

Chapter 1 : The Secret of the Veda, Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo breaks new ground in interpreting the ancient Vedas. His deeper insight into this came from his own spiritual practices for which he found vivid allegorical descriptions in the Vedas.

A Retrospect of Vedic Theory Veda, then, is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies. In that original epoch thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning and speech accepted modes of expression which in our modern habits would be inadmissible. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Vedas. In the Vedic idea of the revelation there is no suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. The Rishi who employed these faculties, had acquired them by a progressive self-culture. Knowledge itself was a travelling 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. On that path, as it advances, it also ascends; new vistas of power and light open to its aspiration; it wins by a heroic effort its enlarged spiritual possessions. From the historical point of view the Rig Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. It is far, therefore, from being an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation, nor does it consist of the dogmas of a primitive religion. Only, out of the sameness of experience and out of the impersonality of the knowledge received, there arise a fixed body of conceptions constantly repeated and a fixed symbolic language which, perhaps, in that early human speech, was the inevitable form of these conceptions because alone capable by its combined concreteness and power of mystic suggestion of expressing that which for the ordinary mind of the race was inexpressible. We have, at any rate, the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures and frequently in the same phrases with an entire indifference to any search for poetical originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated form which had become for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates. The hymns possess indeed a finished metrical form, a constant subtlety and skill in their technique, great variations of style and poetical personality; they are not the work of rude, barbarous and primitive craftsmen, but the living breath of a supreme and conscious Art forming its creations in the puissant but well-governed movement of a self-observing inspiration. Still, all these high gifts have deliberately been exercised within one unvarying framework and always with the same materials. For the art of expression was to the Rishis only a means, not an aim; their principal preoccupation was strenuously practical, almost utilitarian, in the highest sense of utility. The hymn was to the Rishi who composed it a means of spiritual progress for himself and for others. The invariable fixity of Vedic thought when taken in conjunction with its depth, richness and subtlety, gives rise to some interesting speculations. For we may reasonably argue that such a fixed form and substance would not easily be possible in the beginnings of thought and psychological experience or even during their early progress and unfolding. We may therefore surmise that our actual Sanhita represents the close of a period, not its commencement, nor even some of its successive stages. It is even possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or version of a more ancient lyric evangel couched in the freer and more pliable forms of a still earlier human speech. Or the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of a more richly vocal Aryan past. Made, according to the common belief, by Krishna of the Isle, the great traditional sage, the colossal compiler Vyasa, with his face turned towards the commencement of the Iron Age, towards the centuries of increasing twilight and final darkness, it is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition, the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, to their descendants, to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels and the more easy and secure gains — secure perhaps only in appearance — of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reason.

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Chapter 2 : Secret of the Veda by Sri Aurobindo

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The greatness of a literature lies first in the greatness and worth of its substance, the value of its thought and the beauty of its forms, but also in the degree to which, satisfying the highest conditions of the art of speech, it avails to bring out and raise the soul and life or the living and the ideal mind of a people, an age, a culture, through the genius of some of its greatest or most sensitive representative spirits. And if we ask what in both these respects is the achievement of the Indian mind as it has come down to us in the Sanskrit and other literatures, we might surely say that here at least there is little room for any just depreciation and denial even by a mind the most disposed to quarrel with the effect on life and the character of the culture. The language itself, as has been universally recognised by those competent to form a judgment, is one of the most magnificent, the most perfect and wonderfully sufficient literary instruments developed by the human mind, at once majestic and sweet and flexible, strong and clearly-formed and full and vibrant and subtle, and its quality and character would be of itself a sufficient evidence of the character and quality of the race whose mind it expressed and the culture of which it was the reflecting medium. The great and noble use made of it by poet and thinker did not fall below the splendour of its capacities. Nor is it in the Sanskrit tongue alone that the Indian mind has done high and beautiful and perfect things, though it couched in that language the larger part of its most prominent and formative and grandest creations. It would be necessary for a complete estimate to take into account as well the Buddhistic literature in Pali and the poetic literatures, here opulent, there more scanty in production, of about a dozen Sanskritic and Dravidian tongues. The whole has almost a continental effect and does not fall so far short in the quantity of its really lasting things and equals in its things of best excellence the work of ancient and mediaeval and modern Europe. A mental activity so great and of so fine a quality commencing more than three thousand years ago and still not exhausted is unique and the best and most undeniable witness to something extraordinarily sound and vital in the culture. A criticism that ignores or belittles the significance of this unsurpassed record and this splendour of the self-expressing spirit and the creative intelligence, stands convicted at once of a blind malignity or an invincible prejudice and does not merit refutation. No criticism would be worth making on such a mass of absurdities, and in this equally ridiculous philippic only a stray observation or two less inconsequent and opaque than the others perhaps demands a passing notice. But although these futilities do not at all represent the genuine view of the general European mind on the subject of Indian poetry and literature, still one finds a frequent inability to appreciate the spirit or the form or the aesthetic value of Indian writing and especially its perfection and power as an expression of the cultural mind of the people. One meets such criticisms even from sympathetic critics as an admission of the vigour, colour and splendour of Indian poetry followed by a conclusion that for all that it does not satisfy, and this means that the intellectual and temperamental misunderstanding extends to some degree even to this field of creation where different minds meet more readily than in painting and sculpture, that there is a rift between the two mentalities and what is delightful and packed with meaning and power to the one has no substance, but only a form, of aesthetic or intellectual pleasure for the other. This difficulty is partly due to an inability to enter into the living spirit and feel the vital touch of the language, but partly to a spiritual difference in similarity which is even more baffling than a complete dissimilarity and otherness. Chinese poetry for example is altogether of its own kind and it is more possible for a Western mentality, when it does not altogether pass it by as an alien world, to develop an undisturbed appreciation because the receptivity of the mind is not checked or hampered by any disturbing memories or comparisons. Indian poetry on the contrary, like the poetry of Europe, is the creation of an Aryan or Aryanised national mind, starts apparently from similar motives, moves on the same plane, uses cognate forms, and yet has something quite different in its spirit which creates a pronounced and separating divergence in its aesthetic tones, type of

