and abundant with the many and rapid shocks and impulsions from the dynamic worlds of Life and Desire where the Gods battle with the demons and raise him yet higher from those troubled rapidities and intensities into the steadfast purity and clarity of the high mental existence. For pure thought and feeling are man’s sky, his heaven; this whole vitalistic existence of emotion, passions, affections of which desire is the pivot, forms for him a mid-world; body and material living are his earth.

But pure thought and pure psychic state are not the highest height of the human ascension. The home of the Gods is an absolute Truth which lives in solar glories beyond mind. Man ascending thither strives no longer as the thinker but is victoriously the seer; he is no longer this mental creature but a divine being. His will, life, thought, emotion, sense, act are all transformed into values of an all-puissant Truth and remain no longer an embarrassed or a helpless tangle of mixed truth and falsehood. He moves lamely no more in our narrow and grudging limits but ranges in the unobstructed Vast; toils and zigzags no longer amid these crookednesses, but follows a swift and conquering straightness; feeds no longer on broken fragments, but is suckled by the teats of Infinity. Therefore he has to break through and out beyond these firmaments of earth and heaven; conquering firm possession of the solar worlds, entering on to his highest Height he has to learn how to dwell in the triple principle of Immortality.

This contrast of the mortality we are and the immortal condition to which we can aspire is the key of the Vedic thought and practice. Veda is the earliest gospel we have of man’s immortality and these ancient stanzas conceal the primitive discipline of its inspired discoverers.

Substance of being, light of consciousness, active force and possessive delight

are the constituent principles of existence; but their combination in us may be either limited, divided, hurt, broken and obscure or infinite, enlightened, vast, whole and unhurt. Limited and divided being is ignorance; it is darkness and weakness, it is grief and pain; in the Vast, in the integral, in the infinite we must seek for the desirable riches of substance, light, force and joy. Limitation is mortality; immortality comes to us as an accomplished self-possession in the infinite and the power to live and move in firm vastnesses. Therefore it is in proportion as he widens and on condition that he increases constantly in substance of his being, brightens an ever loftier flame of will and vaster light of knowledge, advances the boundaries of his consciousness, raises the degrees and enlarges the breadth of his power, force and strength, confirms an intenser beatitude of joy and liberates his soul into immeasurable peace that man becomes capable of immortality.

To widen is to acquire new births. The aspiring material creature becomes the straining vital man; he in turn transmutes himself into the subtle mental and psychical being; this subtle thinker grows into the wide, multiple and cosmic man open on all sides of him to all the multitudinous inflowings of the Truth; the cosmic soul rising in attainment strives as the spiritual man for a higher peace, joy and harmony. These are the five Aryan types, each of them a great people occupying its own province or state of the total human nature. But there is also the absolute Aryan who would conquer and pass beyond these states to the transcendental harmony of them all.

It is the supramental Truth that is the instrument of this great inner transfiguration. That replaces mentality by luminous vision and the eye of the gods, mortal life by breath and force of the infinite existence, obscure and death-possessed substance by the free and immortal conscious-being. The progress of man must be therefore, first, his self-expanding into a puissant vitality capable of sustaining all vibrations of action and experience and a clear mental and psychical purity; secondly, an outgrowing of this human light and power and its transmutation into an infinite Truth and an immortal Will.

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. By the word of the Truth the all-engendering Surya creates; by that rhythm Brahmanaspati evokes the worlds and Twashtri fashions them; finding the all-puissant Word in his intuitive heart, shaping it in his mind the human thinker, the mortal creature can create in himself all the forms, all the states and conditions he desires and, achieving, can conquer for himself all wealth of being, light, strength and enjoyment. He builds up his integral being and aids his gods to destroy the evil armies; the hosts of his spiritual enemies are slain who have divided, torn and afflicted his nature.

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.

But 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.

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.

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

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, 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, 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 outbringing, 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.

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.

