

The Blazing Dragon Of Wisdom:  
The Esoteric Tradition As Enshrined In The Vedas And Beyond

By  
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## PREFACE

A book which answers one's deepest questions and stirs one's aspirations in such a beautiful and clearly explained way is indeed hard to find. What is herein expressed is an experience of inestimable value to those who search for a meaning and purpose to life, and for those scholars who endeavour to deepen their understanding of ancient sacred texts. The aim of *The Blazing Dragon of Wisdom* is twofold; first, to trace the esoteric wisdom through the Vedas, primarily by examination of certain verses in the Rgveda where it fully belongs, but has been denied through sheer neglect. From the Vedas Jeanine Miller moves on to the Kabbalah where she finds the same esoteric thread, not only in cosmogony and the idea of Deity, but also in Archetypal Man, Vedic *Purusa*, and Kabbalistic *Adam Kadmon*, two expressions of one supreme archetype to which the human mind gave birth, to culminate in the Perfect Man as conceived by the Sufi philosopher Ibn Arabi. Secondly, Jeanine's aim is to vindicate, through detailed examination of Vedic ideas and verses and other ancient lore, H.P. Blavatsky's *The Secret Doctrine* in its several claims which only now turn out to be true and verifiable.

The author's enquiry in this very ancient lore is an extraordinary mosaic of wisdom that explores deep truths not normally undertaken in a scholarly task. For, as a mystic, she recognizes the hidden activity of *psyche* in the redaction of sacred texts, so far ignored by scholars, and she is not afraid to lay it bare. Another two main streams of perspective that differ from the usual scholarly research emerge: one reveals how deeply the human mind can probe the abyss of an all absorbing, transcendental and deeply-rooted *gnosis*, and make sense of it; the other highlights the sheer exuberance felt at the discovery of those age old esoteric truths which have come down to us in poetic hymns and from which nothing need be discarded, if one understands them. The author's approach is unique: it is both scholarly and mystical, rational and poetic; its result may be given as a crystal clear truth to the uninitiated. The Vedas are revealed as containing an ageless vision and message of supreme importance to our disillusioned humanity. The same holds good for H.P. Blavatsky's master work.

May this book reach out to those who search for a deeper vision of the world and of themselves; may it give inspiration to those scholars who would undertake a further search to uncover the truths of the spiritual rather than the platitudes of the literal.

R.M. Wildego, author of *Mirrors of Reflection*

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### AIMS AND THEMES

The present study aims at investigating certain hidden *gnosis* extant in the written records of some of the greatest ancient civilizations, notably those of India above all, but also found in Egypt, Babylonia, Greece, Persia and elsewhere. The four collections of hymns (*samhitās*) known as the Vedas, the very basis of Indian lore, enshrine through myths, allusions and hints a wealth of themes pertaining to an ageless fund of *sacred knowledge* whose deeper significance has been more or less ignored. That there are traces of a *secret doctrine* known to and taught by the ṛṣis only to those initiated<sup>1</sup> into their sacred lore and handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth – from mouth to ear – to be finally set down into writing at the dawn of the Christian era to form the collection of the Vedas, becomes evident as one progresses in the investigation. The word *veda* itself of which *gnosis* is the Greek equivalent, means "true or sacred knowledge or lore", as against the mere accumulation of facts, the usual meaning of knowledge. The word *upaniṣad*, as is stated in Monier Williams' Sanskrit dictionary, means

"According to some, the sitting down at the feet of another to listen to his words and hence, secret knowledge given in this manner; but according to native authorities *upaniṣad* means 'setting at rest ignorance by revealing the knowledge of the supreme spirit'; the mystery which underlies or rests underneath the external system of things; esoteric doctrine." (op.cit. p.201. 1971 reprint)

Such is fully confirmed by taking one example from one of the earliest Upaniṣads, the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad:

"When the voice of a dead man goes into fire, his breath into the wind, his eye into the sun, his mind into the moon, his hearing into the quarters of heaven, his body into the earth, his soul (*ātman*) into space (*ākāśa*) ... what then becomes of this person (*puruṣa*)? 'My dear, take my hand. We two only will know of this. This is not for us to speak in public.' The two went away and deliberated. What they said was *karma*. What they praised was *karma*. Verily one becomes good by good action, bad by bad action." (Bṛhad.Up. III.2.13)

Here is a full admission to an esoteric doctrine that was not to be divulged to the "public". Besides this doctrine of *karma* kept secret in the early days of Vedic civilization, the passage is replete with strange notions incomprehensible to the modern mind, referring to the passing beyond the gates of death, to the scattering away of the various components of the human constitution in accordance with the law of correspondences, an esoteric law usually also unknown to the modern mind, yet understandable enough to the ṛṣis. Such hidden *gnosis* appears in the earlier collection known as the Ṛgveda as well, and not merely in its myths, but encapsulated in words which, when Sanskrit scholars first met them, meant practically nothing to them; such words as *tapas*, *svar*, *vāc*, *mantra*, *prāṇa* (or its equivalent in the Ṛgveda *vāyu* or *vāta*), *dhīḥ*, a word translated as thought but which, as revealed in the complete study of J. Gonda (*The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, 1963) signifies far more than our superficial word "thought", and finally *yajña*, the sacrificial offering which encloses within itself a whole philosophy. The Ṛgveda is replete with highly philosophical themes such as *logos* or *vāc*, sound/vibration as the fashioner of forms, such as the solar rays and their hidden influence on humans, such as man as the primordial sacrificial offering, themes which on investigation reveal a complete lore only hinted at and so far hardly investigated at its deeper level: a *secret doctrine* become a *wisdom tradition*.

This timeless *wisdom tradition* which one discovers in other ancient civilizations besides India, such as Egypt, has come down the ages in various guises, through temple lore, myths, initiations, ancient cosmologies, pantheons, expressed in more or less veiled language in the world scriptures, more and more distorted by accretions and transformations as the ages passed and the differences in human culture and mentality became more marked. This will be referred to as the *wisdom tradition*, or the *esoteric wisdom* or the *secret doctrine*, according as the emphasis is on the wisdom or on the secrecy of the teachings. This *wisdom tradition* and its significance will be investigated mainly in the Vedas – but other lore may be turned to for comparison – in the Vedas as enshrining an ancient *gnosis* rooted in *revelation*, that appears somewhat veiled in the four hymnal collections, but interpreted in the Brāhmaṇas from the ritualistic standpoint with additional myths and legends giving further insights, and expounded in the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads, the latter considered the more or

less esoteric exegesis of the four Vedas. This whole examination will be set in relation to the 19th century reformulation of aspects of this ancient *gnosis* in modern language consigned to that monumental work, *The Secret Doctrine*, by the very much maligned and misunderstood H.P. Blavatsky, henceforth referred to by her initials, H.P.B. as she did herself, an author whose undeserved besmirched reputation has stood against any serious academic study of her whole output. Yet, whether we agree with its premises or not, *The Secret Doctrine* is full of deep insights, wide erudition, far expanding horizons and breadth of vision, recognized only by the few, quite extraordinary for one 19th century woman, at a time when men, let alone women, whether scholarly or scientific, for all their knowledge, could not expand their minds beyond a very limited horizon. Certain claims of *The Secret Doctrine* will be put to the test by examining the *wisdom tradition* as it transpires in the Vedas and comparing it with certain tenets of *The Secret Doctrine*. Occasionally, excursions into the later tradition, such as the Purāṇas will have to be made in so far as they may clarify the early texts, and in so far as *The Secret Doctrine* discusses some of their standpoints. Occasionally also, comparisons will be drawn, as the need arises, from other esoteric traditions such as the Egyptian wisdom and the Kabbalah, in as much as some of their views are very close to those found in *The Secret Doctrine* and confirm the *gnosis* of the Vedas.

Since in a limited work one is restricted to specific limits I shall keep to two main trends of enquiry:

1) what do the Vedas reveal of a *secret gnosis*? Can tenets of *The Secret Doctrine* be found in the Vedas, especially the Ṛgveda as being the oldest of the four collections of hymns? If so, do they throw light in some measure, on obscurities and enigmas in the Ṛgveda, the sacred book which H.P.B. introduces as

"... the ṚgVeda, the oldest of all the known ancient records, may be shown to corroborate the occult teachings in almost every respect." (S.D.II.p.606)

2) extending the search beyond the Vedas, can their *gnosis* be recognised as a common basis or core of doctrine in the ancient lore of, for instance, Egypt, Babylonia, Greece; can it be traced to the main or better known world religions? In this respect can the claim of *The Secret Doctrine* that its essential doctrine was "the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world" be validated? Can a similar esoteric meaning as expounded there be traceable to the root of religions?

The main Ṛgvedic themes that will be treated are:

How the ONE becomes the many; how emanation and evolution are viewed as they unfold into our space-time dimension; the meaning of space and the various ways of apprehending it; the Universal Mind as basic to manifestation and its two instruments: the role and activity of Agni, the Flame Divine, and that of his feminine counterpart, the logos, or *vāc*; the Seven streams of spiritual lives or powers representing the Universal Mind as expressed in *The Secret Doctrine* and exemplified in the Ṛgveda; the hidden role and meaning of the solar deity, Sūrya and his Seven Rays; how celestial Man, *puruṣa*, and his sacrifice is revealed as the crux of evolution; how this idea travelled the world over. All these confirm the main themes outlined in *The Secret Doctrine*. To these aspects of the ancient texts *The Secret Doctrine* gives meaning and provides a key that may help to unravel some of the more knotty problems one encounters in the Ṛgveda, and above all to reconstruct its vision of Cosmic Order, far reaching in its metaphysical and moral consequences, and so far unsurpassed by any other religious vision.

It should be evident from the start that the present study is not just a scholarly investigation into past scriptural themes, but an exegesis that also looks at the subject under consideration through the mystic's eyes and with the key of the esoteric tradition.

### ***LANGUAGE AND TECHNICAL TERMS IN THE ṚGVEDA***

The mass of myths and invocations to gods and partial allusions to unknown past events, and meaningful words superficially grasped, or just ignored, put the early Western scholars off the track of any real understanding as to the underlying meaning. As a result, they gave a biased assessment of the Vedas. In our rational, literal mindedness which has overwhelmed the other side of our nature and usually prevents us from rising beyond the face value of words, we forget or are ignorant of the fact that the ṛṣis use the language of poetry, of natural images, to depict a world whose ramifications go far beyond the physical senses. This is the language of the human *psyche*, of that in us whose roots touch both mind and feeling and reach out to the spiritual anchor deep within psyche; this language is not that of reason but of that in us which is capable of responding to intuition, vision, illumination. Psyche permits us to plunge into the inner ocean of life, that

"ocean" which appears again and again in the Ṛgveda, from which emerge those archetypal images that have moulded the scriptural views of the world religions and are responsible for fashioning those grand ideas that underlie the "seeing" or vision of the great "truths" such as the oneness and sacredness of *life*. But such language, when not understood, deters the rational mind, as all myths have done which have now become synonymous with "lies", and blinds it to the possibility of any "truth" or "revelation" enshrined therein. Even as late as 1966 A.C. Bouquet in his study entitled *Hinduism* voiced a question which could be considered to sum up Western attitude until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

"Since, however, most of them [the Vedic hymns] consist of lyrical addresses to the greater deities of the people concerned, it is difficult to see what, in a literal sense, they reveal." (op.cit. 1966.p.28)

One could answer that even in a literal sense the hymns reveal a grandiose Cosmic Order, a solidarity of all godly beings that set the example for human social order, and a cosmic sentiency that set the ṛṣis quite above average humanity. A century ago Max Müller did recognise the worth of the Ṛgveda but merely as a "primitive" document – "the only important, the only real Veda, is the ṚgVeda", he claimed, making the all sweeping statement that "the other so-called Vedas ... deserve the name of Veda no more than the Talmud deserves the name of Bible".<sup>2</sup> The learned scholar was incapable of understanding the sacrificial formulas, charms and incantations contained in these other collections. But even in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one or two scholars detected something more than a mere primitive document in the Ṛgveda. Thus A. Barth remarked:

"Neither in the language nor in the thought of the *Ṛg-Veda* have I been able to discover that quality of primitive natural simplicity which so many are fain to see in it. The poetry it contains appears to me, on the contrary, to be of a singularly *refined* character and artificially elaborated, *full of allusions and reticences, of pretensions* [?] to mysticism and theosophic insight; and the manner of its expression is such as reminds one more frequently of the phraseology in use *among certain small groups of initiated* than the poetic language of a large community."<sup>3</sup> (Italics H.P.B.'s)

Apart from the word "pretensions" which seems completely out of place, the above assessment does give out a much fairer view of the Ṛgveda than others<sup>4</sup> of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century L. Renou, as indeed J. Gonda (surely the greatest of our Western Sanskrit scholars), went far into the recognition of the Ṛgveda as an esoteric document, in spite of Renou's rejection of Śri Aurobindo's symbolism thesis which for Renou ceased to make the Ṛgveda a "document of prehistory". However, L. Renou recognised certain aspects which bear upon the esoteric doctrine, thus:

"The Ṛgveda is much more than an adjunct to ritual ... The aim was to compose on a given theme ... not introducing direct accounts of the lives of the gods so much as veiled allusions, occult correspondences between the sacred and the profane such as still form the foundation of Indian speculative thought. A large part of Sanskrit literature is esoteric. These correspondences, and the magic power they emanate, are called *brahman*; this is the oldest sense of the term. They are not intellectual conceptions but experiences which have been lived through at the culmination of a state of mystic exaltation conceived as revelation. The soma is the catalyst of these latent forces."<sup>5</sup>

These "veiled allusions", these "occult correspondences", hints and reticences, reveal the Ṛgveda as the occult book par excellence: where all sorts of ideas, sometimes of far reaching import and hints as to secret teachings, are jumbled together with praises and invocations to apparently meaningless gods; where no explanation is given but rather the intuition is kept on the alert to find the deeper meaning to statements which superficially make no sense (such as the seven half embryos, or the ṛṣis bearing light in the mouth). This made A. Bergaigne refer to the Ṛgveda as a *fatras* or hotchpotch. Indeed, an occult book always puts the rational, orderly mind *off*. This almost insurmountable obstacle for a long time militated against the deeper understanding of the Ṛgveda and to this day remains one of the reasons for the lack of real insight into its significance, even though great strides have been made during the last 30 years towards a deeper apprehension. Note that the law of correspondences, like that of analogy, is one of the basic laws of the wisdom tradition and it still forms "the foundation of Indian speculative thought" simply because that thought has been steeped in that wisdom for millennia.