imagination, turn of self-expression, ideative mind, method, form, structure. The mind accustomed to the European idea and technique expects the same kind of satisfaction here and does not meet it, feels a baffling difference to whose secret it is a stranger, and the subtly pursuing comparison and vain expectation stand in the way of a full receptivity and intimate understanding. At bottom it is an insufficient comprehension of the quite different spirit behind, the different heart of this culture that produces the mingled attraction and dissatisfaction. The subject is too large to be dealt with adequately in small limits: I shall only attempt to bring out certain points by a consideration of some of the most representative master works of creative intuition and imagination taken as a record of the soul and mind of the Indian people. The early mind of India in the magnificent youth of the nation, when a fathomless spiritual insight was at work, a subtle intuitive vision and a deep, clear and greatly outlined intellectual and ethical thinking and heroic action and creation which founded and traced the plan and made the permanent structure of her unique culture and civilisation, is represented by four of the supreme productions of her genius, the Veda, the Upanishads and the two vast epics, and each of them is of a kind, a form and an intention not easily paralleled in any other literature. The two first are the visible foundation of her spiritual and religious being, the others a large creative interpretation of her greatest period of life, of the ideas that informed and the ideals that governed it and the figures in which she saw man and Nature and God and the powers of the universe. The Veda gave us the first types and figures of these things as seen and formed by an imaged spiritual intuition and psychological and religious experience; the Upanishads constantly breaking through and beyond form and symbol and image without entirely abandoning them, since always they come in as accompaniment or undertone, reveal in a unique kind of poetry the ultimate and unsurpassable truths of self and God and man and the world and its principles and powers in their most essential, their profoundest and most intimate and their most ample realities, - highest mysteries and clarities vividly seen in an irresistible, an unwall'd perception that has got through the intuitive and psychological to the sheer spiritual vision. And after that we have powerful and beautiful developments of the intellect and the life and of ideal, ethical, aesthetic, psychic, emotional and sensuous and physical knowledge and idea and vision and experience of which the epics are the early record and the rest of the literature the continuation; but the foundation remains the same throughout, and whatever new and often larger types and significant figures replace the old or intervene to add and modify and alter the whole ensemble, are in their essential build and character transmutations and extensions of the original vision and first spiritual experience and never an unconnected departure. There is a persistence, a continuity of the Indian mind in its literary creation in spite of great changes as consistent as that which we find in painting and sculpture. The Veda is the creation of an early intuitive and symbolical mentality to which the later mind of man, strongly intellectualised and governed on the one side by reasoning idea and abstract conception, on the other hand by the facts of life and matter accepted as they present themselves to the senses and positive intelligence without seeking in them for any divine or mystic significance, indulging the imagination as a play of the aesthetic fancy rather than as an opener of the doors of truth and only trusting to its suggestions when they are confirmed by the logical reason or by physical experience, aware only of carefully intellectualised intuitions and recalcitrant for the most part to any others, has grown a total stranger. It is not surprising therefore that the Veda should have become unintelligible to our minds except in its most outward shell of language, and that even very imperfectly known owing to the obstacle of an antique and ill-understood diction, and that the most inadequate interpretations should be made which reduce this great creation of the young and splendid mind of humanity to a botched and defaced scrawl, an incoherent hotch-potch of the absurdities of a primitive imagination perplexing what would be otherwise the quite plain, flat and common record of a naturalistic religion which mirrored only and could only minister to the crude and materialistic desires of a barbaric life mind. The Veda became to the later scholastic and ritualistic idea of Indian priests and pundits nothing better than a book of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies; European scholars seeking in it for what was alone to them of any rational interest, the history, myths and popular religious notions of a primitive people, have done yet worse wrong to the Veda and by insisting on a wholly external rendering still farther stripped it of its spiritual

interest and its poetic greatness and beauty. The Veda was to these early seers the Word discovering the Truth and clothing in image and symbol the mystic significances of life. It was a divine discovery and unveiling of the potencies of the word, of its mysterious revealing and creative capacity, not the word of the logical and reasoning or the aesthetic intelligence, but the intuitive and inspired rhythmic utterance, the mantra. Image and myth were freely used, not as an imaginative indulgence, but as living parables and symbols of things that were very real to their speakers and could not otherwise find their own intimate and native shape in utterance, and the imagination itself was a priest of greater realities than those that meet and hold the eye and mind limited by the external suggestions of life and the physical existence. This was their idea of the sacred poet, a mind visited by some highest light and its forms of idea and word, a seer and hearer of the Truth, kavayah satyashrutah. The poets of the Vedic verse certainly did not regard their function as it is represented by modern scholars, they did not look on themselves as a sort of superior medicine-men and makers of hymn and incantation to a robust and barbarous tribe, but as seers and thinkers, rishi, dhira. These singers believed that they were in possession of a high, mystic and hidden truth, claimed to be the bearers of a speech acceptable to a divine knowledge, and expressly so speak of their utterances, as secret words which declare their whole significance only to the seer, kavaye nivacana ninya vacamsi. And to those who came after them the Veda was a book of knowledge, and even of the supreme knowledge, a revelation, a great utterance of eternal and impersonal truth as it had been seen and heard in the inner experience of inspired and semi-divine thinkers. The smallest circumstances of the sacrifice around which the hymns were written were intended to carry a symbolic and psychological power of significance, as was well known to the writers of the ancient Brahmanas. But mere common sense ought to tell us that those who were so much nearer in both ways to the original poets had a better chance of holding at least the essential truth of the matter and suggests at least the strong probability that the Veda was really what it professes to be, the seeking for a mystic knowledge, the first form of the constant attempt of the Indian mind, to which it has always been faithful, to look beyond the appearances of the physical world and through its own inner experiences to the godheads, powers, self-existence of the One of whom the sages speak variously - the famous phrase in which the Veda utters its own central secret, ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti. The real character of the Veda can best be understood by taking it anywhere and rendering it straightforwardly according to its own phrases and images. A famous German scholar rating from his high pedestal of superior intelligence the silly persons who find sublimity in the Veda, tells us that it is full of childish, silly, even monstrous conceptions, that it is tedious, low, commonplace, that it represents human nature on a low level of selfishness and worldliness and that only here and there are a few rare sentiments that come from the depths of the soul. It may be made so if we put our own mental conceptions into the words of the Rishis, but if we read them as they are without any such false translation into what we think early barbarians ought to have said and thought, we shall find instead a sacred poetry sublime and powerful in its words and images, though with another kind of language and imagination than we now prefer and appreciate, deep and subtle in its psychological experience and stirred by a moved soul of vision and utterance. Hear rather the word itself of the Veda. They have called to him, getting a wide knowledge, they guard sleeplessly the strength, they have entered into the strong city. The peoples born on earth increase the luminous force of the son of the White Mother; he has gold on his neck, he is large of speech, he is as if by the power of this honey wine a seeker of plenty. He is like pleasant and desirable milk, he is a thing unaccompanied and is with the two who are companions and is as a heat that is the belly of plenty and is invincible and an overcomer of many. Play, O Ray, and manifest thyself. Or again in the succeeding hymn, - Those flames of thee, the forceful godhead, that move not and are increased and puissant, unclinging the hostility and crookedness of one who has another law. O Fire, we choose thee for our priest and the means of effectuation of our strength and in the sacrifices bringing the food of thy pleasure we call thee by the word. O god of perfect works, may we be for the felicity, for the truth, revelling with the rays, revelling with the heroes. And finally let us take the bulk of the third hymn that follows couched in the ordinary symbols of the sacrifice, - As the Manu we set thee in thy place, as the Manu we kindle thee: O Fire, O

