

CHAPTER FOUR: THE VEDAS IN THE LIGHT OF SRI AUROBINDO

We see art as an expression of emotions of the transcendental longing. Thus in every art there is a glimpse of the infinite. Thus we also have the Indian notion of '*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*', as Tagore puts it. Satyam Shivam Sundaram is an expression from Rabindranath Tagore. Should we interpret this philosophically, one can say that Satyam stands for Logic, Shivam stands for Ethics and Metaphysics and Sundaram stands obviously for Aesthetics. But then, these attempts also shall suffer from the usual reductionism as the case is, whom one attempts to translate Bhartiya concepts and categories into European terms and this danger always remains. Thus even these works of hymns can be considered as the expression of inner revelations of the Rishis and Rishikas coming from a different realm which the intellection fails and experiential only functions. Thus, Aurobindo had his transcendental experience first and later he went to confirm it in the Vedas in a most natural manner.

The whole point of the Vedas is not just restricted to the material gains or mere ritualistic aspects as interpreted by most European scholars. But it is a journey of the spiritual quest, the transcendental longing which man finds in this process. And as briefly explained in the four Mahavakyas of the Upanishads. It is the journey to the self through the self.

“Sri Aurobindo considers the Vedic Mantra produced in the dawn of human civilization as the best specimen of Poetic Art, because as he says, it is an invocation to Truth and a prayer to have spiritual intelligence, so that man can move forward in his Godward march. Thus, in all the Vedic Deities Sri Aurobindo traces diverse aspects of the same Truth and affirms that when Truth establishes its empire on earth a new light glows,- a divine touch energises all tissues and cells,- and human feelings experience celestial thrill: It is in such a situation that the human journey gets its fulfilment. Sri Aurobindo consequently, maintains that the future Poetry is to take the form of Mantra, so that it can directly communicate with Truth and bring it down on this mortal region through the music of sound and melody of sense.”(1)

The first glimpses of revelations which Aurobindo had which he later confirmed in the Vedas are of three Goddesses which also represent a psychological function in us. As further Sri

Aurobindo talks about the discoveries of these revelations, it is important to know this revelation as an inspiration and intuition in us. How to reach these revelations is through ascension and how to reach ascension is through sacrifice which is the essence of the Rig Veda. Again this sacrifice is done with the help of clarified butter which symbolises clarity of mind or perception.

Sri Aurobindo has often stated the role of ascension and evolution. Thus the secret of ascension that we find in the Rig Veda is sacrifice at different levels. Thus the entire Rig Veda and our lives revolve around this secret of *Sacrifice*. The word used in the Rig Veda for ascension is the bird *Hamsa* which soars in the sky, here describing the process of ascension. This happens towards truth where one finds soma (delight). Not sure if delight can be used for soma but it can help us understand that it can be something that which gives delight by making us immortal. Later we find Sri Aurobindo making dapper explanations when he comes to his philosophy of Integral Yoga.

“In the view of Sri Aurobindo the Vedas contain universal, eternal and impersonal truths, and consequently a harmonious blending of liturgical, god-based and spiritual interpretations along is competent to bring out the real important of the Veda. He gives an altogether different explanation of sacrifice and **soma**, the much- used oblation, and says that the process of sacrifice refers really to the perpetual on-going sacrifice continuing in the inner structure of the man, - a sacrifice, in which all egoistic and materialistic desires are consumed in the fire of divine energy burning in man, striving to attain the highest state of evolution. Keeping in conformity to this concept of ‘Sacrifice’ Sri Aurobindo explains ‘Soma’ as the immortal flow of Bliss, which constitutes a part and parcel of the man’s being, and consequently, gives him new inspiration and inducts in him a zest for life. The **Soma**, as envisaged in the scheme of Sri Aurobindo is not different from ‘perineal light’ or ‘Immortality’, That have been described as the goals of human existence in the famous Brihadaranyaka Upanishads.” (2)

Here Sri Aurobindo appears very close to reality. The Vedas are to be treated essentially as knowledge texts, created in a very special manner. Vedas have a style of speaking indirectly or even enigmatically. In all likelihood, this appears as a technique to keep preserving the

knowledge as archetype and without any losing of the contents. At the same time, the Vedic knowledge system also allows evolutions and interpretations given time and space in an infinite manner. Precisely this makes the Vedas both dynamic and eternal.

In the book 'The secret of the Veda' Sri Aurobindo begins with the hymns to the Agni in which different Gods are being called upon. Here the symbols of priest and clarified butter are shining cow of infinitude. Sacrifice cannot be performed without purohita which acts as a guide in performing the Sacrifice. Thus this purohitas are four in number hota, adhvaryu, udgata and Brahma.

“Gu (gavah) and go (gavah) bear throughout the Vedic hymns this double sense of cows and radiances.”(3)

That is luminous light coming from infinitude giving us Aditi (knowledge) also has a psychological function within our body. What we become by this is *Ribhus* who are ancient human beings who had attained to the condition of Godhead by power of knowledge.

“Knowledge itself was a traveling and a reaching, or a finding and a winning, the revelation came only at the end, the light was the prize of a final victory. There is continually in the Veda this image of the journey, the soul’s march on the path of Truth. On that path, as it advances, it also ascends; new vistas of power and light open to its aspirations; it wins by a heroic effort its enlarged spiritual possessions.”(4)

When Agni rises from earth to heaven again we see ascension in it. Later Indra descends from heaven to earth. Similar process of evolution and involution which we find in Sri Aurobindo’s writings. Later Sri Aurobindo describes this phenomenon of ascension and destruction more systematically as he establishes his philosophy of “Integral Yoga”. And when Indra descends it finds the trace of Sarama (Intuition); one of the Goddesses which Sri Aurobindo had a revelation of.