Each of these primary deities has others associated with him who fulfil functions that arise from his own. 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.

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.

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.

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, 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. Their large and free scope is the condition of our achievement. Vayu, Master of life, links them together by the mid-air, the region of vital force. And there are other deities, — Parjanya, giver of the rain of heaven; Dadhikravan, the divine war-horse, a power of Agni; the mystic Dragon of the Foundations; Trita Aptya who on the third plane of existence consummates our triple being; and more besides.

The development of all these godheads is necessary to our perfection. And that perfection must be attained on all our levels, — in the wideness of earth, our physical being and consciousness; in the full force of vital speed and action and enjoyment and nervous vibration, typified as the Horse which must be brought forward to upbear our endeavour; in the perfect gladness of the heart of emotion and a brilliant heat and clarity of the mind throughout our intellectual and psychical being; in the coming of the supramental Light, the Dawn and the Sun and the shining Mother of the herds, to transform all our existence; for so comes to us the possession of the Truth, by the Truth the admirable surge of the Bliss, in the Bliss infinite Consciousness of absolute being.

Three great Gods, origin of the Puranic Trinity, largest puissances of the supreme Godhead, make possible this development and upward evolution; they support in its grand lines and fundamental energies all these complexities of the cosmos. Brahmanaspati is the Creator; by the word, by his cry he creates, — that is

to say, he expresses, he brings out all existence and conscious knowledge and movement of life and eventual forms from the darkness of the Inconscient. Rudra, the Violent and Merciful, the Mighty One, presides over the struggle of life to affirm itself; he is the armed, wrathful and beneficent Power of God who lifts forcibly the creation upward, smites all that opposes, scourges all that errs and resists, heals all that is wounded and suffers and complains and submits. Vishnu of the vast pervading motion holds in his triple stride all these worlds; it is he that makes a wide room for the action of Indra in our limited mortality; it is by him and with him that we rise into his highest seats where we find waiting for us the Friend, the Beloved, the Beatific Godhead.

Our earth shaped out of the dark inconscient ocean of existence lifts its high formations and ascending peaks heavenward; heaven of mind has its own formations, clouds that give out their lightnings and their waters of life; the streams of the clarity and the honey ascend out of the subconscious ocean below and seek the super-conscious ocean above; and from above that ocean sends downward its rivers of the light and truth and bliss even into our physical being. Thus in images of physical Nature the Vedic poets sing the hymn of our spiritual ascension.

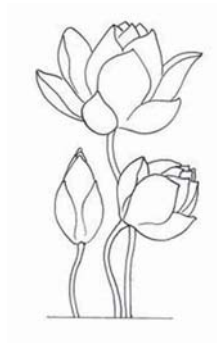
That ascension has already been effected by the Ancients, the human forefathers, and the spirits of these great Ancestors still assist their offspring; for the new dawns repeat the old and lean forward in light to join the dawns of the future. Kanwa, Kutsa, Atri, Kakshiwan, Gotama, Shunahshepa have become types of certain spiritual victories which tend to be constantly repeated in the experience of humanity. The seven sages, the Angirasas, are waiting still and always, ready to chant the word, to rend the cavern, to find the lost herds, to recover the hidden Sun. Thus the soul is a battlefield full of helpers and hurters, friends and enemies. All this lives, teems, is personal, is conscious, is active. We create for ourselves by the sacrifice and by the word shining seers, heroes to fight for us, children of our works. The Rishis and the Gods find for us our luminous herds; the Ribhus fashion by the mind the chariots of the gods and their horses and their shining weapons. Our life is a horse that neighing and galloping bears us onward and upward; its forces are swift-hooved steeds, the liberated powers of the mind are wide-winged birds; this mental being or this soul is the upsoaring Swan or the Falcon that breaks out from a hundred iron walls and wrests from the jealous guardians of felicity the wine of the Soma. Every shining godward Thought that arises from the secret abysses of the heart is a priest and a creator and chants a divine hymn of luminous realisation and puissant fulfilment. We seek for the shining gold of the Truth; we lust after a heavenly treasure.