However, in the second half of our 20<sup>th</sup> century a way has been opened towards a better grasp of the essence of the *veda* hidden in the Vedas, through the work of J. Gonda whose insight and documented proof widened the scholarly grasp of the Vedic horizon, that of L. Renou, K.Werner, (among the Indians, Vasudeva



Agrawala, R. Panikkar), H.Aguilar,D.M.Knipe, etc. and those insights into mythologies given by Joseph Campbell, Mircea Eliade and psychologists like C. Jung and his school. Mythology, at least among the educated readers, does not seem any longer considered to be "the disease which springs up at a peculiar stage of human culture", as Renouf described it in his Hibbert Lectures quoted by H.P.B.,<sup>6</sup> and hymns composed some 4000 years ago are no longer thought to be *ipso facto* primitive. It remains now to take up *The Secret Doctrine* and consider its specific *keys* to the inner meaning of certain abstruse subjects of the Vedas, ungraspable by our modern mind.

The R̥gvedic language is based upon vision and poetic exaltation even if its expression is sober and lacks the exuberance of the much later *bhakti* Hindu movement. Using images from the environment it described states of consciousness, *états d'âme*, unknown to the average person, states that transcend the limits of the words used, as well as our own intellectual concepts; it is the language of metaphors, some hopelessly mixed but making their point,<sup>7</sup> images that *symbolise* something far grander, far deeper than the images themselves; it is the language of *psyche*, such as is found in all the scriptures of the world; it is the language of *sacred texts*, a fact completely eschewed by a whole generation of Western scholars.

There is perceptible a kind of technical idiom which has hardly been detected or analysed in its depth of meaning, but which is present in most world scriptures whereby specific *everyday words* are used as *stepping stones* to denote a higher meaning, the figurative or qualitative meaning of the words themselves opening up an inner dimension of further depth otherwise unthought of. The higher meaning appeals to deeper levels of the understanding, which levels have to be *awakened*, for in the average person they lie completely dormant, but it can only be done by means of words which are understood by all and which in themselves can show a reason why they may lead to a further step in our understanding. This is the aim and method of certain scriptures. We find it in the Bible and in the Vedas, notably the R̥gveda. In most scriptures the aim is to awaken the intuitive perception at the call of the stories, legends, or myths or parables, or allegories which themselves are couched in ordinary language, but with several layers of meaning.

We could take for instance the word *stone* which in this case does not merely mean the bit of rock or pebble strewn on the ground or lining the mountain, but figuratively also points to durability, fixity, rigidity; hence going further, to the fixity of the *law*, not to be tampered with, like the 10 Commandments which are expressly said to be carved on stone. In the very commandments themselves we hold the key to a stable society – thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, etc. are orders that should be strictly obeyed, but these commandments also hide a deeper side; thus we can "kill" or ruin or cause great pain to a person by our words, by our hatred, by our thoughts even, for thoughts may concretise into deeds. According to some Sufi ethics, to eat more food than you need is to steal food from someone who desperately needs it.

A sequence as to a gradation in meaning is perceptible in the Bible. Thus the Commandments are engraved on stone, but rigid law does not quench the inner thirst of the true seeker after truth. Moses struck the rock and water gushed out to quench the thirst of the people. Perhaps there is another meaning to this episode than the mere stay in the desert by barbaric tribes and the quenching of their physical thirst. From barren literal truth to psychological or further truth is already a step forward in the expression of deeper knowledge. Behind or within the rigidity of stone or literal truth lie the waters that give life, significance, inspiration, that take us to a deeper aspect of ourselves. Did not Christ himself use the word "water" with an altogether different sense when he spoke to the woman of Samaria?

"... Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again.

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him,  
shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him

shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (N.T. John.IV.13-14)

If the writers of sacred texts used words that could not be understood, what would be the point, and how could a further opening to the understanding be effected? The third step to such an opening is given in the New Testament: at the marriage of Cana, Christ orders *stone* vessels to be brought in and to be filled with *water* which he then and there changes to *wine*. Are these specific words used at random – like the random collocation of atoms by which, so we are told, the universe and man are made? No, this is not the method of scripture. Literal, psychological and spiritual meaning; law, life and ecstasy, these cover the range of human compass and the last is the most difficult, for most people remain at the first or literal level and so miss the

whole inner dimension of their own psyche, of life, let alone of spirit.

But this kind of method does not belong only to the Bible. One recognises it in the Ṛgveda where ordinary words are used with a "technical" meaning. Thus such words as cow, rock, cave, mountain, well, water, river, sea, ocean, thunderbolt, honey, ghee, sun, etc. open up a horizon quite beyond their literal meaning. Only now are some scholars beginning to suspect this. The Cow, for instance, is Aditi, the Infinite, the higher realm of cosmic dimension; elsewhere the source of inspiration which for the poet becomes vision and eloquence; the cows themselves are rays of light, we are told by the ancient Indian exegesists; but if so, are they not in many instances, glimpses into the mysteries of nature, of cosmos, of life, of the human psyche, hidden in and to be dug out of the "rock" of the "unconscious"? The prized cows with the nourishing milk are also the inspired intuitions that "feed" the poets. Again and again the words, cows, rock or stone, sun, well, water, etc. appear as though to tax our higher understanding, to take us a step beyond their literal meaning, to open up a deeper strand of thought, but who takes it? Too many scholars have been at loggerheads to find a sensible physical meaning to verses which, taken literally, make no sense, thereby landing themselves in absurd interpretations; whilst on another level, the verses are quite revealing.

Thus the "waters" contain a secret, "that secret hidden in mysterious place amidst the waters" (*guhā hitam guhyam gūlham apsu etc.* III.39.6&7), Indra placed in his right hand, Indra who finds honey in the cow, who discerns the light from the darkness. Addressing Indra, the poet reminds him "when thou didst break the rock for the waters" (IV.16.8).<sup>8</sup> What kind of "water" is this that Indra has to break through the rock or mountain (*adri*) to reach it; the result being that Saramā, the hound of Indra, becomes "manifest before thee", Indra! It is she who finds the mountain fissure where the cows are hidden away. Childish myths, or allegories using images replete with spiritual meaning? From our own tradition do we know the significance of *The Hound of Heaven*? There Francis Thompson relates the relentless pursuit of his prey, the ever fleeing pigmy self, by the "hound of heaven" - the divine spirit hidden in the depth of psyche.

Technical terms such as cavity, cave, or well, spring, or hole, or aperture bear upon the hidden fountain spring of our being, of our inner resources, or the "well" of inspiration and aspiration, full of luminous riches (VI.36.4ab); or the "well full of honey" placed in heaven, in the highest footstep of Viṣṇu (I.154.5). Modern realisations of the powers of the "unconscious" appear in the ancient texts as legends, or myths expressing a vast knowledge of psyche and its activity, through many technical terms as the above. So Indra pierces wells, discharges channels or rivers (cf.V.32.1), and from the inner void or darkness, from the well, issue the inspired visions which are poured out for Indra's sake.

"To him, vast, profound, from birth awe-inspiring, all absorbing,  
the well of inspired-thoughts (pours out)". (III.46.4)

These are just a few, out of innumerable examples bearing upon this all important aspect of Vedic and especially Ṛgvedic terminology and its interpretation, terms to be grasped in their deeper sense before any progress can be made in the understanding of the myths and allusions. That several layers of meaning, such as a spiritual, a ritual and a psychological sense may be found in one verse, given the ambiguity of many of the statements, is borne out in so many hymns as may crush the patience of reason, and so be reason enough to dismiss the hymns or verses as nonsensical, but such is not the case. Take for instance hymn IV.16 of which verse 4 runs as follows:

"When by their hymns *sva* became apparent, so they (the patriarchs)  
caused the mighty light of dawn to shine. He, hero-like, in his graciousness  
dispelled the blinding darkness for men to see."

The ritual as well as the literal sense implies that the sun, the usual translation of *sva*, appeared as a result of the chanting of the verses during the rite at break of dawn. But knowing the ṛṣis' *gnosis* concerning sound, light and mantras, this could also mean that the inner sun of light, what they have called *satyaṃ sūryam*, the true sun, illumination, that which grants them the inspired and inspiring *dhīḥ* or vision, arose in the consciousness of the exalted seers (*viprah*) (literally those who tremble or vibrate) like dawn in the morning sky, all as a consequence of their chanting, of their "fiery hymns", of their stirring themselves to exaltation; and this also applies to the ritual significance whereby the rites and chanting worked on the seer-poets to the point of exaltation and the inducing of visions and eloquence.

The *revelation* of the Vedas is also hidden within such words as *tapas*, the creative flame of contemplative

exertion, a word which originally was completely misunderstood; *yajña*, the sacrificial worship, the doctrine of the eternal give and take or offering and taking and returning the gift which forms the web of life and makes it sacred, hence the sacred work, *apas*, hence sacrifice, the very basis of life; (*vi*)*ṛṣṭi*, the projection of the inner into the outer; *ṛta*, the Cosmic Order, a very small word yet enshrining a mighty vision; *arka*, the *shining hymn*, the ultimate oneness of sound and light, their power and use in the evocation of spiritual entities and the forming of *mantras*, this word itself containing a whole science concerning sound and its influence on beings; *dhīh*, the visionary insight or thought-provoking vision, the flashing forth of some truth or insight; *svar*, the solar splendour, illumination. Insight and vision into realms beyond our space-time world, reveal certain truths of which the ṛṣis are the "keepers". The ṛṣis

"harness their minds, harness their visionary-insights" (V.81.1) and

"behold with their heart, with their consciousness, the bird anointed with the magic of the celestial-spirit." (X.177.1)

The first verse shows the steps taken in their *tapas*, the second the mystical vision resulting from this.

That this ancient lore was "handed down" may be inferred and confirmed from the following:

"Not breaking the links, let us seeking help, follow after the powers of our forefathers." (I.109.3)

### **SEERSHIP BASIC TO THE ṚGVEDA, AND THE WORK OF J.GONDA**

One aspect of great importance in endeavouring to probe the Ṛgveda's esoteric basis is the seership of its poets. Early revelation which subsequently took shape as scriptures in the religions of humanity relied on spiritual insight, on vision and communion for its enunciations. Moses communed with his Lord, so did Vasiṣṭha and the great ṛṣis, so did Zoroaster, and many others. The Ṛgveda is full of the reminiscences of its ṛṣis and their visionary insights. Descriptive epithets such as *gāmbhīravepasaḥ* "profoundly stirred", applying to Aṅgiras and his sons "born of Agni" (X.62.5), who bequeathed on their descendants a *gnosis*, or *kavī gambhīracetasā*, given to the Aśvins (VIII.8.2), those heavenly physicians, healers and saviours of men, amply testify to this quality of fervour and exaltation resulting from epiphanies. Through such visionary insights the seers were led 1) to institute the ritual as an opening link between the celestial and the earthly; 2) to intuit that Cosmic Order and solidarity of the devas in their concerted activity (VI.9.5) as a blueprint for humanity; hence 3) to establish this order on earth, as in a mirror, in their socio-religious life. These fundamentals are expressed in various ways in verses scattered in the Vedic hymns. (Cf. Ṛgv. VIII.35.16-18; X.191; Athv.III.30.1; Yjv.V.S..6.31; 18.48; 26.1, 2; 20.25) This alone would make the Ṛgveda a sacred book and a book of revelation, i.e. a book that reveals other spheres than our mere physical domain and the loftiness of the ṛṣis' thought and vision.