“Surya is the Lord of the supreme sight, the vast light, brhaj jyotih, or, as it is sometimes called, the true Light, rtam jyotih. And the connection between the words rtam and brhat is constant in the Veda.”(5)

What Indra does is he makes Sun (Surya) Truth mount high in the abode of our mentality. Thus Surya is the Sun, the master of supreme Truth and revelation. He is also *Savitri* (manifested of all things). Aurobindo’s poetry- “Savitri” is yet another attempt from the Maharishi to explain the entire cosmos itself. Thus with this begins new beginnings. We seek illuminations from the Surya of Truth in the form of *Usha* (The Divine Dawn).

“The language of the hymns clearly points to a particular worship or spiritual culture as the distinguishing sign of the Aryan,- a worship of Light and of the powers of Light and a self-discipline based on the culture of the “Truth” and the aspiration to Immortality,-Ritam and Amritam.”(6)

These illuminations lead us upto the highest beatitude that is Soma. Thus it is the highest beatitude and also the Truth. Thus we find many modern thinkers relating Truth with beauty and beauty with Truth. Thus this form of aesthetics has been talked upon by John Keats, Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi in the modern times. Also it’s reference we find in Tagore with the notion of ‘*Satyam Shivam Sundaram*’.

“If we take into account the numerous passages of the Veda which indicate the general object of the sacrifice, of the work, of the journey, of the increase of the light and the abundance of the waters to be the attainment of the Truth-consciousness, Ritam, with the resultant Bliss, Mayas, and that these epithets commonly apply to powers of the infinite, integral Truth-consciousness we can see that it is this attainment of the Truth which is indicated in these three verses.”(7)

As Sri Aurobindo talks about the discoveries of his revelations, it is important to know what these revelations are basically. *Illa, Saraswati and Sarama* which represents revelation, inspiration and intuition.

The truth of Surya comes with few conditions which are indispensable like Varuna (Vast Purity)-Mitra (luminous power), Bhagha (God of enjoyment), Vayu (life energy), Brihaspati (the power of the Soul), Ashwins (the lord of bliss), Vishnu (the all-pervading Godhead), Shiva and Rudra (supreme healer). These are present in us in the form of male energies. The following others are present in us in the form of female energies which are Aditi (infinite mother of Gods) which represents knowledge. The five powers of truth consciousness which are Mahi or Bharati (Vast Word). Illa (the power of revelation), Saraswati (the power of inspiration).

Vayu is the swiftest of God present everywhere, worthy of praise, who gives us our vital breath. With the help of all Godhead's truth can be realized.

“Saraswati means, “she of the stream the flowing movement,” and is therefore a natural name both for a river and for the goddess of inspiration.”(8)

Sarama (the power of intuition), Dakshina (the power of discern rightly). So these are the forms of energies present in us and they also happen to be our Vedic dieties. So these Vedic dieties represents the powers which we need to possess for our ascension towards the Truth.

Further the deities of the Rigveda basically Agni, Indra, Surya and Soma represents the four shaktis of fire, wind, the sun and water which further represents speech, breath, sight, mind respectively. These are basically four different light forms present in us. These Vedic deities are the powers which we need to possess for our ascension towards the Truth.

“Fire became speech and entered into the mouth; Air became Breath and entered into the nostrils; the Sun became Sight and entered into the eyes; the Quarters became Hearing and entered into the ears; Herbs of healing and the plants and trees became Hairs and entered into the skin; the Moon became Mind and entered into the heart; Death became apana, the lower breathing and entered into the navel; the Waters became Seed and entered into the organ.” (9)

“I had already seen that the central idea of the Vedic Rishis was the transition of the human soul from a state of death to a state of immortality by the exchange of the Falsehood for the Truth, of divided and limited being for integrality and infinity.” (10)

The difference between the Vedic Gods and the puranic Gods is that the Vedic Gods are pure in nature whereas the puranic Gods have certain human qualities. Thus when being provoked they can get really angry just like humans.

“The movement of spiritual practice is to progress from the material fire to the spiritual sun, from the limited light of the brain to the higher light of cosmic intelligence. The four Vedic light forms have specific interaction in various dual forms, in which their influences combine.” (11)

Another symbol we see is of *sacrifice* which means to grow by giving. Thus it is not confined to the ritualistic sacrifice but to the various aspects in the Universe. Thus, all our life is a Sacrifice. And we shall continue to see Vedas, revolving around sacrifice. Thus the sacrifice is offered to the Agni. Thus the first seer that we come across in the Rig Veda is Rishi Angirasa. He came from Brahma’s mouth. What we can learn from Rishi Angira is that the fire inside us should take the form of tapas and through the tapas one can excel in life. We can make impossible possible through tapas. So may Rishi Angira keep igniting the fire inside us.

“The Vedic sacrifice is, psychologically, a symbol of cosmic and individual activity become self-conscious, enlightened and aware of its goal.”(12)

So when we talk about our lives revolving sacrifices. What it means is our life is a battle and similar battle was fought by human fathers *Angirasa*.

The alter that is made for sacrifice is the altar of truth. Thus, one ’ s self is to be surrendered there. Thus, the nature of the Agni is to purify. Thus who ignites this deity brings for one

higher and higher plane until he becomes immortal. It is said that the soul in the man and the soul in the sun it is the same. Thus, who doesn't know his truer self-lives in ignorance. Thus, the evil here is ignorance. And ignite spiritual path in us.