Angiras, as the Manu sacrifice to the gods for him who desires the godheads. O Fire, well pleased thou art kindled in the human being and the ladles go to thee continually. Thee all the gods with one pleasure in thee made their messenger and serving thee, O seer, men in the sacrifices adore the god. Let the mortal adore the divine Fire with sacrifice to the godheads. Kindled, flame forth, O Bright One. Sit in the seat of Truth, sit in the seat of peace. I have translated these passages with as close a literalness as the English language will admit. Let the reader compare the original and judge whether this is not the sense of the verses. That, whatever interpretation we choose to put on its images, is a mystic and symbolic poetry and that is the real Veda. The character of Vedic poetry apparent from these typical verses need not surprise or baffle us when we see what will be evident from a comparative study of Asiatic literature, that though distinguished by its theory and treatment of the Word, its peculiar system of images and the complexity of its thought and symbolised experience, it is in fact the beginning of a form of symbolic or figurative imagery for the poetic expression of spiritual experience which reappears constantly in later Indian writing, the figures of the Tantras and Puranas, the figures of the Vaishnava poets, - one might add even a certain element in the modern poetry of Tagore, - and has its kindred movements in certain Chinese poets and in the images of the Sufis. The poet has to express a spiritual and psychical knowledge and experience and he cannot do it altogether or mainly in the more abstract language of the philosophical thinker, for he has to bring out, not the naked idea of it, but as vividly as possible its very life and most intimate touches. He has to reveal in one way or another a whole world within him and the quite inner and spiritual significances of the world around him and also, it may well be, godheads, powers, visions and experiences of planes of consciousness other than the one with which our normal minds are familiar. He uses or starts with the images taken from his own normal and outward life and that of humanity and from visible Nature, and though they do not of themselves actually express, yet obliges them to express by implication or to figure the spiritual and psychic idea and experience. Or an outward figure nearest to the inward experience, its material counterpart, is taken throughout and used with such realism and consistency that while it indicates to those who possess it the spiritual experience, it means only the external thing to others, - just as the Vaishnava poetry of Bengal makes to the devout mind a physical and emotional image or suggestion of the love of the human soul for God, but to the profane is nothing but a sensuous and passionate love poetry hung conventionally round the traditional human-divine personalities of Krishna and Radha. The two methods may meet together, the fixed system of outward images be used as the body of the poetry, while freedom is often taken to pass their first limits, to treat them only as initial suggestions and transmute subtly or even cast them aside or subdue into a secondary strain or carry them out of themselves so that the translucent veil they offer to our minds lifts from or passes into the open revelation. The last is the method of the Veda and it varies according to the passion and stress of the sight in the poet or the exaltation of his utterance. The poets of the Veda had another mentality than ours, their use of their images is of a peculiar kind and an antique cast of vision gives a strange outline to their substance. The physical and the psychical worlds were to their eyes a manifestation and a twofold and diverse and yet connected and similar figure of cosmic godheads, the inner and outer life of man a divine commerce with the gods, and behind was the one spirit or being of which the gods were names and personalities and powers. These godheads were at once masters of physical Nature and its principles and forms their godheads and their bodies and inward divine powers with their corresponding states and energies born in our psychic being because they are the soul powers of the cosmos, the guardians of truth and immortality, the children of the Infinite, and each of them too is in his origin and his last reality the supreme Spirit putting in front one of his aspects. The details of outward existence and of the sacrifice were in their life and practice symbols, and in their poetry not dead symbols or artificial metaphors, but living and powerful suggestions and counterparts of inner things. And they used too for their expression a fixed and yet variable body of other images and a glowing web of myth and parable, images that became parables, parables that became myths and myths that remained always images, and yet all these things were to them, in a way that can only be understood by those who have entered into a certain order of psychic experience, actual realities. The physical melted its shades into the lustres of the psychic, the