I dare say that seership, intuitive perception, insight meant nothing to our early Sanskritists, or even to many of our contemporary translators - ultra rationalism, which M. Eliade qualified as *corrosive*, barring the way to any recognition of the psyche, its faculty of seeing in its own depth and its activity of relating the inner to the outer, the unseen to the seen, the spiritual to the material. Even most of those scholars who flourished right to the 1960's refused to look at and admit this extra dimension of the Vedas, hidden as it is from any superficial reading, and continued to view the Ṛgveda as a primitive record to suit their bias.

The great exception in so far as Western exegesis is concerned, has been J.Gonda whose pioneering study, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*, 1963, investigated the significance of *dhīh*, its derivative and allied concepts, and came to the conclusion that to 'see' meant "a 'mystical', supra-normal 'beholding' or 'visionary experiencing'" (p.28), as in Ṛgv.I.164.3 where the poet sees the "untiring herdsman (Agni) continuously journeying through the world, clothed in diverging and converging (forces)". Gonda's thorough investigation opened the way to a profounder insight into the Veda, the ancient *gnosis* heirloom of the ṛṣis and partially enshrined in their hymns. L.Renou in his own studies and translations took this new perspective into account to a certain extent but more in its poetic significance and emphasized the latter at the expense of spiritual insight and seership, not deviating from his bias that the Ṛgveda was a "prehistoric document", whatever this may have meant to him - most likely just primitive. In 1977 appeared a magnificent tribute to the spirit of the

Vedas in R.Panikkar's *The Vedic Experience; mantramañjarī. An anthology of the Vedas for modern man and contemporary celebration*.

There still seems to be a fundamental misapprehension as to what was the higher prehistoric man, the seer, prophet, sage - logic and rationalism seemingly being taken as the pinnacle of mental life! The ṛṣis' mental life circled round an altogether different compass than our own very prosaic one. Their's was profounder and vaster. Their power of expression, of eloquence, was linked to their seership, and this fully applies to the poet, the inspired one, the *kavi* whom Kuiper rightly declared meant far more than our word poet, but an inspired wise man, an "initiate" made so by his god, as the ṛṣi Vasiṣṭha reveals to us in one of his hymns (VII.88). This is evident among all the ancient prophets, and indeed the word prophet, prior to its modern distortion of sense, meant "seer".

In his book above mentioned, Gonda examined minutely a vast number of examples where occur the word *dhīḥ* and its derivatives, *dhītīḥ*, *dhīra-*, the verb *dhī-* which for him means "to see, look (at) often in connection with extraordinary supranormal vision" (p.202), the root *dhyā* which yielded *dhyāna*, contemplation; and as well, related concepts such as *vena*, *vipra*, *manas*, *matis*, *medhā*, *manīṣā*, (which "like *dhīḥ* ... is also the thought converted into a hymn or eulogy addressed or offered to a god" p.52). For Gonda, "the contextual sense of 'vision' or 'intuition' ... seems to be the central sense of the word, the semantic nucleus" (p.68), although he admits that the ancient Indian sense of *dhīḥ* may not fit completely the definitions of the English "vision" or "intuition", but like the English term, the Sanskrit *dhīḥ* is

"... closely associated with a verb expressing the idea of 'seeing'. By 'vision' is ... to be understood the exceptional and supranormal faculty, proper to 'seers', of 'seeing', in the mind, things, causes, connections as they really are, the faculty of acquiring a sudden knowledge of the truth, of the functions and influence of the divine powers, of man's relations to them, etc... It is this vision which they attempt to give shape ... to 'translate' into stanzas and hymns of liturgical value." (p.68-9)

It may be that the word *dhīḥ* varied in its shades of meaning, such as flash of insight, intuitive perception, inspiration, vision, visionary insight, etc. Two elements would always be present: inspiration and seeing. Words in ancient texts are generally not confined to a single meaning. Geldner, the German translator of the Ṛgveda, as reported by Gonda (p.80) translated *dhīḥ* as "*Erkenntnis*", or "*Dichtung*" or "*Dichtkunst*" (p.77) thereby evidencing the difficulty of pinpointing the exact meaning; Sāyaṇa grouped *dhīḥ* with *buddhi* thereby implying the high quality ascribed to the significance of *dhīḥ*; *buddhi*'s meaning is certainly quite beyond "thought", being that which awakens us to the spiritual dimension of life, hence spiritual understanding and insight. Gonda emphasizes:

"It is visionary sight, higher knowledge, that is given by the god to those men who are worthy of it, or who are receptive to it and which they may use in order to seek help, refuge or welfare ..." (p.80)

Our word "thought", often-times used to translate *dhīḥ*, falls flat on the texts, is rather insignificant in view of the emphasis found in most verses connected with *dhīḥ* and examined by Gonda. Thus Soma is known for granting vision to the seers, and so he is the "Thousand-eyed" "Lord of visionary-insight" (*patir dhiyaḥ* IX.75.2), bestower of "the solar eye" who leads the poet in his eloquent expression of his insight, so that the "vision", as it impacts the seer, the resulting "thought" as it probes the vision, and the "concretizing" of it all into words, into rhythmic chant or mantra, are the three aspects encapsulated into the one word *dhīḥ*. It is "inspired sages" (*vipraḥ*) who invoke those two "thousand-eyed lords of 'visions'", Indra and Vāyu (p.82), which incidentally implies that the vital connection between seers and gods was one of vision, of seeing and thereby communing. Ordinary verbs of seeing such as *paś* and *drś* apply to "man's experiencing, or becoming aware of, a phenomenon in the divine sphere which in itself is imperceptible by the physical eye: *devasya paśya kāvyam mahitvā*" see the god's (Indra's) high 'power-of-wisdom,' in its majesty." (p.29)

The word *kavi* and its derivative *kāvya* relate to the inspired insights of the sage whose poetic utterances are based on his innate wisdom. Gonda explains *kāvya* as it occurs in V.66.4 thus:

"Mitra and Varuṇa who are concerned with *kāvya*, i.e. with the manifestations of that wisdom which is characteristic of a *kaviḥ*, observe or understand these through ... the 'intelligence-signal' (Renou), the internal light of insight (*ketu-*) which belongs to men. The tenor of the statement seems to be that it is the *ketu-* of men as well as the skill of the gods themselves which enable the god to perceive or observe the products or manifestations of kaviship." (p.57)

Poets or *kavayaḥ* are primarily sages "who see through deep mysteries (*pareṣu ... guhyeṣu vrateṣu*)" (Gonda's trans.), for instance in X.114.2 they perceive "the cause or motive (*nidānam*) of three 'goddesses' of destruction" (p.57). So "Varuṇa, the omniscient, is a seer (*kaviḥ*) (8.41.5) in whom all seer functions are concentrated (st.6), who makes revelations (7.87.4) and belongs to those gods who enable man to receive visions (cf.1.105.15)..." (p.208)

The idea of "wisdom" (*kāvya* - the insight of inspired sage-poets) recurs often enough in Gonda's study and it would be appropriate to quote his own definition of it:

"Wisdom transcendently conceived as partaking of the One Mind is a homogeneous whole, incapable of differentiation and transcending the concrete and utilitarianism. Being complete and independent, it is the unique root of all understanding, enabling the sages to apply knowledge ... which is essentially mundane and utilitarian - wisely." (p.58)

If one should ask what exactly is that "higher knowledge", that "wisdom" imparted to the seers through their *dhīḥ*, one could reply: their vision of cosmic order and the oneness that underlies it, mirrored in the divine solidarity. Did they put it in a few succinct words? Yes: Cosmic Order, *ṛta*, is closely allied to truth, *satya*, so:

"Truth is the foundation that bears the earth; by law the sons of the Infinite stand secure." (Ṛg.V.X.85.1)

"One whole governs the moving and the stable, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation."

(Ṛg.V.III.54.8cd.)

"Vast truth, mighty order, consecration, contemplative exertion, (*tapas*), invocation (*brahma*), sacrificial-offering, these uphold the earth." (Athv.XII.1.1)

"Where spiritual and ruling powers move together in unity, that world shall I know as holy, where move the shining-ones (*devas*) and Agni, [the Flame-divine] ." (Yjv.vs. 20:25)

"The seer beholds that *Being* hidden in mystery in whom all find a single home; in That all this unites; from That all issues forth. He omniscient is warp and woof mid created things." (Yjv.vs.32.8. Bose trans.)

These are beautifully recorded insights into their spiritual vision, not quoted as such in Gonda's book, but they give the essence of their high-minded *dhīyaḥ*, a vision that shows them as far from simple-minded primitives.

Gonda goes into specific details in his examination, but one of these is of special interest for the present investigation into the gnosis in the Ṛgveda. Thus he draws attention to the fact that Agni is in VI.1.1

"...explicitly called the first to devise, invent, or 'find' by willful and directed thinking *dhīyaḥ* [visions]...; moreover, he is addressed as a *dasma*, i.e. 'an accomplisher of wonderful deeds, i.e. of deeds that are beyond human understanding'." (p.84)

Can the fire in the hearth, or on the Vedic altar, be literally credited with all this, or has Agni a much deeper spiritual significance? This is the kind of question that constantly comes to mind. Here a simple statement from the Old Testament shows that fire to the seer is an outer manifestation, the "garment" of a spiritual power: "For our Lord is a consuming fire" (O.T.Deut.4.24). Behind the above explanation by Gonda, but seemingly unknown to the author, looms the activity of the inner, i.e. unseen *secret fire*, the *spiritual essence* and counterpart in the human being of the *Flame-divine*, known to the ṛṣis because of their *tapas*. The gods of the Vedas grant epiphanies - manifestations of some divine reality - to their devotees, to those capable of receiving them because of their practice of *tapas*, the activating of the inner fire. This meaning of epiphany must fully pertain to the Ṛgvedic *dhīḥ*. Agni knows "all, like Varuṇa, by his *dhīḥ*" (X.11.1) in this case his spiritual insight. It is in conducting Agni, the "bestower of inspiration" (*vipodhā*- X.46.1) to his altar, or sacrificial ground, that the priests "give concrete shape to the 'visions' which they have received, reciting the texts into which they are converting them." (p.88)

Gonda comments on the luminosity of the visions: "the poet of 3.34.5 speaks of their *śukram varṇam*, 'bright or pure shape or form'; so that "*śukro varṇaḥ* belonged to the *dhīḥ* because of its very character as vision". (p.167) The poet wishes that Agni "will carry upwards our *dhīḥ* of bright complexion" (I.143.7) - Agni who is, in Gonda's words, the "inventor of the bright-and-pure-word" (*śukrasya vacaso manotā*) (II.9.4) - rather the disposer, or the manipulator of the bright word. Such examples are very numerous, but in spite of the "luminosity" of the word, we are still left vague about the content of the vision, the intrinsic form and meaning. This has to be detected. Thus one verse declares:

"The flying bird bears the word in his mind ere the gandharva pronounces it in the womb.