“Sri Aurobindo points out to this hiatus between the Samhitas and the Upanisads , and asserts that the sacrifice that is projected in the samhitas is the inner sacrifice, perpetually continuing in the mind of the man,- an eternal ritual in which all the base inclinations and propensities are consumed into flames, helping the man in attainment of an immortal state of perfect good and felicity. The man is always a victim to opposite pulls of contradictory sets of impulses: one set trying to make his human journey crowned with spiritual fulfilment and the other set attempting to keep him confined within the narrow well of materialistic and ego-centric desires. The man who makes spiritual intelligence his guide attains fulfilment and ultimately arrives at the empire of Truth and realises the identity of his self with the self of the universe. In this eternal march of man, he receives support from all the Gods, who according to Sri Aurobindo, are represented by different aspects of the same Truth, when all aspects of Truth co-operate, beauty is enshrined in the creation, the supramental descends on earth and the kingdom of light and love, bliss and beauty, truth and trust worthiness is established. Referring to this magnificent combination of deities the Aitaareya Brahmana states: sabita creates and inspires: the Asvins with their two arms, Pusan with his auspicious hand, Agni with his effulgence, Surya with his lustre and Indra with his strength perform the ablution of this creation: all these deities bestow strength and grace on it, as a result of which it blossoms forth in it, as a result of which it blossoms forth in its full splendour.” (13)

Another meaning we can take here is when we sit for the Yajna we call upon a deity. So the psychological aspect of it is through the inner fire calling upon the divine present in one self.

So the purpose of Agni here is to make us truth conscious and to free us from our egoistic slumbers, basically to make us immortals. Again the notion of immortality also should not be taken literally. Certainly immortality here is not physical in any manner it has to be transcendental. Transcendental is the Atma and Atma by nature itself is immortal as it is one with the ultimately real. This makes any real search towards immortality a search at the real

nature of the ultimately real nature of the ultimately real and all exercises in whatever forms are only for and towards this.

Because of our ego we are not aware of our truer self. Just like we need a little rain to appreciate the sun. In the same way is the role of ignorance. It is only through ignorance that we can appreciate ananda. Therefore pain is a subordinate of this ignorance.

The whole Rig Veda revolves around sacrifice. This sacrifice is the sacrifices of our ego. Thus what happens in a sacrifice is we sacrifice our ego and in return gain a higher self or a divine self.

“If ignorance is essentially a self-limiting knowledge necessary for working out the secret intent of the universal consciousness force, then falsehood and evil must be its oblique powers used by it for some imperative operations in the areas of self-existence and world-existence. Of course they have no place in Sachchidananda himself; they are not his primary aspects. They have no self-existence in the supreme and cannot exist without ignorance. They both belong to the domain of relativity and not to the Absolute. As Sri Aurobindo put it, they ‘are fruits of unconsciousness and wrong consciousness’ and a by-product of world-manifestation. As such they are a part of our experience and not alive to existence itself. They make their appearance only in cosmic manifestation and do not pre-exist in the timeless being; they are in consistent with the truth and unity and bliss of its substance. Truth and falsehood, good and evil are not mutually dependent; they contradict and oppose each other. They are not opposite fundamental aspects of the Divine and have no fundamental of their own. Though latent in the self-existence they have no credibility or reality of their own by virtue of their inherence in the Absolute. They enter existence as soon as division and separateness enters; they become palpable and perceptible when division and detachment cultivate in opposition. Even as the powers of light and knowledge support and work for the growth of Good, the powers of Darkness and Falsehood work for the prolongation of the reign of Ignorance. Thus is the significance of the constant contest between the Devas and the Asuras in the Veda.” (14)

Here both Devas and Asuras are defined. Devas are ones who gives unconditionally and Asuras are ones who works only for the satisfaction of the senses.

In this world whatever we see are made up of opposite. Therefore we have the truth and the evil, night and day. The same concept exists in the Vedas where we find darkness that is ignorance and with the release of waters come light that is knowledge. It is the same process which we also find in ourselves.

What Sri Aurobindo has said about the Vedic deity Agni is the inner fire which needs to be ignited through tapas. Thus one who is baked enough spiritually will be able to retain soma (ecstasy) and one's whose body is not baked in tapas will not be able to retain it and shall brake. Thus this Agni is the external form of divine within us. In this era we cannot find seers thus we have to invoke the seer in us through tapas. Agni also carries a practical connotation. Agni is capable of transporting all offerings to the desired deity. How Agni does this shall ever remain unknown and so suggests in Kathopanishad.

“What he means is that the divine knowledge is all the time flowing constantly behind our thoughts, but is kept from us by the internal enemies who limit our material of mind to the sense-action and sense-perception so that though the waves of our being beat on banks that border upon the superconscient, the infinite, they are limited by the nervous action of the sense-mind and cannot reveal their secret.”(15)

Thus on an internal realm it means to ignite the internal realm it means to ignite the internal fire of divinity within us. This could also be compared with the example of chariot referring to the body as a tool in the Kathaponishad.

“Agni therefore, Sri Aurobindo concludes, is nothing other than the powers of penance,-the divine force, protecting all forms of knowledge and blazing for ever in the soul of man.”(16)

When we have all these hymns devoted to Agni, Mitra-Varuna, Ashwins. There is always a psychological process going on here. Or even when we talk about the psychological process. What goes on in our mind and body we cannot see that it is internal processes. But these processes are always running in our mind and body. Thus, through these hymns the rishis are talking about the same process. When they are calling upon Agni, Mitra-Varuna, Ashwin to do their tasks. Thus the deity of the mortal world is Agni and that of heaven is Indra. Agni being the purifier and Indra being the divine in intellect. Thus they are being accompanied by Mitra and Varuna. But Mitra stops us to see this divinity of mind. Thus Mitra plays the role of clouds hiding the Sun from us. In the Vedas obstructing the flow of the seven rivers. Thus Mitra signifies our own ignorance dwelling within us. Also the relation of soma to that of mind in us we can see through these symbols throughout in the Vedas and the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas firstly is the interpretation of few hymns from the Rig Veda. Secondly we see a psychological interpretation here which makes it more practical and less enigmatic.