psychic deepened into the light of the spiritual and there was no sharp dividing line in the transition, but a natural blending and intershading of their suggestions and colours. It is evident that a poetry of this kind, written by men with this kind of vision or imagination, cannot either be interpreted or judged by the standards of a reason and taste observant only of the canons of the physical existence. The Western critic sneers at the bold and reckless and to him monstrous image in which Indra son of earth and heaven is said to create his own father and mother; but if we remember that Indra is the supreme spirit in one of its eternal and constant aspects, creator of earth and heaven, born as a cosmic godhead between the mental and physical worlds and recreating their powers in man, we shall see that the image is not only a powerful but in fact a true and revealing figure, and in the Vedic technique it does not matter that it outrages the physical imagination since it expresses a greater actuality as no other figure could have done with the same awakening aptness and vivid poetical force. The Bull and Cow of the Veda, the shining herds of the Sun lying hidden in the cave are strange enough creatures to the physical mind, but they do not belong to the earth and in their own plane they are at once images and actual things and full of life and significance. It is in this way that throughout we must interpret and receive the Vedic poetry according to its own spirit and vision and the psychically natural, even if to us strange and supranatural, truth of its ideas and figures. It is in its form and speech no barbaric production. The Vedic poets are masters of a consummate technique, their rhythms are carved like chariots of the gods and borne on divine and ample wings of sound, and are at once concentrated and wide-waved, great in movement and subtle in modulation, their speech lyric by intensity and epic by elevation, an utterance of great power, pure and bold and grand in outline, a speech direct and brief in impact, full to overflowing in sense and suggestion so that each verse exists at once as a strong and sufficient thing in itself and takes its place as a large step between what came before and what comes after. A sacred and hieratic tradition faithfully followed gave them both their form and substance, but this substance consisted of the deepest psychic and spiritual experiences of which the human soul is capable and the forms seldom or never degenerate into a convention, because what they are intended to convey was lived in himself by each poet and made new to his own mind in expression by the subtleties or sublimities of his individual vision. The utterances of the greatest seers, Vishwamitra, Vamadeva, Dirghatamas and many others, touch the most extraordinary heights and amplitudes of a sublime and mystic poetry and there are poems like the Hymn of Creation that move in a powerful clarity on the summits of thought on which the Upanishads lived constantly with a more sustained breathing. The mind of ancient India did not err when it traced back all its philosophy, religion and essential things of its culture to these seer-poets, for all the future spirituality of her people is contained there in seed or in first expression. It is one great importance of a right understanding of the Vedic hymns as a form of sacred literature that it helps us to see the original shaping not only of the master ideas that governed the mind of India, but of its characteristic types of spiritual experience, its turn of imagination, its creative temperament and the kind of significant forms in which it persistently interpreted its sight of self and things and life and the universe. It is in a great part of the literature the same turn of inspiration and self-expression that we see in the architecture, painting and sculpture. Its first character is a constant sense of the infinite, the cosmic, and of things as seen in or affected by the cosmic vision, set in or against the amplitude of the one and infinite; its second peculiarity is a tendency to see and render its spiritual experience in a great richness of images taken from the inner psychic plane or in physical images transmuted by the stress of a psychic significance and impression and line and idea colour; and its third tendency is to image the terrestrial life often magnified, as in the Mahabharata and Ramayana, or else subtilised in the transparencies of a larger atmosphere, attended by a greater than the terrestrial meaning or at any rate presented against the background of the spiritual and psychic worlds and not alone in its own separate figure. The spiritual, the infinite is near and real and the gods are real and the worlds beyond not so much beyond as immanent in our own existence. That which to the Western mind is myth and imagination is here an actuality and a strand of the life of our inner being, what is there beautiful poetic idea and philosophic speculation is here a thing constantly realised and present to the experience. It is this turn of the Indian mind, its spiritual sincerity and psychic positivism, that makes the Veda

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and Upanishads and the later religious and religio-philosophic poetry so powerful in inspiration and intimate and living in expression and image, and it has its less absorbing but still very sensible effect on the working of the poetic idea and imagination even in the more secular literature.

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Chapter 3 : Sri Aurobindo VOL 15 - The Secret of the Veda pdf ebook

Awaken to Superconsciousness: How to Use Meditation for Inner Peace, Intuitive Guidance and Greater Awareness Online Free PDF. Awakening Online Free PDF.

These three courses are offered in rotation, once every three years. Our Approach to the Study of Scriptures Our courses on scriptures are not designed as scholastic or academic scrutiny of the theories of the scriptures. Our purpose is to get into the spirit of the scripture and approach these for help, guidance and inner light. Our aim is to distinguish the essential and living messages and insights, all that which humanity has to seize for its perfection and its highest spiritual welfare; to seek in these the living truth that these scriptures contain; and to extract all the values and wisdom that can help us or the world at large. This course is offered once in three years. Sri Aurobindo, while writing on Sanatana Dharma, says: I believe that Veda to be the foundation of the Sanatan Dharma; I believe it to be the concealed divinity within Hinduism, but a veil has to be drawn aside, a curtain has to be lifted. I believe it to be knowable and discoverable. I believe the future of India and the world to depend on its discovery and on its application, not to the renunciation of life, but to life in the world and among men. It aims at uplifting the man Human to the level of man Divine. For this a bridge has to be built between the Man and the Divine. And it is the Veda that can do so. But the Veda has been misunderstood, misinterpreted and has been presented to the humanity not in its true sense. It must be presented in all its purity, and the Truth hidden in the Veda has to be brought into the front if the humanity has to raise itself to the level of divinity. There have been several attempts to find the true sense of the Vedic Mantras. But the secret of the Veda is yet to be discovered. A proper understanding of the key words of the Vedas and the symbolism underlying the Vedic hymns can lead to discover the experiences of the Vedic Rishis expressed so lucidly and elegantly and symbolically through the hymns. This course is open to all those who genuinely aspire to enter into the spirit of the Indian scriptures and live the truths expounded therein. From the Vedas evolved the Upanishads, which carry within themselves copious enquiries into the nature of man, the Universe, and God, and which further raise innumerable thoughts and questions that lead to attaining all the knowledge that is available to human mind till date. The Upanishads are fundamentally manuals of sadhana, which immensely help aspirants in their spiritual growth. These are the records of a period in human evolution when the sages and seers of the time translated their inner experiences and realizations into rich poetic imagery and philosophical expressions. It is here that one gets a glimpse of the workings of the genius minds of the great scholars and thinkers of ancient India. It is from here that the entire systems of Indian philosophy, religion and spirituality have drawn their inspiration and the force for their growth and enrichment. Through a systematic study of the Upanishads, and the knowledge gained thereby, one can gain self-awareness and realize the purpose of life and connection to the Supreme. In a life riddled with contradictions, the Upanishadic teachings add meaning to day-to-day activities and improve the quality of life in the current stress-ridden environment. This five-day intensive workshop on the Upanishads focuses on several key aspects: Srimad Bhagavadgita Study Camp When: The words of the Gita flowed directly from the mouth of Satchitananda Krishna as a revelation to Arjuna. The Gita also contains the essence of the Vedas, unfolds the highest truth and gives supreme felicity. Gita is Yoga, a spiritual truth applied to external life and action. It is said that all that is needed of spiritual truth for the spiritual life is found in the Gita. But the question is how to approach this great scripture, and with what attitude? This, indeed, is the reason why scriptures are made. This day intensive study camp covers the entire Srimad Bhagavadgita, with word-by-word explanations and deeper exposition of the thought contents of each of its chapters.

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Chapter 4 : Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Indian Culture (SAFIC) – Courses on Indian Scriptures

Sri Aurobindo was able to uncover the mystery of the double meanings, the inner psychological and yogic significance and practices and the consistent, clear sense brought by this psychological view of the Vedic hymns.