That radiant, celestial (*svaryam*) intuition, inspired-poets safeguard in the abode of Order." (X.177.2)  
The second *pāda* above (2cd) is translated by Gonda - a little too discursively - thus:

"The inspired seers (*kavayo*) guard this inspired thought (*manīṣām*) which is bright-like-lightning,  
and is of the nature of the light of heaven (*svaryam*) at the abode or seat of *ṛta*." (ibid)

Note that Gonda feels obliged to use the word "inspired" twice, once to qualify *kavayaḥ*, once for *manīṣā*, any of our words not being adequate enough. We are faced here with one of those highly esoteric verses scattered throughout the *Ṛk saṁhitā*. It first implies that the "word" that rings out the essential nature of the "bird" or "soul", kept in its consciousness, becomes incarnated, i.e. descends into the womb, when a celestial entity (*gandharva*) has struck the keynote in the womb. This was evidently part of the *gnosis* or *vidyā* of the ṛṣis which they could only arrive at through their *tapas* or contemplative exertion, and their seership. They protect their "*manīṣā*" in the abode of sacrificial ritual, i. e. the altar, mirror of the Cosmic Order, where their visions take place which they offer to the devas. Their visionary insight wells up from the hidden spot of the heart, in that "cherished state, abode of heaven, kept secret by the priests" (IX.10.9). In stanza 1 of hymn X.177, a partial clue is also given of the content of their vision:

"The wise-seers perceive with their heart, with their mind, the flying-bird  
anointed with the magic of the celestial- spirit (*asura*); deep within the ocean,  
the inspired-poets observe him; the worshippers seek out the source of his rays." (X.177.1)

Is this not indicative of a contemplation where vision is paramount occurring in the inner ocean of the heart? - the heart and the ocean as perceived by Gonda (p.281) being identical. But it is not the physical heart that is meant but that which substands it. And what are the rays of this flying bird and what is their source? "The bird", for Gonda, "is the inner light of the visionary illumination and perception" (p.277) which the ṛṣis call *svar*; though Gonda does not go so far as admitting that *svar* is a state of supreme illumination. The bird is not just the sun in the sky as it has seemed to some, but the soul wherein resides that *satyaṁ sūryam*, the quest of the ṛṣis, that solar splendour which they find beyond the darkness (I.50.10) or hidden in the "waters", i. e. in the depths of the "unconscious"; the sun "*ātman* of what moves and what moves not". (I.115.1)

The further aspect "... of the notional complex covered by the term *dhīḥ* is 'prayer'. The gods' 'furtherance' of the *dhīḥ* consists in satisfying the speaker's desires and aspirations, in answering his prayers." (p.129)

Numerous examples of the plea to "further" or "favour" our *dhīyaḥ* may be found in the *saṁhitā*. This has led to the very superficial but completely unjustified charge by some scholars that most prayers are for material benefits. This was answered in one section of my *The Vedas; harmony, peace, meditation*. Here again one finds Western prejudice at work, e.g. the extraordinary translation of *vāja* as booty, as remarked by A.C. Bose in his illuminating book *Hymns from the Vedas*, where he noted several such anomalies (e.g. in IV.23.10, VI.56.5) where the translator Griffith used the word "booty" for *vāja*. Gonda saw in *vāja* a reference to the "(re)generative power by which new food and new life is obtained" (p.129), in short *invigoration*, usually towards more visionary insight and eloquence, such as the goddess Sarasvatī is known to grant, and celestial fulfilment. None of the detractors had noted the meaning of *dhīḥ* and its whole conception and background. Moreover, one should recognise that it is human nature to ask - prayer in common Christian language has degenerated nowadays to mean simply asking for material good, but that is not its real meaning.

The Ṛgveda has been made out to be a "worldly book" in accordance with the worldly mindedness of some of its translators, without any insight into its real meaning. Gonda restored the balance and in his study pointed out how this visionary perception led the ṛṣis to deeper insights than had been realised by our exegesists. Two verses in particular stand out as setting the seal on the sacredness of the ṛṣis' receiving of visions, or epiphanies, their use, meaning and consequences. The first to be examined concerns Father Manu and that ancient seer taken to be Indra. The following translation is made in accordance with Gonda's directives:

"That ancient seer was anointed with the creative-powers of the mighty ones,  
by which means Father Manu anointed the *dhīyas* as an open-access to the gods". (VIII.63.1)

I shall here only consider my own conclusion. The whole verse implies a *paramparā*, a passing on of something sacred, a visionary insight, a gnosis, from an inspiring deva - Indra presumably - to humanity's ancestor Manu, to the ṛṣis or inspired descendants, the seer/poets. (Cf. I. 91.1cd; 109.3; 87.5a; VIII.6.10; etc.)

The second verse also implies that ancestral lineage that brings a veracity and high significance to the ṛṣis' *dhīh* as their instrument of contact and communion with the divine powers essential to their framing it into hymns, into mantras that caught the subtle vibrations of the inner dimensions thus contacted.

"Born of the first dawning, watchful, recited at the sacred-function, robed in auspicious raiments of light, this is our ancestral vision, born of old." (III.39.2)

This verse admits an ancient epiphany converted into a chant that is renewed each morn, hence an archetypal vision - their link with the celestial realm - that recurs with the morning's offering and on which the chanting depends. This link with the sacred past at the level of what was most precious to the seers, gave them a secure basis for their spiritual endeavours and the foundation of their society.

One question preoccupied Gonda: it concerned the

"... 'mechanism' of visionary inspiration or of the transmission of visions ... what it meant to them when they considered a definite activity of the god Agni a determinant factor in their receiving visionary thoughts. In 7.10.1 it reads ... 'the yellow, radiant bull shines brightly, he has stimulated the eager visionary thoughts and has roused them' ... the meaning obviously is that Agni while inflaming exerts a stimulating influence on the mind of the ṛṣi, awaking thoughts which are converted into verses, stanzas and hymns..." (p.83-4)

There is far more to it than just an external stimulus. What the scholar could not consider - and this is crucial to the understanding of the whole process of the ritual and the visioning - is that in kindling the outer fire on the altar, the poet has to concentrate on kindling his own inner fire, the *secret creative flame of meditative absorption (tapas)* without which no inspired thought or insight, no vision could come to him. It is always a two way process and a final fusion. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* refers to this in terms of the sacrificer taking Agni up into himself "for by his own mind he purposes to sacrifice and from his own mind he impels it when he performs it" (Śat. Br.III.1.4.12.) Here is hidden one of the secrets of the spiritual life. (See ch.4)

The answer to the question of the "mechanism of visionary inspiration" for which Gonda thought no "complete description" or "theoretical discussion" can be "expected" in the Ṛgveda, lies here in the two way process, in which concentration and the activating of the inner flame, are of utmost importance. Many hints may be found in the Ṛgveda and in the Brāhmaṇas, which touch on that very esoteric and well guarded knowledge, which was not detected until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. This involves the practice of *tapas*, difficult to understand at the mere rational level, just as the experience of colours and their various shades is incomprehensible for a blind person, but also hinted at in X.154.2,4,5, and scattered in various verses. Not only are the seven ancient ṛṣis described as practising *tapas* (X.109.4b), but the Angirasas create through *tapas* (X.169.2c), etc. This will be examined in ch. 4. But let it be clearly understood that *tapas*, at the human level, implies an intensive spiritual inner focussing in deep meditation which kindles the inner being or psyche's flame to incandescence; this results in arousing the inner or secret fire, in bringing exaltation, inspiration, transcendental visions, such as recorded in the world scriptures and mystical writings. Physiological heat is only a body reaction, taken by too many as the only meaning. Far more ground needs be broken and fathomed before we may come to a just appreciation of the ancient Vedic vision and the ground of all revelation.

Gonda's analysis goes further:

"A close examination of all the Ṛgvedic texts exhibiting the term under discussion [*dhīh*] will however show that the mere 'revelation' of a 'vision' did not suffice. The supranormal sight, the privilege of a temporary initiation into the divine secrets was necessary; it was however only the initial stage of a process. It was left to the seer to foster, develop, cultivate the *dhīh* which he had acquired ... He had to 'translate' it into audible and intelligible words, ... liturgically useful..." (p.106)

Ṛgv.X.71, the so-called *jñāna sūkta*, serves as an introduction to the subject:

"...according to the Bṛhaddevatā (7.109) Bṛhaspati praised that knowledge 'which is immortal light and by union with which one attains to *brahma*' ... In this *sūkta* the problem of sacral speech, its origin, secret and production is of course in an archaic and unsystematic way, discussed. One of its themes is the 'invention' of sacral speech by ancient seers, another its discovery by the wise." (p.107)

In the first stanza, "...the first and foremost part of Speech which was the most excellent ... pure, being concealed became manifest through their sympathetic disposition" (Gonda's trans.) - almost an admission on Gonda's part of "sympathetic resonance". The Sanskrit word for this is very simple: *preman*, love. This stanza

shows that Vāc was not "invented" but was discovered through sympathetic resonance. Furthermore, the seers, by means of worship - the sacrificial ritual, an essential part of *tapas*- "went the way of Speech; they discovered her that had entered the ṛṣis (viz. the *dhīrāh* 'wise seers' of st.2); they fetched her and distributed her over many places (persons)." (st.3) (Gonda's trans. p.108). Accordingly, Vāc is tracked by means of worship and is found within the ṛṣis. They "distribute" her; that is, they express her through their mantras into which they initiate others. Part of the clue is given here, Vāc in her purest form, i.e. her ultimate frequency or *nityā vāc* (cf. VIII.75.6) is found "within" the seers who resonate to her.

Admittedly, to translate Vāc as speech with its connotation of logical discourse is to reduce her to our discursive, prosaic language and falls flat on one's ears. The Vāc in question is the "eternal *akṣara* (or *nityā vāc*) first born of the Cosmic Order" (*prathamajā ṛtasya*, Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa II.8.8.5), is prior to speech, is equivalent to: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God". Vāc, Logos, Verbum, Word, all bear the same mystical significance hoary with age, - the original sound vibration at the very root of manifestation. Thus is the transcendental quality of Ṛgvedic thought reduced to nought by our ill-adapted and merely profane words and our disregard of the essence of *sacred texts*.

Something vital in Gonda's examination of the ṛṣis' transference of their vision into proper mantras or "sacral speech" remains unexplained. It concerns the meeting-point of vision and sounding, seeing and hearing, the link between fire and word, flame and frequency, succinctly expressed in *Agni the manipulator of the "bright-and-pure word"*. It is Agni who discovers for the meditator that vibration which, when externalised as sound, becomes the word. This knowledge, however irrational it may appear to us, underlies the *veda*, and is the lost but still standing secret of part of the Ṛgveda's sacredness. The innermost secret flame that dwells within the human being, later to be called the *puruṣa* of the heart, emits its own frequency allied to the cosmic frequency; hence Vāc who dwells within the human being is found through the secret fire: Agni is the *manotā* of the eulogy whose basis is Vāc (II. 9.4). This could only be discovered through *tapas* - an unknown quantity for a whole generation or more of scholars. (See ch.5 on Logos)

"In order to deepen our insight into the technique of receiving visions" (p.276) Gonda investigated the question of the heart which he admits is for the ṛṣi "the place where inspiration is received and from which sacred speech originates." (p.281)

"The heart is the organ with which one is able to see what is denied to the physical eye. Thus 10.123.6 Soma is addressed as follows: 'when they, looking eagerly with their heart ... saw thee flying up as a bird to the firmament...' Compare 10.129.4 where the sages by reflecting in their heart found the close connection between 'being' and 'non-being' ... " (p.276)

The word *heart* in Vedic texts does not refer to the physical organ, as is usually mistakenly understood, but to its counterpart at a much subtler level, a centre of force behind the heart which is the seat of psyche in the human body; it is concerned with the higher spheres and radiates the cosmic principle of cohesion and harmony, hence love - in average humanity, feelings, emotions and devotion. Our word heart is very ambiguous in its meaning and seldom goes beyond feeling and emotion, sometimes love. In the Vedas, the heart as seat of psyche wields that transformative power that is alone able to achieve extraordinary changes in the human being, and to read into the cosmos, hence to vouchsafe vision, insight, intuition, love; all of these characterise the ṛṣis. Therefore we should observe that their use of the word heart goes far beyond the physical organ, to the non-physical seat of psyche's spiritual consciousness, of which the ṛṣis were fully aware, but of which we are not. Hence the puzzle.

On the whole, *The Vision of the Vedic Poets* is a remarkable advance on most previous Western exegesis. It opens wide the door to a fuller appreciation and understanding of the visionary insights of the Ṛgvedic poets, their significance and their message. It shows that there is more to our mere logic and philology than we dream of, and that this more is in the Ṛgveda, waiting to be fathomed and understood. A study of this book can serve as a guide to an esoteric approach to the *sacred texts*, their revelation and gnosis. The book implies a complete dismissal of the too long prevalent attitude that the ancient prehistoric poets could have neither depth of thought (cf. A.B. Keith) nor the relevant vocabulary to express thought. Without such a basic introduction to, and proof of, the ṛṣis' seership and their vision of a spiritual world that man was invited to establish on earth, the present study which aims at demonstrating the *esoteric dimension* of the Ṛgveda as the pioneering *sacred text*, could hardly have been undertaken.



The Ṛgveda is one of the few prehistoric records still extant that contains revelations which inscribe it in the tradition of the *esoteric wisdom*. This is traceable in the discussion of Gonda's views on the poets and their visionary activity, let alone in the various puzzling verses to be discussed, and in the data he surveyed. This wisdom has been disregarded, if not just denied by more than one generation of Western scholars. But H.P.B. recognised it, pointed it out, commented upon it with examples.

One of the greatest gifts of the Ṛgveda to the world of thought is its vision of harmony, wholeness, divine solidarity, of Cosmic Order which subsequently became the fountain-head of the peculiarly Hindu doctrines of *dharmā* and *karmā*, and of the law of vast cycles, hinted at in some verses, but again denied by some scholars. Two other revelations are, 1) that of the *sacred spiritual flame* within the human being as within the cosmos (so completely misunderstood by Western exegesis until recently), the precursor of the *puruṣa of the heart* and the *ātman* of the Upaniṣads; and 2) the mystery of vibration or frequency which opens vast horizons to those who can understand it. All this is not spelled out in logical, discursive language, but in poetic imagery and metaphors; one has to fathom it step by step. As the Ṛgveda falls within *the esoteric tradition which concerns the mystical insight of humanity*, the present investigation will be taken from the third level of interpretation which Indian exegesis labels *ādhyātmika*. The understanding of mysticism requires an intuitive insight not developed in every one. For those who fail in this the ancient insights will be meaningless and this book had better be left alone. However rational the explanations may be, the present book does touch on, and tries to probe, certain depths of experience unique to the human psyche, not vouchsafed to many, and which reason by itself can never fathom.