“If we turn to Vedic symbols we see that the Ashwa or Horse is an image of the great dynamic force of Life, of the vital and nervous energy, and is constantly coupled with other images that symbolises the consciousness.”(17)

Here in the hymns we have to understand the significance of each deity and their relation to our body. Like the, Agni being the inner light and like.

“We have only to fix the psychological function of Agni, the priest, the fighter, the worker, the truth-finder, the winner of beatitude for man; and that has already been fixed for us in the first hymn of the Rig Veda by Madhuchchanda's description of him,-“the will in works of the seer true and most rich in varied inspiration.” Agni is the Deva, the All-seer, manifested as consciousness-force or, as it would be called in modern language, Divine or Cosmic Will, first hidden and building up the eternal worlds, then manifest, “born”, building up in man the Truth and the Immortality.”(18)

Varuna being the Pran or Breath is the God of wideness. Lord Varuna helps us to become vast, it is important to become broad minded to grasp the special knowledge which is covered by darkness. Varuna helps to remove this darkness.

“Varuna in the Veda is not an Indian Neptune, neither is he precisely, as the European scholars at first imagined, the Greek Ouranos, the sky. He is the master of an ethereal wideness, an upper ocean, of the vastness of being, of its purity; in that vastness, it is elsewhere said, he has made paths in the pathless infinite along which surya, the sun, the Lord of Truth and the Light can move.”(19)

Horse symbolises power of knowledge.

“A study of the Vedic horse led me to the conclusions that go and asva represent the two companion ideas of light and energy, consciousness and Force, which to the Vedic and Vedantic mind were the double or twin aspect of all the activities of existence.”(20)

The description of this vastness in the book can only be felt if it is experienced in real. That is Brahman is said to be the infinite or Ananta. Thus, we being the one with Brahman is said to be the infinite or Ananta. Thus, we being the one with Brahman are of the same nature. Thus, whatever that we read in the book and the significance of these deities with our physical self is relatable according to the book. But in real it can be known or believed only if it is experienced in reality. It is only after the experience of this vastness that all the things in the book and its relevance shall come true for us. Only then the jigsaw puzzles shall fall into place as the meanings of the symbols are of the esoteric sense. And not all are fit to grasp it but only the chosen ones who wouldn't misuse its true power.

Thus the deities in the Vedas should not be considered by hierarchy or the number of times they have been mentioned in the hymns but by the functions they perform in us. Also they represent the psychological functions in us. Also they are the energies centres from which this consciousness proceeds. Because even for energy it needs a source from which it proceeds. Thus these deities are these sources.

“It is beyond doubt that go is used in the Veda in the double sense of cow and light; the cow is the outer symbol, the inner meaning is the light. The figure of the cows stolen and hidden by the Panis is constant in the Veda. Here it is evident that as the sea is a psychological symbol-the heart-ocean, samudre hr̥di,- and the soma is a psychological symbol and the clarified butter is a psychological symbol, the cow in which the gods find the clarified butter hidden by the Panis must also symbolise an inner illumination and not physical light.” (21)

“If we may be permitted the liberty of interpreting this part of the story in modern psychological terms with necessary modifications, we may pretty well identify Pani’s cave with the unconscious of the human mind, particularly the collective one as made out by C.G.Jung, which harbours within it immense wisdom of colossal dimensions and is not prepared to let them come to the conscious mind ordinarily. So do the Panis. The cows of wisdom are restlessly lowing in their cave but are not allowed to come out even on the intervention of Sarama.” (22)

Panis are not people outside clan but from within the same clan. But used for self-centred people. So psychologically we see it is a character trait within us. So even if we want to destroy it, it is not something to be destroyed outside but within us only. Even in the allegory we see the same thing, Panis obstructs the flow of water because they want to keep it only for themselves. Pani’s cave here stands for ignorance in us and release of cows stands for knowledge which is obstructed due to ignorance. Seers with the help of deities are able to do it, in this case with the help of Indra the slayer.

“This account has the possibility of interpretation from a viewpoint is cosmogonic. Since the Vedas at every step go deep down to the root of the creation and always claim to belong to that root, there is full justification for any such interpretation. From this viewpoint, the cows of Indra kept confined in the cave maybe taken as symbolic of the fact of matter having within it in a latent form the entire possibility of future developments in the form of life, mind and higher consciousness. The theory of evolution tells us that it is out of matter that life and mind have grown. The problem is that matter could not have given rise to life and mind from within it, had it not all these present in it in a latent form, for it is only nothing which can come out of nothing. Prior presence of life etc. in matter would, however, necessarily

presuppose entrance of these elements of opposite nature in matter at some earlier stage in the process of creation. So must also be the case with the higher wisdom. Pani's cave yielding cows of wisdom on the intervention of Indra and Brhaspati may, therefore, be taken as an allegorical way of stating how matter has given rise from within it eventually to the higher wisdom which is yet to be owned by mankind in general and is lying there in the Veda." (23)

"In this mantra seer explicitly conceives of the cave as a symbol of the human psyche serving as the secret source of words and indeed of speech as such. There is another mantra seen by Dirghatamas which talks of four stages in the vocalisation of things. According to it, the actual steps involved in the production of speech are four but the earlier three steps lie hidden inscrutable in the cave while it is only the fourth step which comes to serve as the point of articulation by mankind." (24)

Just like on a rainy day the sun gets hidden by the Sun. In the same way the Titans have hidden this Sun. Here hiding of the Sun causes darkness that is the suffering in humans.