And Sri Aurobindo to add: This prophecy of course, came to be fulfilled when the Americans exploded their first nuclear device in the Nevada desert in 1945. But how could Sri Aurobindo have guessed twenty years before this momentous event, that solar heat is the result of a nuclear fusion and that nuclear power is locked in the atoms? Because nine thousand years ago, the Vedic rishis had experienced within themselves the different subtle properties of agni, the inner fire, which becomes solar, saura-agni, when one reaches the supra-mental levels of consciousness and of which nuclear energy is only the most material manifestation. I believe that Veda be the foundation of the Sanatana Dharma; I believe it to be the concealed divinity within Hinduism, -but a veil has to be drawn aside, a curtain has to be lifted. I believe it to be knowable and discoverable. He argued that the Veda remains the foundation of Indian culture: The recovery of the perfect truth of the Veda is therefore not merely a desideratum for our modern intellectual curiosity, but a practical necessity for the future of the human race. For I firmly believe that the secret concealed in the Veda, when entirely discovered, will be found to formulate perfectly that knowledge and practice of divine life to which the march of humanity, after long wanderings in the satisfaction of the intellect and senses, must inevitably return. First we have to discard the ridiculously early dates given by historians and bring it back to at least BC. Why did historians show such an eagerness in post-dating the Vedas and making of them just a mumble-jumble of pagan superstition? The Vedic rituals, has lost its profound meaning to us. Therefore, as Sri Aurobindo elucidates, when we read: It has to be translated to us.. Firstly, the Vedic rishis had realized that God is One, but He takes many faces in His manifestation; this is the very foundation of Hinduism. And Secondly, the Vedic rishis had gone down in their minds and their bodies all the way to the roots of Death, to that eternal question which haunts humanity since the beginning of times: What is the purpose of living if one has always to die? Why the inevitable decay and oblivion? No wonder the West cannot recognize the Vedas for what they are, the whole foundation of their moral domination would then collapse. All the subsequent scriptures of Hinduism derive from the Vedas, even though some of them lost sight of the original Vedic sense. The Vedas are the foundations of Indian culture; 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 falsehood of mortal existence. To rise beyond death, to become one of the immortals, he has to turn from the falsehood to the Truth; he has to turn onto the Light, to battle with and conquer the powers of Darkness. This he does by communion with the Divine Powers and their aid; the way to call down these aids was the secret of the vedic mystics. Foundations of Indian Culture. David Frawley, who is today the best Vedic specialist in the West, could not agree more: Cherish it, support it, and above all share it with the entire world. For the Vedas are like a sun:

Chapter 5 : Sri Aurobindo Light - The Secret of The Veda

The present edition of The Secret of the Veda with Selected Hymns differs in content from earlier editions of the corresponding book (On the Veda and The Secret of the Veda) in that it contains all writings on and translations of the Veda published by Sri Aurobindo in the Arya.

Tweet Hindus worship the Devas and Devatas of the Rig Veda as standing outside of their consciousness as objective realities. The Rig Vedic Rishis also worshipped them in this manner, and through the homa, the sacrificial fire. They worshipped the terrestrial, atmospheric and cosmic deities. Agni was the central deity of the homa. Sayana, the great commentator of the Rig Veda focussed on the ritualistic aspect of this worship and his work has been the basis of most subsequent scholarship on the topic. His book The Secret of the Veda is some plus pages long in pdf , is dense and closely argued. There are many quotations from the Veda, along with English translations. Its companion work Hymns to the Mystic Fire was written a few years later and was published in , with a foreword by Aurobindo himself. Approximately half of The Secret of the Veda is an introduction and commentary, the second part being translations by the author. It was written serially between , in a journal, Arya, started by Aurobindo. It is not an easy read and it is all too easy to miss the forest for the trees. Hence, it is important at the very outset to state briefly what his central concepts are. Ritam cosmic order and Satyam Truth are his central concepts. Agni, the deity of the homa, the fire god, is seen as the mediator as did the Rishis between humans and the Devas and Devatas Gods and Goddesses. The latter have sent Agni in order that humans may reach Ritam and Satyam. All the Devatas are participants in the process of exalting and elevating human beings to a vision of Truth which is the cosmic order. In addition to Agni, Mitra, Indra, Varuna, the Viswadevas, Saraswati and her companions and even the seven rivers are interpreted by Aurobindo as having a symbolic meaning. About one third of the commentary is on Agni with the remainder on the various Devatas and their role in the process of engaging in Truth consciousness. The study is extremely interesting and worth pondering over, even if the reader may find it somewhat and needlessly esoteric. The Gods and Goddesses and this is the terminology that Aurobindo uses are not merely natural phenomena. The philosopher focuses on Agni at the outset because this Devata God is the subject of the first hymn of Book 1 of the Rig Veda, in addition to being the messenger from the Devatas throughout the Veda and of course the Vedic sacrifice. The Rishis used the sacrificial fire and the presence of various Devas and Devatas at the homa, to speak in veiled and mysterious fashion of a deeper truth that of Sat, Chit and Ananda, later openly spoken about in the Upanishads. He does not use the word Brahman, instead he uses the words Ritam and Truth. The hymns of the Rig Veda are symbolic according to him, even though they also invoke the actual presence of the Devas and Devatas. Hence the Rig Veda operates in dual fashion: Explaining the importance of Agni the philosopher says: All the rest of Vedic thought in its spiritual aspects is grouped around these conceptions emphasis ours, p. The state of felicity is what he means by Bliss. Sat, Chit and Ananda are envisioned by the Rishis through drsti vision, sight and sruti hearing. The Gods the word used by Aurobindo send Agni to humans to take them to this state. This Truth is spoken in the Veda as a path leading to felicity, leading to immortality. In the Upanishads also it is by the path of the Truth that the sage or seer, Rishi or Kavi, passes beyond. He passes out of the falsehood, out of the mortal state into an immortal existence. We have the right therefore to assume that the same conception is in question in both Veda and Vedanta p. It is satyam, truth of being; it is in its action rtam, right, - truth of divine being; it is in right activity both of mind and body; it is brhat, the universal truth proceeding direct and undeformed out of the Infinite. The consciousness that corresponds to it is also infinite, brhat, large as opposed to the consciousness of the sense-mind which is founded upon limitation. The one is described as bhuma, the large, the other as alpa, the little. Another name for this supramental or truth consciousness is Mahas which also means the great, the vast. And as for the facts of sensation and appearance which are full of falsehoods,. Whosoever is in possession of this truth-consciousness or open to the action of these faculties, truth, satyam and rtam, that we have to apply