## **PART II**

### **THE WISDOM TRADITION AND THE STANZAS OF DZYAN**

Nowadays with the better understanding of Oriental philosophies and with the deeper studies on *yoga*, certain ideas have become far more acceptable than in the last century, at least to the *intelligentsia*. Such, for example, is the conception of Deity met with in the Ṛgveda and the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, as an impersonal Absolute Principle emanating the cosmos, referred to in the Ṛgveda as merely That (*tat*) rather than an extra-Cosmic anthropomorphic masculine God and arbiter of human destiny; or that other conception of one universal Law of action and reaction on all planes, physical, moral, mental and spiritual, denied by scholars to the Ṛgveda, even though the notion of Cosmic Order (*ṛta*) referred to in many verses fully implies it. Even "eternal recurrence" as peculiar to the cosmos, the ebb and flow of all things, the seasons, the years, day and night, activity and rest, to which are bound all creatures, as well as the "numberless universes incessantly manifesting and disappearing" upon the boundless plane of THAT which is, does not appear as unthinkable or forbidding as it used to. We can more readily accept the immense duration of the cycles of evolution (and involution) succinctly expressed as the Days of Brahmā, which in their inherent meaning find their counterpart in the Seven Days of *Genesis*, which are *not* human days, but like every vast conception have been so dwarfed in their interpretation. Because of this slight familiarity with notions that were previously considered fabulous and opposite to what was decreed *common knowledge*, but which in fact denoted mere conditioning of mind, we can better appreciate the ideas expounded in *The Secret Doctrine* and recognise how the latter can be used as a tool to understand the ancient scriptures and those best preservers of the wisdom tradition: the *Vedas*.

But to be able to appreciate the depth of insight within the *Vedas* as within *The Secret Doctrine* one has to throw away all "orthodoxies" and not rely *solely* on Western rationalism. One should come to the *Stanzas of Dzyan* with an open mind, a fair attitude, giving the benefit of the hope that one day their source will be discovered. For *The Secret Doctrine* bases its exposition on the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, Stanzas of contemplation or "mystic knowledge" which H.P.B. translates, explains and comments upon, bringing into her comments elements from all the known religions, scriptures, philosophies and mythologies to substantiate the themes expounded. Obviously a great deal is left out, for there was a great deal to cover. The accumulation of her comparisons goes far to build up a proof that all of these ancient scriptural or mythological writings have some fundamental core in common that goes back to one primeval wisdom revelation.

However, the greatest bone of contention is not, or perhaps no longer, the claim to this original revelation, or even to a *secret doctrine* or *gnosis*, "the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world"

(S.D.I.p.xxxiv) – this was simply unacceptable to 19th century mentality for which primitive humanity could know nothing of wisdom, and may still be unacceptable in some quarters to 20th and 21<sup>st</sup> century minds – but it centred and still centres around the fact that the original source of the *Stanzas of Dzyan* has so far never been found, though definite clues are given by H.P.B herself. So scholars have dismissed the *Stanzas* as inauthentic, without giving them a fair trial. The grandeur of the themes covered, the great poetry emerging from time to time, and the vast erudition evident in their handling, if attributed merely to one 19th century woman would be unbelievable, more so even than the validity of the *Stanzas* as authentic works. Their poetry and their vision of immense compass speak for themselves. From internal evidence they blend archaic, symbolic, Buddhist and Hindu strains of thought, and the commentaries of H.P.B. reveal profound knowledge and understanding of aspects of Northern Mahāyāna Buddhism with its Schools of Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, not to speak of the vast fields of Hindu sacred writings; the commentaries themselves blend a psychological insight into mythology and its timeless message as the "repository of man's cosmic sentiency", its lore enshrining the wisdom of the human psyche throughout the past ages; and finally they evidence a wide-ranging cultural knowledge and erudition. Could H.P.B. have written the *Stanzas*, one may well ask, or were they written by several hands in the course of *many centuries*? The latter seems far more probable, but the great objection to this remains: who were *they*? To understand aspects of hoary knowledge and its way of expression, and marshall these aspects into a wholeness, and bring out their significance, is one thing; to invent archaic stanzas and their way of writing and make them compatible with the wisdom tradition as reflected in the Vedas, the Ancient Egyptian and Sumerian lore, etc. even the Kabbalah, and reflected in the age-old myths of all the nations; to invent a history of humanity that in substance fits with the world's myths and legends, is far more difficult and far too colossal a task for a single human being to perform. H.P.B. was obviously helped. But through her understanding of the Vedas, of esoteric Mahāyāna Buddhism, of the fundamental meaning of myths - a rare achievement in her day when all these were dismissed as inferior to our Western rational thought - and finally her gift for poetic style, she made an extraordinary synthesis of all these, at a time when synthesis was simply not grasped. Would-be critics may jump to the conclusion that she wrote the *Stanzas*, perhaps inspired from the Vedas and that therefore they are *fakes*. This is the easiest way out of a difficulty when one finds no proof and no solution. In either case, how did she get her knowledge of the R̥gveda and specific details in it, such as the meaning of the Waters of space, the Seven Rivers and the Seven Races mentioned there, the Seven Solar Rays and their mystery, the real meaning of Indra forgotten by orthodox Hinduism, etc., at a time when it was hardly known to the wider public; how did she know what Aditi signified when scholars themselves had hardly enquired into that subject, when learned Brahmins would not have taught a mere foreigner, let alone a mere woman? How did she get her insight into Mahāyāna Buddhism at a time when hardly any of the texts had been translated, let alone commented upon? Who taught her, where? These are serious questions that should be pondered upon before dismissing an author for being a charlatan. Why should she hide the fact, if fact it was, that she wrote the *Stanzas*? She admits only to having here "made a nosegay of culled flowers and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them" (S.D.I.p.xlvi), an understatement, as a great deal of thinking and erudition can be seen to have entered into their presentation. H.P.B. did not write the *Stanzas*, but she gave her own stamp to whatever she, or others, had translated, and her own understanding to many difficult subjects.

### **THE ESOTERIC WISDOM**

In her *The Secret Doctrine* H.P.B. makes certain claims and expounds that *wisdom* which, she maintains, is the one "original revelation" given to humanity at the dawn of human evolution by those who had already reached a certain degree of perfection, hence belonged to a previous humanity. This particular claim was *a priori* unacceptable to 19th century scholars who, like Max Müller, refuted the very notion of one universal wisdom tradition underlying all religious philosophies as well as the possibility of loftiness of thought, let alone abstract thinking, among the ancient people who were branded *primitive* in spite of their grand achievements, such as architecture (Egypt) or scriptures, however misunderstood by us. Nowadays the "perception" of the ancient thinking has changed somewhat.

What is exactly meant by the *esoteric wisdom*, or the *wisdom tradition*? Wisdom implies the assimilation of profound ideas, intuitive insights emerging from the depths of the psyche, maturing and wrought out in the very fabric of daily living. It is thus based upon the results of experience duly assimilated and the knowledge

accumulated through that experience, but it is dependent upon mature reflection and understanding for its expression. The *esoteric wisdom* which forms the nucleus of all the grand spiritual ideas of humanity, wrought in the burning-ground of life, could be summarised in the following points:

- 1) the inherent *divinity* at the core of life; this makes all the multiform expressions of life fundamentally *one* and *sacred*, for the same *divine Life* operates through them. This therefore refers to a divine Cause or Origin manifesting through many aspects, hence the ONE through the many; hence the profound meaning of "love thy neighbour as thyself" of Christ's injunction, and the "That thou art" of the Upaniṣads. Each complements the other;
- 2) what is now called *evolution* is viewed as the unfolding to full expression of multiple aspects inherent to that ONE LIFE SOURCE. According to *The Secret Doctrine*

"The first lesson taught in esoteric philosophy is, that the incognizable Cause does not put forth evolution, whether consciously or unconsciously, but only exhibits periodically *different aspects of itself* to the perception of *finite Minds*." (S.D.II.p.487)

This is expressed by the human mind as the genesis of the worlds from an ever unknown Supernal Source, transcendent yet immanent, "whose shadow is death, whose shadow is immortality" (Ṛgv.X.121.2); a spark of which animates all beings, becomes the quickening core of human beings, pervades all and holds all in a network of interconnecting *forces* (whether called gods, *devas*, or energies) that are constantly at work weaving the "pattern in the heavens" and bringing back all erring efforts and straying creatures to a harmonious wholeness, thereby restoring whatever disequilibrium may have occurred to that balance which mirrors the cosmic wholeness;
- 3) hence the great law of action and reaction, cause and effect, called *karma* by the Hindus, irrevocably working towards the greater harmony of the whole, responsible for the balance of Nature, the harmony of the spheres, the Cosmic Order and, at the human level, human efforts at establishing socio-ethical values as the norms of civilized societies and the reflection of the Cosmic Order;
- 4) hence the law of cycles of activity and repose or obscurity, of birth and death, of fruition and sterility, of eternal recurrence to which all manifestation is subject;
- 5) hence that other law: as above, so below; each level or plane of manifestation from the lowest to the highest being a reflection of a more subtle level: each higher level stepped down into a more limiting expression of a reality of which we, at our physical level, can know only a distorting "measure" (*māyā*). The essence of *being* is unitary, what is projected from it becomes a reflection and, in its outermost mirroring, a very limited and thereby at times opposite reflection of that original unlimited source at the innermost level; real only in so far as it borrows its reality from its source, hence in a sense illusory. Opposition is an inherent law of the universe, there being no manifestation without opposition, dualising, separating, hence friction, at the human level pain; hence evil. Therein is found the origin of evil;
- 6) hence man, the "seven-leafed plant" (*saptaparṇa*), with his spiritual capacity of transcendental vision and his feet firmly set on the earthly plane, in the limitation of matter, becomes "the measure of all things", the microcosm of the macrocosm, hinted at in the Delphic injunction: "Man know thyself and thou shalt know the universe"; or in theological language: man is made in the image of God; to which the sceptic retorts that man rather creates God in his own image, a truth at its own level, but which does not recognise the inner constitution of man and his "equipment" which reflects the layout of the cosmos;
- 7) hence the fundamental meaning of man's pilgrimage on earth at the mid-point of evolution, the bridge between heaven and earth, the spiritual and the material, the animal and the divine.

Certain aspects of the above tenets found expression in the ancient Vedas thus:

"Firmly fixed are the foundations of Cosmic Order,  
shining in beauty, manifold are its beauteous forms." (Ṛgv.IV.23.9ab)

"Sweet blows the breeze for one who lives by truth,  
rivers pour for him sweets." (Ṛgv.I.90.6)

and those verses quoted on p.10 (Ṛgv.X.85.1; III.54.8cd; Athv.XII.1.1; Yjv.vs.20.25; 32.8.)

### ***THE CLAIMS OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE***

Basing itself upon this *wisdom tradition*, traces of which are found reflected in the Vedas, the Egyptian

scriptures, the Chinese, Sumerian, Hebrew, Greek, etc. *The Secret Doctrine* makes certain claims which go far beyond the tracing of the wisdom tradition to the Vedas:

1. "The Secret Doctrine was the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world." (S.D.I.p.xxxiv)
2. "... there exists a science called *Gupta Vidyā* ... like the once mysterious sources of the Nile, the source of all religions and philosophies now known to the world has been for many ages forgotten and lost to men, but it is at last found." (S.D.I.p.xxxviii)
3. "The 'Wisdom-Religion' is the inheritance of all the nations, the world over ..." (S.D.I.p.xviii)
4. "Esoteric philosophy reconciles all religions, strips every one of its outward human garments, and shows the root of each to be identical with that of every other great religion." (S.D.I.p.xx)
5. "... *The Secret Doctrine* has neither been invented nor exaggerated, but, on the contrary, simply outlined; and finally ... its teachings antedate the *Vedas*." (S.D.I.p.xxxvii)

These are claims that may seem at first sight somewhat preposterous. But by examining the main religions of this world from their essential or esoteric meaning as against the outer form of their presentation (see ch.9) which *The Secret Doctrine* helps us do; by recognising the esoteric wisdom, for instance, of the Vedas, enshrined in myths, images, technical words and invocations to many gods, that needs a *key*, one may discover this needed key to the unravelling of it all in *The Secret Doctrine*. In many cases, the latter does explain particular aspects of Vedic enigmas, as indeed of various religious tenets, then some of these claims will no longer seem so forbidding. But it is not yet possible for the scholars to fully trace this wisdom tradition to beyond the first *known* scriptures of the world, the Vedic, the Egyptian, Sumerian, Chinese, South American, etc. H.P.B.'s source, she claims, is other than these; these are simply used to corroborate the main thesis of her book. As she herself wrote:

"One of the greatest, and, withal the most serious objection to the correctness and reliability of the whole work will be the preliminary STANZAS: 'How can the statements contained in them be verified?' True, if a great portion of the Sanskrit, Chinese, and Mongolian works quoted in the present volumes are known to some Orientalists, the chief work – that one from which the Stanzas are given – is not in the possession of European Libraries. The *Book of Dzyan* (or 'Dzan') is utterly unknown to our Philologists, or at any rate was never heard of by them under its present name ... The main body of the Doctrines given, is found scattered throughout hundreds and thousands of Sanskrit MSS., some already translated – disfigured in their interpretations, as usual – others still awaiting their turn. Every scholar, therefore, has an opportunity of verifying the statements herein made, and of checking most of the quotations. A few new facts, (*new* to the profane Orientalist, only) and passages quoted from the Commentaries will be found difficult to trace. Several of the teachings also have hitherto been transmitted orally; yet even those are in every instance hinted at in the almost countless volumes of Brahmanical, Chinese and Tibetan temple-literature." (S.D.I. p.xxii-xxiii)

#### *THE SOURCE OF THE BOOK OF DZYAN AND H.P.B.'S CONNECTION WITH TIBETAN BUDDHISM*

According to H.P.B. "The Book of Dzyan – from the Sanskrit word *dhyāna* (mystic meditation) is the first volume of the Commentaries upon the seven secret folios of Kiute, and a glossary of the public works of the same name ... The Books of Kiu-te are comparatively modern, having been edited within the last millennium, whereas, the earliest volumes of the Commentaries are of *untold antiquity*, some fragments of the original cylinders having been preserved." (*Esoteric Writings* p.324-325 = C.W. 14, p.422)

The *Books of Kiu-te* have only recently been identified<sup>9</sup> as forming part of the Tibetan sacred *Buddhist Canon* and being the *Buddhist Tantras*. But they are mentioned in a book of "Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet ...", published in London in 1876 containing in an appendix the "Brief Account of the Kingdom of Tibet" written more than a century earlier, in 1730, by a Capuchin missionary monk, Horace della Penna who travelled to Tibet earlier on and related his findings together with derisive comments, in the usual arrogant Christian way, on what he saw and failed to understand. He refers to Gautama Shakyamuni as having "restored the laws" which his disciples wrote down after his death in 106 volumes "... which divide themselves

into two kinds of laws, one of which comprises 60 books which are called the Laws of Dote" (*mDo-sde* or *Sūtra* collection), "and the other which consists of 38 volumes are called Khiute" (*rGyud-sde* or *Kiute*, the Tantra collection). Here is a clear enough indication of these Books and perhaps the first reference printed in the West as to their existence. The number of volumes does not agree with any known recension, nor with H.P.B.'s figures; this is a detail, perhaps depending on the edition, or information or misinformation given to the monk.

The Tibetan sacred Buddhist Canon is divided into two collections as noted above: the KANJUR or works containing what the Tibetans considered the Buddha's words; and the TANJUR or expositions and commentaries, including the writings of Nāgārjuna, Maitreya, Āryāsaṅga, etc., all of which form the sacred canon. Both collections are themselves divided into the *sūtra* portion (*mDo-sde* or *dote*) and the *tantra* portion (*rGyud-sde* = *Kiute*) hence the *Books of Kiute* to which H.P.B. refers. The *Kālacakra Tantra* is one of the most important of these books, always placed at their head, but the complete *Kālacakra* is lost to us and no full translation has yet been made of its abridged version. Nevertheless one knows that it consists of 5 sections: 1st) cosmogony; 2) its correspondence to man, the microcosm; 3) *abhiṣeka*, initiation, and 4) *sādhana*, practices relating to these correspondences; 5) *jñāna*, or wisdom and its practical application. In short it is a complete teaching in accordance with the two occult laws, as above so below, and man the microcosm of the macrocosm. Only the first section could be discussed publicly.

H.P.B. mentions 35 volumes of *Kiute* which could be found in Gelugpa monasteries for public use. These offered "the popularised version of the secret doctrine, full of myths, blunders and errors", whilst

"the fourteen volumes of Commentaries ... with their translations, annotations, and an ample glossary of occult terms, worked out from one small archaic folio, the BOOK OF THE SECRET WISDOM OF THE WORLD – contain a digest of all the occult sciences. These, it appears, are kept secret and apart, in the charge of the Teshu Lama of Tji-gad-je (Shigatze)." (E.W.p.324 = C.W.14, p.422)

According to the great Tibetan historian BUSTON there were voluminous original versions, which however, have not been found, either in India or Tibet. The complete *Kālacakra Mūla Tantra* is "lost". The seven secret folios of *Kiute* mentioned by H.P.B. were "kept secret and apart" – in her days, but now? The *Mūla Guhyasamāja tantra* is "lost". The *Mūla Hevajra Tantra* in its full version is also "lost" and we have only its quotation in the Bodhisattva Vajragarbha's Commentary which made Dr Snellgrove remark that

"The actual passages that he (Vajragarbha) quotes, come from no normal tantra; they are always explanatory and doctrinal and it is to this work that he frequently refers when he is seeking the figurative meaning of a passage."<sup>10</sup>

All these "lost texts" may have something to do with H.P.B.'s "secret folios" of commentaries. The loss points out that a vast corpus of explanations concerning certain doctrines has now disappeared, though not without leaving definite traces behind in their quotes in other texts, sufficient evidence of the existence of a certain *gnosis* – which perhaps humanity is still far from ready to receive.

In respect of this *gnosis* H.P.B. practically quotes from S. Beal's *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures* (p.125) (with a slight difference of wording) but omits to acknowledge the quote:

"Because from the beginning all sentient creatures have confused the truth and embraced the false, therefore there came into existence a hidden knowledge called *Ālaya Vijñāna*."

To the question "Who is in possession of the true knowledge?" the answer is:

"The great Teachers of the Snowy Mountains." (E.W.p.325 = C.W. 14, p.423)<sup>11</sup>

One problem concerns the word *ālaya vijñāna* and its rendering as *hidden knowledge* which is probably Beal's approximation of the Chinese word. The second concerns the answer to the question as to "who possess the true knowledge" or *gupta vidyā*, the hidden *gnosis*.

1) *Ālaya vijñāna* is now recognised to mean "storehouse consciousness", or "substratum consciousness", that consciousness that stores all acquired knowledge. H.P.B. claimed that for the esoteric Buddhists

"'Ālaya' has a double and even a triple meaning. In the Yogācāra system of the contemplative Mahāyāna school, *Ālaya* is both the Universal Soul, (Anima Mundi) and the Self of a progressed adept." (S.D. I. p.49)

Then citing a quote presumably from Āryāsaṅga in E. Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet* (1863, p.40), but omitting to give her source: "He who is strong in the Yoga can introduce at will his *Ālaya* by means

of meditation into the true Nature of Existence ..." Schlagintweit uses the word "soul", H.P.B. "Ālaya ". A further quote, from Āryāsaṅga, states "Ālaya has an absolute eternal existence" (S.D. I. p.49) which certainly differs from orthodox Buddhism, but the previous quote reveals knowledge of the essence of yoga.

For H.P.B. "Ālaya is literally the 'Soul of the World' or Anima Mundi", which in one sense she equates with *pradhāna* of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, *alias ākāśa* (S.D.I. p.49 & 256), the latter being space or the cradle of universes, and as will be seen in ch.3 equivalent to the Universal Soul. Here we note that orthodox Buddhist understanding of *ālaya vijñāna* and H.P.B.'s esoteric understanding are at variance.

2) The second point concerns the answer to the question "who possess the true knowledge?" This brings up the whole issue of the existence and the whereabouts of Śambhala. Behind the very succinct answer "The Teachers of the Snowy Mountains", lies a long series of myths and legends, a lore handed down by sages and Oriental people and even ancient guidebooks, written by Tibetans, to a remote and sacred spot in Central Asia, surrounded by snowy mountains, most difficult of access, called Śambhala. The word itself being Sanskrit, and popularly spelled Shambhala, derived from *śam*, happiness, and *bhala*, "a term of uncertain meaning, possibly derived from the obscure verbal root *bhal* which may mean 'to give'"<sup>12</sup> is in Tibetan *bde 'byung*, the "source of happiness".

It seems that apart from two Jesuit missionaries who in the 17th century were in the monastery of the Panchen Lama at Shigatse where they heard of Śambhala, no information reached Europe until late in the 19th century. But for many an Eastern aspirant after the sacred wisdom it was like Mecca to the devout Muslim. Since the mid 20th century more attention has been given to Śambhala. Serious studies, well researched, have appeared such as E. Bernbaum's *The Way to Shambhala* and V. LePage's *Shambhala*, attesting to a determination to fathom out and somewhat understand what lies behind the legend. Other studies are descriptive of the journey across the mountains of Tibet and central Asia where is usually located Śambhala, such as N. Roerich's *Shambhala* where he in 1923-26 led an expedition across the Gobi desert to the Altai Mountains; others yet again try to bring out the esoteric meaning, like R. Guénon's *The Lord of the World* for whom Śambhala represents a centre of "high evolutionary energies" in central Asia. With the sweep of so many Tibetans to the West, the interaction of their beliefs and their way of looking at the legend, its meaning and prophecy, with the new Western attitude of more openness towards Eastern enigmas, there is an undermining of our prejudices so strong during H.P.B.'s lifetime that anything that smacked of the fantastic was sneered out of existence, including her reputation for daring to give credence to "impossibilities". A different outlook, ready to investigate, is slowly emerging. But the physical existence of Śambhala and hence its location remain a stumbling-block. The Dalai Lama is reported to have asked:

"If so many *Kālacakra* texts are supposed to have come from Shambhala, how could the country be just a fantasy?"<sup>13</sup>

In this respect E. Bernbaum remarks how the Tibetan guidebooks become more and more mystical as the traveller gets closer to the "kingdom", one lama admitting that the vague directions are meant to keep Śambhala safeguarded from the "barbarians". E. Bernbaum asks:

"If Shambhala exists on earth, which seems more likely according to the *Kālacakra* texts, how does it manage to stay hidden?"

and offers various theories as to its existence and whereabouts. He goes on:

"The *Kālacakra* texts may well be using a symbolic representation of an actual place for the purpose of conveying mystical insights. In that case, their description of Shambhala could bear little resemblance to what it actually looks like, yet still give us some idea of its essential nature. Or, as another likely possibility, time and imagination may have simply exaggerated and transformed the size and shape of the kingdom beyond recognition."

"If it deliberately kept itself secret, such a community could still exist as an isolated monastery or rustic village overlooked by the outside world. It would need none of the conspicuous signs of material progress that we normally associate with an advanced culture; the highest wisdom requires only the naked mind. The Indian sages who composed the *Upanishads*, some of the deepest expressions of Hindu philosophy, lived and taught in forest dwellings. The Taoist mysticism of China, which inspired many of the greatest works of Chinese art and literature, held forth the ideal of

the simple, primitive life as the mark of an enlightened society. The royal trappings of Shambhala, with its Kings and palaces, may only be alluding to the nobility of spirit concealed in such a community; similarly, the great size of the kingdom may actually be symbolizing the depth and extent of the wisdom found there."<sup>14</sup>

E. Bernbaum is quite right in his surmises – the kingdom of the spirit with its far-reaching simplicity ends by being represented as a lavish earthly kingdom with all the trappings of royalty.

V. LePage follows this train of thought:

"... to say that the hidden sanctuary of sages exists on two different levels of reality – that it is both visible and invisible – as is constantly affirmed, is simply to say that there is an aspect of the place that can only be seen in a heightened state of consciousness ... A set of directions to it would then exhibit precisely the dual reality, the shifting orientation towards the miraculous already noted, the nearer the destination is approached."<sup>15</sup>

From these quotations it becomes evident that the idea and whereabouts of Śambhala are very intractable and that they will hardly be solved by physical means. As very reasonably put by E. Bernbaum

"... Whether or not the kingdom exists or has existed as an actual place or community of people, it certainly does exist as a myth and symbol. As such it has a power and reality of its own, independent of whatever material existence it might have ... What gives this myth its reality and power? What does the kingdom tell us about ourselves – about the secret yearnings and intuitions it awakens?"<sup>16</sup>

These are questions that arise out of profound thinking, at the same time they uncover the dynamic potentialities hidden in *myth* that throughout the ages have galvanised men to greater achievements. What does the "myth" reveal of our aspirations and intuitions? Each one of us must answer this question for himself or herself.

If Christians admit to a "Council Chamber of God" where the Prophets of Israel, according to H.L Ellison<sup>17</sup> had entrance – a mighty privilege for mere humans even though of the visionary stature of the Prophets – so the Orientals also have their "Council Chamber" of the Most High whose outermost boundary spills over to our planet, but to whose inner centre only the most spiritually evolved can gain admittance.