"In the Veda the recovery of the light is first effected by the Angirases, the seven sages, the ancient human fathers and is then constantly repeated in human experience by their agency."(25)

Thus when the clouds disappear the Sun is out again, spreading its brightness that is knowledge. That is in us ignorance is being removed by this knowledge. So that we realize our truer illumined self and take ascend towards our illumined self.

"In other Upanishads the Gods are clearly the symbols of sense-functions in man. Soma, the plant which yielded the mystic wine for the Vedic Sacrifice, has become not only the God of the moon, but manifests himself as mind in the human being."(26)

The mind is often symbolised by moon cause of the similarities they share. The beauty of symbols is it is always open ended therefore it is open to several interpretations same has

been done in the work of Yaska. He has provided interpretation on three levels, out of which the western scholars have stuck to the physical level therefore reducing all the deities to physical elements. Sri Aurobindo has provided psychological interpretation, therefore the dimensions of interpreting vedic symbols still remain open, that is the purpose of symbols as there is no certainty to it as in case of a sign which represent a particular form.

“Symbols mostly are used in their original shape. It is only rarely that some change is made in a symbol’s shape so as to make it more suitable in representing the idea symbolically. But to make so many changes in one and the same symbol all in a single stroke is something rarest & therefore indicative of the extremely complex nature of the idea it is intended to symbolise.” (27)

“His theory of threefold interpretation of the Veda is a significant illustration on the point. According to this theory, Vedic mantras have the possibility of interpretation on three levels, the physical, the supra-physical and the spiritual. Agni, for instance, which has so elaborately been invoked in the Veda, appears sometimes or rather more often as a deity and sometimes also as the psychic or spiritual being lying in the heart of man. So is the case with the rest of the divinities. Almost all of them can be identified on these three levels with the sole exception of certain divinities of purely psychological nature, such as Dhi, Dhisana, Manyu, etc., which are shorn of physicality. They too, however, retain their remaining two aspects, that is supra-physical and spiritual. The triplicity in the nature of the Vedic deities brought out by Yaska, indeed, has emboldened the Western Scholars to try to reduce each Vedic deity to the physical level identifying it with some or the other physical phenomenon cancelling, however, the remaining two aspects as a sheer concoction of the primitive mind, as the Vedic seers were supposed by them to have actually been.” (28)

The deities are related to the elements in the body at a physical level. With the help of the mantra vibrations these elements of deities in us are evoked.

In the book Night is used as a symbol of Ignorance and dawn is used as the symbol of knowledge. Thus, dawn is a symbol of Goddess Usha. Savitri the creator, illuminator and

revealer of light. Here, the dawn mentioned is the never ending dawn. Next we have the bird Hamsa symbolises upward soaring movement of the soul or that of liberated soul. Heaven here is the mental consciousness and earth being the physical one. The dawn that is Usha is also symbolic of an evolutionary process.

“For the bird in the Riks is quite often a symbol of the liberated soul that soars to the heights of Being. We know the Hamsa bird is the symbol of the supreme Soul. The famous Rik of Vamadeva “Hamsah Shuchishad” has still more familiarised us with this truth.” (29)

“When any material object is used to signify something beyond its own range, it becomes figurative and when the figurative usage matures into the reflective usage of the object in the broader sense, it becomes symbolic.” (30)

Usha illuminates the seeker of truth with knowledge therefore brings radiance. Every word has an exoteric meaning. Usha helps illumine different levels of consciousness who is also called the daughter of heaven and spouse to surya.

“The word usra is always used in the Veda, like go, with the double sense of the concrete figure or symbol, the Bull or Cow, and at the same time the psychological indication of the bright or luminous ones, the illumined powers of the Truth in man.”(31)

Many deities are compared with that of bull because of the power they possess like bull. We also find seals of bull in Indus Valley Civilization. Bull as power is also part of our economy.

So just like Brahman cannot be known without the help of a Guru or by the Grace of God. In the same way the Soma wine that is the drink of delight is not everyone’s cup of tea. Because even to know Brahman with the help of a Guru or by the Grace of God. One has to be prepared to know Brahman. Thus, even to drink and sustain the Soma Wine one has to be prepared for its outcomes. If we go to see the interpretation of the Soma rus. That itself can have so many interpretation in itself. It belongs to the empire of truth. One gets to enjoy it

only when one has known the truth. The thing that we see in Aurobindo's writings is the emphasis on the upward movement. Even when he talks about the Aryans or the Greek mythology which he compares in his book. The upward movement starts right from the Arctic. Other areas where we see the upward movement is in the evolution starting from involution. Here too we see the upward movement that is from mind to super mind. So the journey is about the highest level. But it is not limited to that cause once when we have reached the Gnostic level from Psychic level. That is ascent is not permanent because we have to come down again to help other Psychic Being reach their Gnostic level. Thus, that is how we don't have the concept of heaven. But it's very practical same as what has been said by Swami Vivekananda in his practical Vedanta.

“Sometimes the Mantras are interpreted as Subjective symbolism or psychological spiritualism concealed in a concrete and material way to hide the truth from the profane and reveal it only to the qualified and the initiated. Thus Surya signifies intelligence, Agni will, Soma feeling; Ashvamedha means meditation where the whole universe is offered as the horse and desires are sacrificed and true spiritual autonomy (svarajya) is attained.”(32)

Even the horse sacrifice is symbolic where the horse stands for various God heads. This argument is also supported by the allegory of Lord Krishna in Bhagvad Gita, where people fail to recognize his divine origin initially.

Even to the common intellect the mantras may seem meaningless but the power of the mantras remains. It is the usage of the mantras whether in yajna or otherwise which is used and is popular here again the inherent value of the mantras remains. Also the sounds and vibrations the mantras produce have a certain effect that is how they are called as mantras; otherwise they also will be ordinary lines. This is what makes the mantras extremely powerful. The mantras give us the glimpses of the reality. They are meant to have an effect. The nature of the mantras is very subtle, yet containing in them profound meaning. Everything is yajna even the karma that we do is also yajna.