in this opening hymn of the Veda p. It is this work which is symbolised by the sacrifices p. Who is this guardian of the Truth, who is in his act its illumination, whose will in the act is the will of a seer possessed of a divine wisdom, governing his richly varied inspiration? What is the Truth that he guards? And what is this good that he creates for the giver who comes always to him in thought day and night bearing as his sacrifice submission and self surrender? Is it gold and silver horses and cattle that he brings or is it some divine riches? He did not go beyond this mandate as it were, since he considered the sacrifice important enough for the Rishis to have established a procedure for conducting the sacrifice and as well remembering the mantras. Aurobindo on the other hand, sees the sacrifice as symbolic. Hence, the ritual is incidental. However, he does not explain the paradox of having a ritual in order for it to be symbolic, pointing to some other world. As he puts it: Yet throughout the symbol of the sacrificial Fire is maintained. It is evident that we are in the presence of a mystic symbolism to which the fire, the sacrifice, the priest are only outward figures of a deeper teaching, and yet figures which it was thought necessary to maintain and to hold constantly in front p. This is the paradox which a ritualist such as Sayana or the ordinary worshipper does not have to resolve. Aurobindo is unable to utilise this devotional aspect of the sacrifice. In trying to read Vedanta backward into the Rig Veda his remarkable genius missed out on the very fact that he himself asks about rhetorically: Why was it thought necessary to maintain to hold constantly in front? See the question in the above quotation. A possible reason for this paradoxical situation might be that Aurobindo was writing in the early 20th century when the colonial and Western approach was to look down on the Rig Veda as an uncivilised worship of natural phenomena. Rig Vedic polytheism was viewed contemptuously as such, as a pagan practice see previous articles by the present writer. Today, with the New Age philosophies and the spread of Eastern religions, especially Hinduism, in the Western world, a more sophisticated approach has made it possible for Hindus to provide a richly textured account of the Devatas in the Veda. And of course, the devout Hindu can continue to worship the Devas and Devatas without any further encroachments from the colonials or missionaries or so one hopes! A second reason is that Aurobindo does not clarify the relationship between Devatas and Brahman in The Secret of the Veda. In his other works he does admit that the Infinite Brahman is both manifest and unmanifest. His focus in this work is on rejecting ritual, rather than seeing its significance. The Rishis saw the manifest Brahman in the ritual and saw that this was a path for humankind. The Devatas are manifest Brahman and humans can so approach them. They are not just symbols. The result of these limitations on the part of this great philosopher is that the Veda becomes restricted to his personalised vision and the Agama is totally without any significance in his world view. Hence, while the brilliance of his vision of the Devatas is moving and even imposing, it remains an incomplete account of Hinduism.

Chapter 6 : An Essay on the Vedas by Sri Aurobindo

The Problem and Its Solution ❧ IS THERE at all or is there still a secret of the Veda According to current conceptions the heart of that ancient mystery has been plucked out and revealed to the gaze of all, or rather no real secret ever existed.

His father, Krishna Dhun Ghose, was then Assistant Surgeon of Rangpur in Bengal, and a former member of the Brahma Samaj religious reform movement who had become enamoured with the then-new idea of evolution while pursuing medical studies in Edinburgh. Aurobindo had two elder siblings, Benoybhusan and Manmohan, a younger sister, Sarojini, and a younger brother, Barindrakumar also referred to as Barin. Although his family were Bengali, his father believed British culture to be superior. He and his two elder siblings were sent to the English-speaking Loreto House boarding school in Darjeeling, in part to improve their language skills and in part to distance them from their mother, who had developed a mental illness soon after the birth of her first child. Darjeeling was a centre of British life in India and the school was run by Irish nuns, through which the boys would have been exposed to Christian religious teachings and symbolism. To achieve this it was necessary that they study in England and so it was there that the entire family moved in . This was a prerequisite for admission to good English schools and, after two years, in , the elder two siblings were enrolled at Manchester Grammar School. Aurobindo was considered too young for enrolment and he continued his studies with the Drewetts, learning history, Latin, French, geography and arithmetic. Although the Drewetts were told not to teach religion, the boys inevitably were exposed to Christian teachings and events, which generally bored Aurobindo and sometimes repulsed him. There was little contact with his father, who wrote only a few letters to his sons while they were in England, but what communication there was indicated that he was becoming less endeared to the British in India than he had been, on one occasion describing the British Raj as a "heartless government". He considered himself at one point to be an atheist but later determined that he was agnostic. Cotton secured for him a place in Baroda State Service and arranged for him to meet the prince. His father died upon hearing this news. Anushilan Samiti In Baroda, Aurobindo joined the state service in , working first in the Survey and Settlements department, later moving to the Department of Revenue and then to the Secretariat, and much miscellaneous work like teaching grammar and assisting in writing speeches for the Maharaja of Gaekwad until . He was later promoted to the post of vice-principal. He linked up with resistance groups in Bengal and Madhya Pradesh, while traveling to these states. He established contact with Lokmanya Tilak and Sister Nivedita. He formally moved to Calcutta in after the announcement of the Partition of Bengal. In , on a visit to Calcutta, he married year-old Mrinalini, the daughter of Bhupal Chandra Bose, a senior official in government service. Aurobindo was 28 at that time. Mrinalini died seven years later in December during the influenza pandemic. In his public activities he favoured non-co-operation and passive resistance; in private he took up secret revolutionary activity as a preparation for open revolt, in case that the passive revolt failed. He helped establish a series of youth clubs, including the Anushilan Samiti of Calcutta in . In at the Surat session of Congress where moderates and extremists had a major showdown, he led along with extremists along with Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The Congress split after this session. He was arrested again in May in connection with the Alipore Bomb Case. He was acquitted in the ensuing trial, following the murder of chief prosecution witness Naren Gosain within jail premises which subsequently led to the case against him collapsing. Aurobindo was subsequently released after a year of isolated incarceration. Once out of the prison he started two new publications, Karmayogin in English and Dharma in Bengali. He also delivered the Uttarpara Speech hinting at the transformation of his focus to spiritual matters. This sparked an outburst of public anger against the British, leading to civil unrest and a nationalist campaign by groups of revolutionaries, who included Aurobindo. In , Khudiram Bose and Prafulla Chaki attempted to kill Magistrate Kingsford, a judge known for handing down particularly severe sentences against nationalists. However, the bomb thrown at his horse carriage missed its target and instead