Excerpts from a dialogue between N. Roerich and a Lama he met during his journeying across the Himalayas, recorded in his *Shambhala* may make us wonder at what lies behind the Lama's words and whether they refer to H.P.B.'s "Great Teachers of the Snowy Mountains":

"– ... Lama, have you met Azaras and Kuthumpas?

... – Many of our people during their lives have encountered the Azaras and Kuthumpas and the snow people who serve them. Only recently have the Azaras ceased to be seen in cities. They are all gathered in the mountains. Very tall, with long hair and beards, they appear outwardly like Hindus ...

The Kuthumpas are no longer seen now. Previously they appeared quite openly in the Tsang district and at Manasarowar, when the pilgrims went to holy Kailāsa. Even the snow people are rarely seen now. The ordinary person, in his ignorance, mistakes them for apparitions. There are profound reasons why, just now, the Great Ones do not appear so openly. My old teacher told me much of the wisdom of the Azaras. We know several places where these Great Ones dwelt, but for the moment these places are deserted. Some great reason, great mystery!

– Lama, then it is true that the Ashrams have been moved from the vicinity of Shigatse?

– This mystery must not be uttered. I already said that the Azaras may no longer be found in Tsang.

... – The great Azaras who know the Teachings of India, know the origin of Kalachakra. They know vast things which, when they will be revealed to help humanity, will completely regenerate life! ...

This Teaching of Kalachakra, this utilization of the primary energy, has been called the Teaching of Fire. The Hindu people know the great Agni – ancient teaching though it be, it shall be the new teaching for the New Era. ... One of your priests once asked me, 'Are not the Kabala and Shambhala parts of the one teaching?' He asked, 'Is not the great Moses an initiate of the same teaching and a follower of its very laws?' We may assert one thing only – Each teaching of truth, each teaching of the high principle of life, issues from the one source ... Many Buddhist images upon the rocks find their origins in teachings which long antedated the Blessed One. Yet they also symbolize the same

high Essence ..."

The Lama furthermore testified to the fact that Śambhala is not a place to be reached out of curiosity, that woe betide those who try to discover it out of curiosity.

"– You have probably heard how certain travelers attempted to penetrate into the forbidden territory and how guides refused to follow them. They said, 'Better to kill us.' Even these simple folk understood that such exalted matters may be touched only with utmost reverence."<sup>18</sup>

The *esoteric tradition* such as it has filtered through to the West, claims that Śambhala is the highly charged spiritual hearth of our planet, a focus of the Divine Will on earth; of the latter humans know next to nothing except indirectly through observations of the evolutionary process: how everything moves towards a harmonious accordance of form and inner centre, of outwardness and inwardness; how the cyclic impetus given to humanity to work towards harmony, wholeness, oneness, etc. is reflected in the ancient laws, in religious precepts, given by great sages and their messengers, thereby raising the level of human thinking, showing by example, by deeds, how to live in peace and harmony. A hint of this activity towards wholeness is found in certain verses of the very ancient Ṛgveda:

"All gods, one-minded, one-intentioned unerringly proceed to the one purposeful accomplishment." (VI.9.5cd)

"One whole governs the moving and the stable, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation". (III.54.8cd)

"Gather together, converse together. Your minds be of one accord, just as in harmony the gods of old took their ritual shares of oblation! United be your counsel, united your assembly, united your spirit and thoughts! A single plan do I lay before you; a single oblation do I offer! United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be at one, that you may long together dwell in unity and concord!" (X.191. 2,3,4. R.Panikkar's translation. *Vedic Experience*. p.854)

This emphasis on harmonious concordance given to humanity ages ago, as revealed in the oldest extant texts, reached its apex in Christ's injunction:

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (N.T. John 13.34),

an injunction still thousands of years in advance of human possibility (with rare exceptions) but pointing to love as the human expression of Cosmic Harmony.

Since every system such as our planetary system with its central sun; or an atom, a plant, an animal or a human being, has a centre, a nucleus of organization, setting movement or rest, a centre of power, visible or invisible, why not a centre of power on our planet? The closer one approaches to the centre of an atom, the deeper one penetrates to a sphere of light, of flame, of incredible power. Does this not give food for reflection? All organized systems must have such a centre, and the atoms and the solar systems are silent indicators of a mighty power within the core of living matter, of forms, of systems, of universes. This, the ancient seer-sages were aware of and they sought to symbolise their insight in the *maṇḍala*. The Tibetan lamas, to quote V.

LePage:

"... have fixed the legend of Shambhala forever in the symbology of a mandala at whose heart lies the sacred mountain Meru, regarded by them as the ultimate unifying principle of the cosmos."

Maṇḍalas "provide a means of instruction, transmitting esoteric knowledge in a symbolic language that will remain opaque to the uninitiated, and in economical form that is capable of illuminating all three of the reality planes – the spiritual, the psychic and the physical – at one and the same time ... These three dimensions are united by Meru, the World Axis which intersects them all at the center of the diagram and is the key to the whole mythology of Shambala."<sup>19</sup>

Nothing much more than what has already been given out so far can and will be discovered and understood of Śambhala before the majority of human beings have recognised and grasped the underlying meaning of divinity, the principle of the One Life and the constant interaction between the divine pole and the earthly pole, the inner and the outer, the existence of a divine spark or sacred centre said to be deeply buried in the *ākāśa* of the human heart (Upaniṣad), or in the stable of the human body (esoteric Christianity); certainly not until the



profane ceases to disparage, distort and misunderstand every message of deep import, and reduce the *sacred* to ashes.

### **THE SECRET TRADITION**

There are nowadays various pointers, more or less documented, to that *secret tradition* referred to by H.P.B., coming down through the ages, seemingly disappearing at times but to reappear in a different guise though with the same essential core of teachings. Well may any reader feel bewildered when confronted with an array of theories and investigations about such a hidden tradition and unknown sages, and with such authors as Saint-Yves d'Alveydre with his mysterious centre he called Agartha, taken up and discussed by R. Guénon in his *The Lord of the World*, or F. Ossendowski's travel narrative, or N. Roerich's own travel tales, or with such theories as are found in Rodney Collins' works, taken up by E. Scott, or with J.G. Bennett's *The Masters of Wisdom* with documentation on these, their activities and teachings, the latter revealing the age old training for spiritual integration; or with James Georges' *Searching for Shambhala*, or E. Bernbaum's *The Way to Shambhala*, or with the Tibetans' and Mongolians' "legend" of Śambhala in the Himalayas, and H.P.B.'s own assertions immediately discredited, yet *essentially in agreement with these*. Let the reader reflect that underneath such a medley of theories and/or investigations, sometimes seemingly conflicting, sometimes in strange accord, there is one substratum common to all, the growing suspicion of and pointer to a secret tradition as being no fable, but behind which may be certain fraternities moving among humanity, accomplishing their task in the world, without the world knowing much or anything about them – the Khwajagan (Masters of Wisdom) being a case in point, having been hardly known to the West until recently; that again behind them may be those wise ones and visionaries who can see far into the future and the destiny of humanity, beyond our puny minds and visions, and who from time to time send their messengers great or small on earth to leaven the minds of men. Have we not had Laotze and Gautama, and Zoroaster and Kṛṣṇa, and Jesus to name but a few of the great ones? Or Pythagoras, Plato, Averroes, El Gazzali, Ibn El-Arabi, to name some of the great intellects who hid in their teachings or writings aspects of the secret *gnosis*?

The difference between the East and the West in point of attitude is that when an average Oriental is asked about something which to the Western mind sounds preposterous, he listens respectfully and admits his ignorance if he does not know, whereas when the average Westerner faces a preposterous idea such as the existence of Masters of Wisdom here on earth but unknown to the West, he generally laughs at it out of scorn. Not for nothing did N. Roerich in his Book *Shambhala* include the remarks of the Lama he questioned about Śambhala:

"Lama, tell me of Shambhala!

– But you Westerners know nothing about Shambhala – you wish to know nothing. Probably you ask only out of curiosity; and you pronounce this sacred word in vain.

– Lama, I do not ask about Shambhala aimlessly ...

– Can this be so, when some of your Western people desecrate our temples? They smoke within our holy sanctuaries; they neither understand nor wish to venerate our faith and our teaching. They mock and deride the symbols whose meaning they do not penetrate. Should we visit your temples, our conduct would be completely different, because your great Bodhisattva, Issa, [i.e. Jesus] is verily an exalted one. And none of us would defame the teaching of mercy and righteousness." (op.cit.p.1)

Considering Westerners propensity to deride everything held sacred either by antiquity or by Orientals and to bring out but the worst in human nature, one is likely to find only those "secret" centres or societies of more than dubious character. Real centres of high spiritual calibre will never be opened out to the wider public scrutiny, but only to those rare individuals with pure spiritual aspiration, capable of selfless efforts. Thus Arken Daraul's *History of Secret Societies* where, with very few exceptions, practically only highlights the worst aspects of secret societies and humanity. No real initiatory society is found. The real people of the Tradition can have no place in such painful research. Along this path of enquiry one will meet with only what reflects one's own level of interest, hence mentality. Fortunately, during the past decades a number of studies has appeared to somewhat counterbalance this morbid appeal.

More and more evidence is being gathered which tends to point to something akin to a tradition of toilers in the field of humanity. In this respect, E. Scott's *The People of the Secret* is quite an eye opener as he traces the work of such people as the Sufis, revealing the existence of an ageless esoteric tradition, exactly as H.P.B.

gave out only to reap insults and ridicule. Rodney Collins theory, set out in his two books - *The Theory of Eternal Life*, 1950, and *The Theory of Celestial Influence*, 1954 - is examined and explained in E. Scott's peculiar way. It concerns a different apprehension of time and thinking and suggests a guidance imparted to humanity by higher Intelligences with a particular and much larger aim than can be envisaged by the average person; it brings out how this perspective gave Western history an inherent significance and all sweeping purpose, in stark contrast to the random, meaningless series of events which, in accordance with linear thinking, passes as history. E. Scott could not help conclude that humanity has all along the ages been silently guided by an initiate tradition - however far it always tends to stray away from the directives received. This was H.P.B.'s thesis, dismissed as absurd by the intelligentsia. One should recall the long line of great sages who have given humanity guidelines for moral and spiritual development. E. Scott traces the real cultural history of humanity showing that various modalities, not just the religious one, have been used as instruments towards furthering human evolution, and ends with the work of the Sufis; thereby in one sense confirming Idries Shah's contention re the Sufis' hidden influence over Middle Ages European intelligentsia.

If such works as those of the above cited authors can be at least considered as offering a possible explanation for the undercurrents of world happenings, and not be immediately defamed, and the research of E. Bernbaum, V. LePage and N. Roerich in their search for Śambhala, can be read and pondered upon without dismissing them as nonsensical, how can H.P.B.'s pioneering work in this very field be dismissed as bogus? She pointed to a different, broader and deeper horizon than that known to Westerners. That she learnt a great deal from an unknown centre of wisdom is obvious from her grasp of Vedic, Purāṇic, Buddhist, Tibetan, Kabbalistic and mythological lore, an understanding quite beyond the intellectual grasp of her revilers and indeed of the scholarly world of the 19th century. But where that centre was located, if we disbelieve what she admitted, is of no great consequence. H.P.B. knew too much of flippant and cruel human nature to reveal too much about her source of knowledge of the ageless wisdom.

H.P.B.'s name has hardly ever been connected with the Sufis. Yet certain indications scattered through her collected writings and brought together by P. Johnson in his pamphlet *Madame Blavatsky: the 'veiled years'* build up a case for a real link which she may not have been prepared to admit beyond the few remarks gathered in the above pamphlet. Moreover, the comparisons Johnson draws between the itineraries of Gurdjieff and H.P.B., the "striking parallels" in both their travels and careers and the complementariness of their teachings, all seem to lead to a common source, but the Sufi label is not necessary for that common source,<sup>20</sup> for the latter could influence the Sufi movement as well as other toilers for humanity.

The *tradition*, better documented nowadays, of *seekers of the truth* and *pointers of the way* that throughout the ages walked this earth and helped their fellow humans towards enlightenment, is still alive. Of these toilers in the human field – apart from the great illumined messengers already mentioned – some are known, many are not. One line of these transmitters of the way is definitely the Sufis who attached themselves to Islam but whose history goes well beyond the advent of Mohammed, though that too is unknown to the average reader. Their influence on Western thought, so far quite hidden because it remained for so long unacknowledged through Church prejudices, is now becoming more and more acknowledged through the work of open-minded historians (e.g. P. Hitti, *History of the Arabs*, J.B. Trend, *Legacy of Islam*). Many surprises are awaiting the would-be enquirer.