“When this energization of speech occurs, we begin to find profound meanings in a few simple sounds. Sound becomes meaning, and we do not need an idea to interpret the sounds of the mind. Such primary sounds as Om give rise to whole fields or spectrums of meaning. They break down the barrier of language and take us into the universal state of communication which is silence and peace.” (33)

“The Rishis used the means of Yajna for reaching the Truth, and in their seeking solicited the support of the gods. Yajna took them into the active presence of the gods who helped them to have glimpses of the Truth- Light and reinforced their faith in their immortal destiny; it identified their inner being with the Truth and enabled them to see its workings. The seeker-sacrificers fixed their will and thought on the eternal Truth behind and beyond all phenomena through ‘one-pointed concentration’ and by crumbling down the wall of separation between the phenomenal and the noumenal.” (34)

If we have to talk about the role that numbers plays in the Veda it can be taken as a whole new different science or separate researches can be done merely on this for example we have the seven headed thoughts, the seven world, seven rivers and coincidentally seven chakras in our body. So this makes it a different science altogether. But here in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo what we know as *supermind* is saptadhi (seven headed-thought), Turiyam svid, Satyam, Ritam, Brihat of the Rig Veda. So there is body, life, mind, saptadhi, sat, chit and Ananda.

Ritam for Sri Aurobindo is truth consciousness. Here truth, Satya is also of the nature Brihat meaning Vast.

As we know Ritam is the truth consciousness and Saraswati is the power that comes along with truth consciousness. Along with Illa and Mahi which even Sri Aurobindo has experienced. Thus Saraswati brings the power of inspiration, illumining us and changing our perception. Thus if we relate this with the general understanding of Goddess Saraswati, is also the Goddess of knowledge.

“For I was left free to attribute their natural psychological significance to many ordinary and current words of the Veda, such as dhi, thought or understanding, manas, mind, mati, thought, feeling, or mental state, manisa, intellect, rtam, truth; to give their exact shades of sense to kavi, seer, manisi, thinker, vipra, vipascit, enlightened in mind, and a number of similar words; and to hazard a psychological sense, justified by more extensive study, for words like daksha which for sayana means strength and sravas which he renders as wealth, food or fame. The psychological theory of the Veda rests upon our right to concede their natural significance to these vocables.” (35)

According to Sri Aurobindo’s hypothesis what we observe is a parallelism between the internal implications in us. This is the psychological interpretation offered by Sri Aurobindo.

As it is believed the words of the Vedas are apaushya, thus the seers are called seers because they have experienced these words. Thus they are the drashta. Thus, they are mere instruments of a higher reality. Through the Psychological interpretation of Sri Aurobindo we find out that how he has come to find out the Veda’s to be not apaushya but rather impersonal. Thus, for him it is the expression’s or experience we get through the practice of Yoga. We see reduction of the Gods of Vedas into our psychological functioning. The state of transcendence, the result of it is peace which he further describes in his book ‘Integral Yoga’. There is psychological significance of each God and there is no hierarchy among Gods. Thus each God can be seen through these three realms physical, mental and spiritual.

Sri Aurobindo’s yogic experiences have given rise to his Integral philosophy, which has also helped him in decoding the Vedic Symbolism.

There is also something about Yoga. One can logically see that Yoga, the method from Yoga as Yogaj pre-existed all knowing. For the method of Yogaj to exist, Yoga must naturally exist. Yogaj has to pre-exist, because Yogaj is the very method that gave rise to all knowing.

Yogaj is trans-sensory perception; that knows directly without the employment of sense organs. The advantage of cognitional sciences is that, they invented instruments those enhances the natural capacities of same organs to acquire knowledge, Yogaj has the only method of knowing at a time when cognitive sciences were not born at all.

In the Puranas we see a sense of expression by the seers. But expression here was not their aim but just a means into the revelations of higher truth. Thus Vedas can be said to be a spiritual explorations and not restricted to that mere poems. Thus the seers were not just poets but seers in real sense. Their personalities do differ. But their goal remained the same that of spiritual explorations. Though there are relations between the seers their names and their psychological implications. Same we can see for example in the name of Angiras Rishi representing the fire element and like.

“It is fairly evident that the Angiras Rishis are here the radiant lustres of the divine Agni which are born in heaven, therefore of the divine Flame and not of any physical fire; they become equipped with the nine rays of the Light and the ten, become most angiras, that is to say most full of the blazing radiance of Agni, the divine flame, and are therefore able to release the imprisoned Light and Force and create the supramental knowledge.” (36)

All seers pray to Agni as Agni is the purifier, bestower of knowledge. Thus different deities in the Veda have different functions. The seers pray to these Gods for relevant functions. The most important of God we can call upon Agni as he has the capacity to make everything pure.

Deities according to the Rishis are the ones who give you unconditionally. If we see these are the elements required for sustenance. Therefore in the Rig Veda we have Gods like Agni, Vayu which are the elements of the nature also the elements from which we are made. Thus these deities have direct relation to us. That is what in the present day we understand as ecology where we know that everything is interconnected with each other and we are dependent on other things as well.

“Agni, the one who is born first, born even before the gods, signifies strength, luminosity and movement. He is the priest who carries out the work of sacrifice and the principal summoner who brings all the other gods to the place of sacrifice. He is the bearer and founder of all felicity. He, the most adorable, bestows upon the sacrifice the strength and vigour necessary for the heroic inner journey as well as protects him on every side from all evil.” (37)

Misconception of human and animal sacrifice is there in the Veda but this sacrifice is about the inner aspects in us. The Gods are said to be twice born. First they are born as the cosmic Gods. Then after the sacrifice they are born in the sacrificer to lift him from his slumbers. Therefore they are called as *dvija*.