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landed in another carriage and killed two British women, the wife and daughter of barrister Pringle Kennedy. Aurobindo was also arrested on charges of planning and overseeing the attack and imprisoned in solitary confinement in Alipore Jail. The trial of the Alipore Bomb Case lasted for a year, but eventually, he was acquitted on May 6, 1909. His defence counsel was Chittaranjan Das. Consequently, his aim went far beyond the service and liberation of the country. He could not explain this and continued to have various such experiences from time to time. He knew nothing of yoga at that time and started his practise of it without a teacher, except for some rules that he learned from Ganganath, a friend who was a disciple of Brahmananda. Aurobindo was influenced by the guidance he got from the yogi, who had instructed Aurobindo to depend on an inner guide and any kind of external guru or guidance would not be required. As Aurobindo disappeared from view, the warrant was held back and the prosecution postponed. Aurobindo manoeuvred the police into open action and a warrant was issued on 4 April 1909, but the warrant could not be executed because on that date he had reached Pondicherry, then a French colony. Pondicherry [edit] In Pondicherry, Sri Aurobindo dedicated himself to his spiritual and philosophical pursuits. In 1909, after four years of secluded yoga, he started a monthly philosophical magazine called Arya. This ceased publication in 1914. Many years later, he revised some of these works before they were published in book form. His letters, most of which were written in the 1900s, numbered in the several thousand. These were later collected and published in book form in three volumes of Letters on Yoga. In the late 1900s, he resumed work on a poem he had started earlier—he continued to expand and revise this poem for the rest of his life. Around 1950, people attended to see his body resting peacefully. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and the President Rajendra Prasad praised him for his contribution to Yogic philosophy and the independence movement. National and international newspapers commemorated his death. Alfassa, came to be known as The Mother. In her 20s she studied occultism with Max Theon. Along with her husband, Paul Richard, she went to Pondicherry on 29 March 1920, [47] and finally settled there in 1921. Sri Aurobindo considered her his spiritual equal and collaborator. After 24 November 1920, when Sri Aurobindo retired into seclusion, he left it to her to plan, build and run the ashram, the community of disciples which had gathered around them. Sometime later, when families with children joined the ashram, she established and supervised the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education with its experiments in the field of education. When he died in 1950, she continued their spiritual work, directed the ashram, and guided their disciples.

Chapter 7 : BSV/www.nxgvision.com Secret of the Veda - Sri Aurobindo

Sri Aurobindo was able to uncover the mystery of the double meanings, the inner psychological and yogic significance and practices and the consistent, clear sense brought by thi His deeper insight into this came from his own spiritual practices for which he found vivid allegorical descriptions in the Vedas.

From a Vedic Hymn: Whichever of its ten Mandalas we choose, we find the same substance, the same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the seers of a single truth and use in its expression a common language. They differ in temperament and personality; some are inclined to a more rich, subtle and profound use of Vedic symbolism; others give voice to their spiritual experience in a barer and simpler diction, with less fertility of thought, richness of poetical image or depth and fullness of suggestion. Often the songs of one seer vary in their manner, range from the utmost simplicity to the most curious richness. Or there are risings and fallings in the same hymn; it proceeds from the most ordinary conventions of the general symbol of sacrifice to a movement of packed and complex thought. Some of the Suktas are plain and almost modern in their language; others baffle us at first by their semblance of antique obscurity. But these differences of manner take nothing from the unity of spiritual experience, nor are they complicated by any variation of the fixed terms and the common formulae. From this peculiarity of the Vedic compositions it results that the method of interpretation which I have described can be equally well illustrated from a number of scattered Suktas selected from the ten Mandalas or from any small block of hymns by a single Rishi. If my purpose were to establish beyond all possibility of objection the interpretation which I am now offering, a much more detailed and considerable work would be necessary. A critical scrutiny covering the whole of the ten Mandalas would be indispensable. To justify, for instance, the idea I attach to the Vedic term *rtam*, the Truth, or my explanation of the symbol of the Cow of Light, I should have to cite all passages of any importance in which the idea of the Truth or the image of the Cow are introduced and establish my thesis by an examination of their sense and context. Or if I wish to prove that Indra in the Veda is really in his psychological functions the master of luminous mind typified by *dyauh*, or Heaven, with its three shining realms, *rocana*, I should have to examine similarly the hymns addressed to Indra and the passages in which there is a clear mention of the Vedic system of worlds. Nor could this be sufficient, so intertwined and interdependent are the notions of the Veda, without some scrutiny of the other Gods and of other important psychological terms connected with the idea of the Truth and of the mental illumination through which man arrives at it. I recognise the necessity of such a work of justification and hope to follow it out in other studies on the Vedic Truth, on the Gods of the Veda and on Vedic symbols. But a labour of this scope would be beyond the range of the present work, which is confined merely to an illustration of my method and to a brief statement of the results of my theory. In order to illustrate the method I propose to take the first eleven Suktas of the first Mandala and to show how some of the central ideas of a psychological interpretation arise out of certain important passages or single hymns and how the surrounding context of the passages and the general thought of the hymns assume an entirely new appearance in the light of this profounder thinking. The Sanhita of the Rig-veda, as we possess it, is arranged in ten books or Mandalas. A double principle is observed in the arrangement. Six of the Mandalas are given each to the hymns of a single Rishi or family of Rishis. Thus the second is devoted chiefly to the Suktas of the Rishi Gritsamada, the third and the seventh similarly to the great names of Vishwamitra and Vasishtha respectively, the fourth to Vamadeva, the sixth to Bharadwaja. The fifth is occupied by the hymns of the house of Atri. In each of these Mandalas the Suktas addressed to Agni are first collected together and followed by those of which Indra is the deity; the invocations of other Gods, Brihaspati, Surya, the Ribhus, Usha, etc. A whole book, the ninth, is given to a single God, Soma. The first, eighth and tenth Mandalas are collections of Suktas by various Rishis, but the hymns of each seer are ordinarily placed together in the order of their deities, Agni leading, Indra following, the other Gods succeeding. Thus the first Mandala opens with ten hymns of the seer Madhuchchhandas, son of Vishwamitra, and an eleventh ascribed

to Jetri, son of Madhuchchhandas. This last Sukta, however, is identical in style, manner and spirit with the ten that precede it and they can all be taken together as a single block of hymns one in intention and diction. A certain principle of thought-development also has not been absent from the arrangement of these Vedic hymns. The opening Mandala seems to have been so designed that the general thought of the Veda in its various elements should gradually unroll itself under the cover of the established symbols by the voices of a certain number of Rishis who almost all rank high as thinkers and sacred singers and are, some of them, among the most famous names of Vedic tradition. Nor can it be by accident that the tenth or closing Mandala gives us, with an even greater miscellaneity of authors, the last developments of the thought of the Veda and some of the most modern in language of its Suktas. It is here that we find the Sacrifice of the Purusha and the great Hymn of the Creation. It is here also that modern scholars think they discover the first origins of the Vedantic philosophy, the Brahmavada. In any case, the hymns of the son and grandson of Vishwamitra with which the Rig-veda opens strike admirably the first essential notes of the Vedic harmony. The first hymn, addressed to Agni, suggests the central conception of the Truth which is confirmed in the second and third Suktas invoking Indra in company with other gods. In the remaining eight hymns with Indra as the sole deity, except for one which he shares with the Maruts, we find the symbols of the Soma and the Cow, the obstructor Vritra and the great role played by Indra in leading man to the Light and overthrowing the barriers to his progress. These hymns are therefore of crucial importance to the psychological interpretation of the Veda.