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.

Such are some of the principal images of the Veda and a very brief and insufficient outline of the teaching of the Forefathers. So understood the Rig Veda ceases to be an obscure, confused and barbarous hymnal; it becomes the high-aspiring Song of Humanity; its chants are episodes of the lyrical epic of the soul in its immortal ascension.

This at least; what more there may be in the Veda of ancient science, lost knowledge, old psycho-physical tradition remains yet to be discovered.

(S15: 370-84)



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

Secret of the Veda not complete

The “Secret of the Veda” is not complete and there are besides many imperfections and some errors in it which I would have preferred to amend before the book or any translation of it was published. Perhaps, however, it does not matter so much in a Gujarati translation which will not come under close criticism such as would meet a book on the subject in English. It would be better, however, whenever there is question of a translation of a book — as opposed to an article or chapter here and there — to let me know first so that I may see whether there is any modification needed or indispensable change. (S36: 297)

Never finished

The publication of *The Secret of the Veda* as it is does not enter into my intention. It was published in a great hurry and at a time when I had not studied the Rig Veda as a whole as well as I have since done. Whole chapters will have to be rewritten or written otherwise and a considerable labour gone through; moreover, it was never finished and considerable additions in order to make it complete are indispensable. (S35: 140)

Glossary of Vedic Words

I see that this is a glossary of Vedic words with their current meanings. I have no objection to that. But I do not want any publication of Vedic interpretations or significances founded upon my translations, so long as my work on the Veda is incomplete and has not taken its final form. (S35: 99)

Translations not final

He (Punamchand) can let Narainji have Veda translations, but I do not want them widely circulated because they are a first draft, not final. (S36: 438)

Comments on a disciple's work on the Veda

Punamchand

No use doing the Vocabulary of the Atri Hymns till the new translation is ready. The old translation is too free for this purpose.

Atri hymns not yet ready.

Not much use to collect words from the Secret of the Veda.

The Vocabulary of the Bharadwaja hymns is very well done; perhaps it is best to do all like that and they could be put together afterwards.

No. The Vocabularies of the Revised Hymns have to be kept separate from the others. I shall look through the others when I have time and see what is to be done.

The comma is a mistake; it has to be omitted. (S36: 439)

APPENDIX II

Bibliographical details

After their appearance in the *Arya*, none of the chapters that constitute *The Secret of the Veda* were reprinted during Sri Aurobindo's lifetime. He expressed some dissatisfaction with them in their existing state and wished to revise them thoroughly before allowing them to be published in book-form. As early as 1920 he wrote to someone who wished to translate *The Secret of the Veda* into Gujarati:

The "Secret of the Veda" is not complete . . .

In the Foreword to the first edition of *Hymns to the Mystic Fire* (1946), Sri Aurobindo explained why *The Secret of the Veda* and the accompanying translations had not been reprinted:

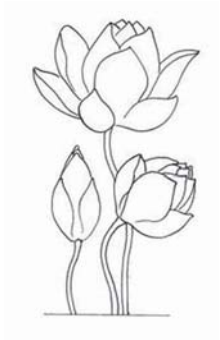
The interpretation I have put forward was set out at length in a series of articles with the title "The Secret of the Veda" in the monthly philosophical magazine, "Arya", some thirty years ago; written in serial form while still developing the theory and not quite complete in its scope or composed on a preconceived and well-ordered plan it was not published in book-form and is therefore not yet available to the reading public. It was accompanied by a number of renderings of the hymns of the Rig Veda which were rather interpretations than translations. . . .

Finally, when it was proposed in 1949 to bring out *The Secret of the Veda* as a book, Sri Aurobindo dictated in reply:

The publication of the Secret of the Veda as it is does not enter into my intention.

(Editorial note adapted from S15: 602-03)

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