“Nothing is more remarkable in the Veda than the exactness with which hymn after hymn describes with a marvellous simplicity and lucidity the physical and psychological processes through which Indian Yoga proceeds. The process, the progression, the successive movements of the soul here described are exactly what the Yogin experiences today so many thousands of years after the Veda was revealed.” (38)

“Thinking on this line, Sri Aurobindo comes to the conclusion that the naturalistic exterior of the Veda also must have been intended by the seers to constitute the article of faith and practice of the people. Thus the Veda, according to him, has two aspects, the inner which is psychological, & the outer which is naturalistic. The inner is intended for the elites of the time while the outer is meant for the common people. The outer is drawn from the traditional beliefs of the semi-civilised people. It was also a matter of common practice at the time of composition of the *samhitas*. The inner, on the contrary, represented the spiritual discovery of the Vedic seers themselves. Since the seers were not very large in number, & since the inner was not easy of comprehension, it remained confined only to a small circle. In view of difficulties involved in its understanding by the common people, the seers wanted to keep it secret from the superficial eye. With this end in view, they presented the inner meaning by enshrouding it in the language of the common belief which obviously was naturalistic in character. Thus, from the same texts, the initiates grasped their own deeper meaning while the common man understood his own.” (39)

“That the light of the Vedic seer is symbolic of the highly willed aspiration of man is evident from a mantra seen by Sakti Vasistha. In this mantra, the seer prays to Indra to infuse will-power into him in the same way as the father infuses his will-power into his sons. Considering life symbolically as an expedition, he prays to the deity to make mankind so capable as to attain to the light. If the light aspired for were merely the physical light, no matter that of the sun or of fire, there was no necessity of deploying one’s total will-power to

its attainment. What would be aimed at by deploying total will-power would obviously form the highest objective of life. That objective in this mantra has been indicated by the word jyotis, light.” (40)

So even what we see today as religions or mere the Indian philosophies all have been coming from the Vedas, directly or indirectly. It is through the Vedas the spiritual roots of the East are strong. Thus, spirituality is our very essence. Thus, legends like Shankara, Paramahansa and Vivekananda tried to explain this reality in their own unique ways.

“Our Darshana, Tantra and Purana, our Shaivism, Shaktism and Vaishnavism, our orthodoxy, heresy and heterodoxy, even when they have been the most perfect misunderstandings of each other, have always been imperfect understandings of one Vedic truth. Shankara clasped the head of Vedic truth, Ramanuja embraced its heart; but both the great disputants were dazzled by their adoration of the body of one veiled deity. Our greatest modern minds are mere tributaries of the old Rishis. This very Shankara who seems to us a giant, had only a fragment of their knowledge. Buddha wandered away on a bypath of their universal kingdom. In our own day Ramakrishna lived in his being and concretised in his talk, Vivekananda threw out into brilliance of many-sided thought and eloquent speech the essence of ancient Veda. The Veda was the beginning of our spiritual knowledge; the Veda will remain its end. These compositions of an unknown antiquity are as the many breasts of eternal Mother of knowledge from which our succeeding ages have been fed.” (41)

That is exactly what happens in the last stage of Ashrama that is one is supposed to move towards spirituality. So all our life has been only a preparation towards spirituality. Even in Aurobindo’s concept of supermind we find the same pattern that is there is a shift from mental to supramental level, from lower to higher plane, from consciousness to supra-consciousness. So in short there is always an upward movement. That is the ultimate aim of an individual. But this ultimate aim is not restricted to this supramental level. That is the journey of Psychic Being towards Gnostic Being. Once an individual reaches the level of Gnostic Being. We see ascend here, but this ascend is followed by descend that is it should be brought down to the level of Psychic Being. To help these psychic being reach Gnostic level. So the journey is not restricted to an individual’s journey, but for whole of the humanity. It is

the most practical philosophy, and the same thing we can read in others work as well be it Swami Vivekananda's practical Vedanta. The difference is everyone has their own way of conveying it.

“It is by the dawning of the true or infinite consciousness in man that he arrives out of this evil dream of pain and suffering, this divided creation into the Bliss, the happy state variously described in Veda by the words *bhadram*, *mayas* (love and bliss, *svasti* (the good state of existence, right being) and by others less technically used such as *varyam*, *rayih*, *rayah*.” (42)

The entire Veda is a journey towards the upward movement that is from mortality towards immortality. Even when we consider it in the modern times, it does seem very relevant. That is even the other religions or religions do talk about the same like, Moksh, Nirvana, Liberation and like. Thus, it is in the nature of man to move towards the upward movement. It can be done in one life or one may need many more births for it until and unless the person finds certitude of truth. The journey is about reaching the truth and in-between we will find many obstacles.

There are also hindrances in the way of immortality which in the *samhitas* are called as *Aratis*. We understand the entire process is about achieving immortality through higher consciousness, which Sri Aurobindo in his terminology calls as *widening, heightening, and integration*. Rig Veda is description of the experience, aim and journey of the seers. The same thing is attempted by Sri Aurobindo by interpreting the works of the Rishis and also his own experience. Therefore we see many terminologies in the entire process which we call as symbols and also the usage of allegories in many hymns. There are different shakhas of the Vedas; these shakhas are further divided according to the works of Rishis and further modifications were dealt in them accordingly.