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Chapter 8 : Sri Aurobindo - Wikipedia

Sri Aurobindo VOL 15 - The Secret of the Veda. Posted on | November 14, | 3 Comments. This is the fifteenth volume in the collected series of works by Sri Aurobindo you soon will find here on the site.

The hymns of the Veda are the sacrificial compositions of a primitive and still barbarous race written around a system of ceremonial and propitiatory rites, addressed to personified Powers of Nature and replete with a confused mass of half-formed myth and crude astronomical allegories yet in the making. It is full of ancient forms and words which do not appear in later speech and have often to be fixed in some doubtful sense by intelligent conjecture; a mass even of the words that it has in common with classical Sanskrit seem to bear or at least to admit another significance than in the later literary tongue; and a multitude of its vocables, especially the most common, those which are most vital to the sense, are capable of a surprising number of unconnected significances which may give, according to our preference in selection, quite different complexions to whole passages, whole hymns and even to the whole thought of the Veda. One of these is prehistoric in time and exists only by fragments in the Brahmanas and Upanishads; but we possess in its entirety the traditional interpretation of the Indian scholar Sayana and we have in our own day the interpretation constructed after an immense labour of comparison and conjecture by modern European scholarship. Both of them present one characteristic in common, the extraordinary incoherence and poverty of sense which their results stamp upon the ancient hymns. The separate lines can be given, whether naturally or by force of conjecture, a good sense or a sense that hangs together; the diction that results, if garish in style, if loaded with otiose and decorative epithets, if developing extraordinarily little of meaning in an amazing mass of gaudy figure and verbiage, can be made to run into intelligible sentences; but when we come to read the hymns as a whole we seem to be in the presence of men who, unlike the early writers of other races, were incapable of coherent and natural expression or of connected thought. Except in the briefer and simpler hymns, the language tends to be either obscure or artificial; the thoughts are either unconnected or have to be forced and beaten by the interpreter into a whole. The scholar in dealing with his text is obliged to substitute for interpretation a process almost of fabrication. We feel that he is not so much revealing the sense as hammering and forging rebellious material into some sort of shape and consistency. In the 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,â€”the received name for the highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable. The hymns are, on the contrary, nothing more than the naive 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. Nor do occasional passages, quite out of harmony with their general spirit, destroy this total impression. The true foundation or starting-point of the later religions and philosophies is the Upanishads, which have then to be conceived as a revolt of philosophical and speculative minds against the ritualistic materialism of the Vedas. 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. We may accept for the present the theory that the earliest fully intelligent form of human religion is necessarily,â€”since man on earth begins from the external and proceeds to the internal,â€”a worship of outward Nature-Powers invested with the consciousness and the personality that he finds in his own being. But when we come to the worship of the Greeks not much later in date than the Veda, according to modern ideas of chronology, we find a significant change. The impetuous God of Fire has been converted into a lame God of Labour; Apollo, the Sun, presides over poetical and prophetic inspiration;

Athene, who may plausibly be identified as in origin a Dawn-Goddess, has lost all memory of her material functions and is the wise, strong and pure Goddess of Knowledge; and there are other deities also, Gods of War, Love, Beauty, whose material functions have disappeared if they ever existed. It is not enough to say that this change was inevitable with the progress of human civilisation: We see the same revolution effected in the Puranas partly by the substitution of other divine names and figures, but also in part by the same obscure process that we observe in the evolution of Greek mythology. The river Saraswati has become the Muse and Goddess of Learning; Vishnu and Rudra of the Vedas are now the supreme Godhead, members of a divine Triad and expressive separately of conservative and destructive process in the cosmos. In the Isha Upanishad we find an appeal to Surya as a God of revelatory knowledge by whose action we can arrive at the highest truth. 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. In the same Upanishad, Agni is invoked for purely moral functions as the purifier from sin, the leader of the soul by the good path to the divine Bliss, and he seems to be identified with the power of the will and responsible for human actions. 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. These evolutions suppose some period, posterior to the early material worship or superior Pantheistic Animism attributed to the Vedas and prior to the developed Puranic mythology, in which the gods became invested with deeper psychological functions, a period which may well have been the Age of the Mysteries. As things stand, a gap is left or else has been created by our exclusive preoccupation with the naturalistic element in the religion of the Vedic Rishis. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the Gods. This wisdom was, they thought, unfit, perhaps even dangerous to the ordinary human mind or in any case liable to perversion and misuse and loss of virtue if revealed to vulgar and unpurified spirits. Hence they favoured the existence of an outer worship, effective but imperfect, for the profane, an inner discipline for the initiate, and clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect, a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers. The Vedic hymns were conceived and constructed on this principle. Their formulas and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature-Worship which was then the common religion, covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge and a psychological discipline of self-culture which were then the highest achievement of the human race. To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vedic terms, the sense of Vedic symbols and the psychological functions of the Gods is thus a difficult but necessary task, for which these chapters and the translations that accompany them are only a preparation. The hypothesis, if it proves to be valid, will have three advantages. It will explain and justify rationally the whole ancient tradition of India; for it will be found that, in sober truth, the Vedanta, Purana, Tantra, the philosophical schools and the great Indian religions do go back in their source to Vedic origins. We can see there in their original seed or in their early or even primitive forms the fundamental conceptions of later Indian thought. Thus a natural startingpoint will be provided for a sounder study of Comparative Religion in the Indian field. Instead of wandering amid insecure speculations or having to account for impossible conversions and unexplained transitions we shall have a clue to a natural and progressive development satisfying to the reason. Incidentally, some light may be thrown on the obscurities of early cult and myth in other ancient nations. Finally, the incoherencies of the Vedic texts will at once be explained and disappear. They exist in appearance only, because the real thread of the sense is to be found in an inner meaning. That thread found, the hymns appear as logical and organic wholes and the expression, though alien in type to our modern ways of thinking and speaking, becomes, in its own style, just and precise and sins rather by economy of phrase than by excess, by over-pregnancy rather than by poverty of sense.

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