“When we go through all the references to *Aratis* in the *Samhitas*, what we find *prima facie* is that *Aratis* are neither Raksasas nor any non-Aryans, whosoever, exclusively but were figures used for describing tangibly the forces of hindrance describing tangibly the forces of hindrance coming in the way of the seer in his search for the higher reality and attempt at self-transformation. This proposition gets support from the very second mantra quoted above in which the seer expresses his obligation to *Agni* for having exposed the *Aratis* as well as the

Raksasas and burnt them out completely so that he could ascend to the wide intermediate space leaving behind the constraints of the earth. Ascension of the seer to the intermediate space those days obviously was not possible as a matter of fact. The seer's experience of such ascension, therefore, is to be taken in the figurative sense of the widening of the horizons of his consciousness and the consequent sense of elevation thus experienced. It is when he comes to this higher experience that he feels that all his *Aratis* as well as the *Raksasas* have got burnt." (43)

"Truth comes to us as a light, a voice, compelling a change of thought, imposing a new discernment of ourselves and all around us. Truth of thought creates truth of vision and truth of vision forms in us truth of being, and out of truth of being (Satyam) flows naturally truth of emotion, will and action. This is indeed the central notion of the Veda." (44)

One does wander in search for the truth. As soon as we know it, we become silence. It is a process hard to explain as it can be restricted to one's own experience and temperament. But to understand it in short one should go through it by itself. But it could be explained through silence because that is the nature of such reality.

The reality dwells in the centre where all the nerves meet. It has been symbolized by the word *Om* for the kind of effects it has on the body due to its vibrations.

"All the Vedic Godheads are truth principles or formations of truth, law, harmony, and vastness. Indra is most commonly the Lord of Sat. Such approaches have an integrative function, and do not aim to set up rigid structures, which is why they have variations." (45)

Indra and Varuna are both upholders of the truth. Thus they bless abundantly to the truth seekers. Thus they are praised and called upon through the hymns in the Rig Veda.

"Indra is repeatedly affirmed to be the supreme god. Associated with the Maruts, linked to Rudra, Vishnu and the Angirasas and intimately connected with Parjanya besides Saraswati

and Pusan, he is said to have killed all the enemies of the soul's progress, namely Vala, Vritra, Sambara and the Dasyus. He is frequently hymned as the twin-brother of Agni and also associated with Surya. The association of Agni and Soma as well as of Indra and Agni occurs frequently in the Veda. Agni is supposed to entertain Indra and press the Soma-wine for him." (46)

"The three main Vedic Gods, Indra, Agni and Soma, relate to the three Doshas or biological humors of Ayurveda as Vata (air), Pitta (fire) and Kapha (water). Indra has the energy of air and the life-force and is often equated with it as Vata or Vayu. Agni is the essential energy of fire and Soma, the essential energy of water. The Vedic chants provide the sound vibrations which balance the three humors in the body and open up their subtle potentials in the mind. From them a complete mantra therapy for disease can be derived." (47)

"Fire is the Divine presence, the presence of light in the material world. No better symbol for the Divine can be found. The spirit is hidden in all material things the way fire is latent in wood. Hence, fire is our most convenient symbol of the Divine and our aspiration towards it. In the homa ceremony we offer our thoughts and emotions to the Divine. We sacrifice the impurities of our lower nature into the Fire of awareness. We can write down our failings in life or the things in our nature we wish to be corrected and offer them into such a sacred fire. This will align us with the powers of nature and the spirit to correct them. Or we can offer into the fire those higher goals and blessings we wish to bring about. It will also serve to energize them. Fire is the Divine messenger. Whatever we offer to it is taken to the Divine and comes back with the portion of Divine energy we open ourselves to." (48)

In several traditions we see fire being worshipped as a symbol of Divine because it brings light, illumination and is representation of knowledge.

Soma symbolises a tool which is used for purification which brings illumination. Just like Agni Surya too purifies. Surya is associated with Illumination; he illuminates the consciousness with Truth, thus helpful for the truth seekers. Just like his rays compared that with ten hundred horses. He is the most glorious of Gods. Surya here is the truth

consciousness, which makes the seeker aware of the truth, therefore removing every hint of darkness or ignorance. Such a surya is praise worthy, the seers praise this Surya.

“Dadhyan is provided with the horse’s head by the Aswins; it represents the dynamic strength and motive-force of the swift moving powers of Life which in the main is a higher and wider constituent of the Cosmos engulfing, pressing upon and penetrating into the physical existence.” (49)

“In the Vedic symbolism Aswins are two distinct formations of the same Godhead for the same purpose but representing severally Light and Power or knowledge and will, with an intimacy of understanding and a mutual dependence. Because of their immediate relation of mutuality they embody the forces of harmony & beauty & health and joy. Their own archetypal interdependence and harmony in the cosmic functioning brings to bear on us the necessity of realising the interdependence of things and beings, the balance and harmony that is preserved among them by a unifying principle, by the great secret. Their mutual relation is that of a balance and harmony but neither of them can be explained by itself without the term of the other and therefore their mutual dependence and balance and harmony can be explained by that one secret, the Madhu, the Delight of being in all existence which effects, supports and holds them in close affinity. It is this Delight that makes possible the harmony and explains and unfolds the necessity of diverse forms in the manifested existence and gives them their value.” (50)

True knowledge comes from within, even if we study the Vedas or any scripture. The beauty of true knowledge is such that it comes only from internal source and not from external source.

Why light is selected as a symbol by Vedic seers because as light illumines everything in the same way light illumines the consciousness therefore the usage of light is done.

So to conclude Sri Aurobindo’s views on Rig Veda one should read between the lines or one should look beyond the parables that are stated in each hymns. Only then one can reach the

essence of the Vedas. That is one really has to understand its spiritual significance than its intellectual significance. So one must look beyond the words and focus on the esoteric meanings than the literal meanings.

Vedas are created in an enigmatic manner which calls for interpretations from time to time and space to space. The understanding and interpretations appear to be infinite and for each individual this could be different.

Aurobindo's understanding of Vedas also carries the same character of Vedas in a most natural manner.

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