The Sufis are the better known of the "people of the secret" for the intellectual and illuminating achievement of their greatest masters, such as Ibn Arabi, El Ghazali, Jalaluddin Rumi, Fariduddin Attar, etc. is now open to the West and speaks for itself. But who has heard of the Sufi influence on the Majorcan mystic Raymond Lully, or on the English Franciscan monk Roger Bacon, on Duns Scotus or even St John of the Cross? Some of these did admit to this influence in their own writing. Who has heard of the 12th century martyred Sufi teacher, Suhrawardi whose book the *Wisdom of Illumination* was consigned to the flames by the Orthodox, but of which a few copies escaped to reveal to later generations the existence of that same old *secret tradition*<sup>21</sup> and its influence on Christians such as some of those named above. In addition to the teaching of the Illuminist Sufi School which is said to have influenced Dante, the book explains the tradition of the handing down of a *secret doctrine* of the eternal truths from master to disciple who in turn becomes master, etc. – the *paramparā* of the Vedas and the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Was H.P.B. so preposterously wrong in also maintaining the existence of a *secret doctrine* handed down from age to age and hidden in more or less distorted

garb in the mythologies and religions of the world? In the words of Idries Shah

"The secret book *Wisdom of Illumination* states that the philosophy is identical with the inner teachings of all the ancients – the Greeks, the Persians, the Egyptians – and is the science of Light and the deepest truth ..." <sup>22</sup>

what difference is there with H.P.B.'s claim as to the reality of an esoteric tradition passed on from age to age and found in all *ancient sacred records* and her erudite demonstration of this? The two testimonies tally with each other and for that her pioneering work should be recognised. In his book E. Scott traced part of this hidden tradition - as it surfaces in time and leaves its mark on human achievements - to the Sufis and their secret influence on the West. He gives us a glimpse of the so called Khwajagans, or "Masters", (Persian word for master), with short biographical notes of each one known as "Master. He mentions the existence of an inner circle wherein a technique of spiritual development was imparted by the Khwajagans to those disciples found worthy. Their line of succession appears in a paper by Hasan L. Shushud translated by J.G. Bennett. <sup>23</sup>

Peter King in his *Afghanistan: Cockpit in High Asia*, 1960 discovered that hidden away in the Kafiristan mountains are monasteries wherein the People of the Tradition are being trained. The claim - as in the case of H.P.B.'s claim in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and of Seth Behramshah Navroji Shroff at the turn of the century - is once again that such recluses still exist and are the custodians of an ageless wisdom which forms the foundation of religion. To these the Sufis of Afghanistan were apparently linked. <sup>24</sup>

Information, however meagre, has thus seeped into the West about these centres, or power houses on Earth, similar to H.P.B.'s hints a century ago. E. Scott surmises that the fact that a location is admitted might imply that by now their centre of activity has been moved somewhere else. <sup>25</sup> Recent dramatic events taking place in Afghanistan at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century would confirm this.

Ages ago the Andes hosted schools of wisdom; centres move their location, the tradition goes on but varies its expression in accordance with the different aptitudes of human beings and their evolutionary development. But one centre, the innermost, may never be revealed, whilst several outposts, after they have run their cycle, or in times of danger (such as occurred in Tibet and Afghanistan), move elsewhere. Who is to know?

Concerning the tradition of the Khwajagan and their activity which is documented, J.G. Bennett in his *The Masters of Wisdom* devotes a whole chapter. He traces their influence, historically, as they moved around the region to the east of the Aral Sea, and their philosophy, perhaps best summed up in the simple words of the first of the Grand Masters, Yusuf of Hamadan:

"All men know that love is the Supreme Power that unites Man and God,  
but no one who is not free from self is capable of love."

Bennett outlines their training of their disciples towards this goal of truth and selfless love, which he calls *transformation*, the bedrock of true esoteric discipline and the stumbling block of the unready. One of these Masters formulated a "system" wherein he divided the stages of transformation, and his "Counsel" has come down to us, translated into English in Bennett's book which succinctly expressed the stages in their discipline in which breathing and the retention of breath (quite a yoga training) played a major role. The mere fact that such a training was required points to what lies behind the breathing techniques: the knowledge of the *sacred fire* which transforms the merely human into the more than human, or spiritual being. Further, the known fact that two of the principles of the Khwajagan enjoined all avoidance of positions of wealth and power, and strict simplicity and humility, clinches the matter. The secret of the *sacred fire* can never be vouchsafed to the selfish and worldly hankering after power, prestige or wealth.

There are other lines of silent workers on earth who cannot be lumped under the same label, who do their work and pass away unnoticed and unsung, but not without leaving behind them some traces of seeds of profound thought to germinate much later on and leaven the human mind. Since they all work for the upliftment of humanity, what matters their labels, or whether they have any or not, or what matters the centre from which they come?

One such silent tradition came into evidence in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking its place in the great wave of esoteric revelation that started around the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the existence of an esoteric tradition in Zoroastrianism was as good as written off in the past centuries, except for H.P.B.'s remarks and examples given in her *The Secret Doctrine*, claiming that "Zoroastrian Esotericism is identical with that of *The Secret Doctrine*" (S.D. II. p.356). How could she know this when nothing was available except remnants of the old

sacred texts? Furthermore, just as Anquetil Duperron's discovery of *Zen Avesta* copies which he deposited in 1764 at the Bibliothèque Royale, and subsequently translated, aroused controversy and were called an imposture in Britain, so have the two books written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to bring to the wider public's attention the existence of an esoteric tradition in Zoroastrianism, been considered an imposture by the "Orthodox" and "well-informed". The first book in question is entitled

*A Manual of KHSHNOOM, the Zoroastrian Occult Knowledge*

Written by P.N. TAVARIA, being as full an exposition of SETH BEHRAMSHAH NAVROJI SHROFF's teachings (died in 1927), who himself received his knowledge from a holy man, SRAOSHAVAREZ MARZBAN SAHEB. The second book is entitled

*Essential Origins of Zoroastrianism: some glimpses of the Mazdayasni Zarathoshti Daen in its original native light of KHSHNOOM.* (1942) By F.S. CHINIWALLA.

Although both are written with great care, they are from the Western standard viewpoint, rather unsystematic, studded with Oriental flourishes most unappealing to the Western mind and highly devotional terms that immediately put off the cerebral enquirer. Disregarding the outer form and concentrating on what is offered, one finds a valuable insight into another link with the esoteric tradition. Are these authors genuine?

To the student of the ageless wisdom who searches beyond the form of presentation, the *acid test* as to the genuineness of a teaching claimed to be esoteric comprises two main aspects of utmost importance: one relates to the fundamental basis of all esoteric teachings discernible through a variation of presentations (outlined in the section on the Esoteric Wisdom); the second concerns the *paramparā* or *handing down of the gnosis* from master to disciple, from "heart to heart", or soul to soul, and the way this is performed. This all implies the necessity of a crucial technique of discipline, the *sādhana* of the Hindus, whereby the whole being of the disciple is involved, not just the intellect; hence the preliminary purification involved, not merely physical, but mental, moral and spiritual. Any mere intellectual way of imparting the teachings does not belong to the ancient tradition and what these days passes for esoteric schools pertains to the domain of intellectual understanding as preliminary to deeper endeavours.

The two books mentioned above fulfill these conditions in their *paramparā* and in their teachings. They should not be dismissed because of their style, but demand examination. To claim that the books are in conflict with orthodox Zoroastrianism, or that there has never been any esoteric tradition in that religion, in the face of the evidence for all other religions, is futile. Christianity, in Christ's statements and in St Paul's remarks in his Epistles (see ch. 9) and Sufi teachings, also conflict greatly with their established orthodoxy.

The teachings presented in Tavaría's and Chiniwalla's work are similar in their fundamental ideas to those expounded by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*; emphasising the One Source of all as the Unmanifest, Impersonal Absolute, manifest in the universe through hosts of spiritual beings in their graded hierarchies who are the fashioners of the created world, until we reach human evolution in the terrestrial sphere; the evolutionary process covering vast cycles of time, with souls having to peregrinate for entire cycles to achieve perfection. The doctrine of souls diverges somewhat. But the doctrine of *kehrp*, the invisible body (or subtle counterpart) with its *chakra*(s) with double meaning, 1) plexus, 2) path, shows a complete esoteric grasp of the question which may differ in details but not in basics. It befits the yoga system of *cakras* for, after all, not only does the *secret fire* finally rise to its destination through control of the *cakras* but the psyche's return journey parallels this very path, extending from the material (*mūlādhāra-cakra*) to the spiritual (*sahasrāra-cakra*). To accuse the authors of plagiarism of *The Secret Doctrine* seems out of place in the face of whatever evidence can be gathered from the life and work of Seth Behramshah, the teacher of both writers, how he was chosen and taught, his illiteracy, etc. As stated by Tavaría "the knowledge of Khshnoom was imparted to our Master by two methods, technically known as - (1) the 'Sināh-dar-Sināh' (heart to heart); and (2) the 'Sijdā', spiritual trance" (op.cit. p.71) i.e. entrance into the spiritual dimension, achieved through a Master's help. To this day the heart to heart method prevails among the Sufis.

Chiniwalla, in his *Essential Origins of Zoroastrianism*, claimed that Zoroastrian sages called 'Sahebe-Dilan' still reside secluded in the mountain peaks of Persia, such as Kahe-Demavand, teaching the ancient doctrine of Zoroaster, unapproachable except by those whom they choose to be their mouthpiece, in true esoteric tradition, and very similar to what used to be told by Tibetan lamas of the Himalayan sages. The special "Zoroastrian Clan", in Chiniwalla's time, consisted of about 2000 members, among whom 72

individuals of the "highest rank" were called Maghav (Magi).

This tradition of specific spots on the earth where the esoteric wisdom has been kept alive has come down to us along the past centuries and cannot be dismissed as not fitting in with our preconceptions. H.P.B. made a similar claim, and it is far more likely that like H.P.B., Seth Behramshah received a specific training from a source similar to that of H.P.B.'s, a source which radiated possibly from central Asia all around, in those days when fanaticism had not yet reared its devastating head. Like H.P.B. who attempted to "awaken" the Western sceptical mind to the much higher ideas of Oriental philosophies, so Seth Behramshah's mission was to bring it home to the Parsis that the ancient religion of Zoroaster held an esoteric basis now lost to their leaders, but giving them the key to many of its mysteries; and that Western attempts at translating the sacred texts with only the tools of philology and rationalism had completely failed to give them their real significance. In fact both books mentioned above prove this point to the best of their capacity.

### PART III

#### **THE ANTIQUITY OF THE SECRET DOCTRINE AND ITS SECRET TRADITION**

Apart from the age-old tradition of a *secret wisdom*, H.P.B.'s claim as to the antiquity of *The Secret Doctrine* rests upon the point made in the quotation where she mentions that the Commentaries which have served her as guidelines are "*worked out from* one small archaic folio, the BOOK OF THE SECRET WISDOM OF THE WORLD", and that these "contain a digest of all the occult sciences". It should be observed here that H.P.B. uses the term *occult* in its real sense of the hidden side of Scripture or Nature, or life, the inner meaning which spells out the *veda* or gnosis; not in its distorted sense to which public ignorance has degraded the word, viz. black magic. The occult side of Nature has nothing of the latter! But man may use specific energies for maleficent goals. Because of this unfortunate twist which has taken root in the public mind I have avoided using this term, except when obliged on rare occasions or in quotes, the word *esoteric* being used to replace it.

H.P.B. adds in a note:

"It is from the texts of all these works that *The Secret Doctrine* has been given. The original matter would not make a small pamphlet, but the explanations and notes from the Commentaries and Glossaries might be worked into ten volumes as large as *Isis Unveiled*." (E.W.p.324 = C.W.14, p.422 fn.)

"The 'very old Book' is the original work from which the many volumes of *Kiu-ti* were compiled. Not only this latter and the *Siphrah di Tseniuthah* [*Sifra de-Zeni'uta*], but even the *Sepher Yetz'irah* [*Sefer Yezirah*] ... the *Shu-king*, China's primitive Bible, the sacred volumes of the Egyptian Thoth-Hermes, the *Purāṇas* in India, the Chaldean *Book of Numbers* and the *Pentateuch* itself, are all derived from that one small parent volume." (S.D.I.p.xliii)

This is a mighty claim which implies that the primordial revelation given to humanity in its early days and enshrined in a succinct form in some archaic volume, formed the basic teaching taught in the temples to the "initiated" few i.e. to those men mature in mind who themselves transmitted it to other initiated few who taught it in a veiled form through myths and allegories. In due time, the priesthood transformed the teaching in accordance with racial and other characteristics and their own understanding, and finally put it to writing, each with its own emphasis and stamp, hence the various ancient sacred texts of the world, with their basic similarity especially in matters of moral precepts, and a mental apprehension whose archetypal basis is recognisable, their presentation being different.

In this respect J.G. Bennett's four broad categories of belief which have guided humanity (as recorded in his book *The Masters of Wisdom*) may serve as an example of this common core foundation; this core derives from man's innate feeling and intuition of, and communion with a divine power over and above yet also within himself and his immediate environment. Thus, the *Great Mother* with her all embracing nurturing principle giving birth to and taking back to herself all her offspring; the *Great Spirit* whose far pervasiveness also enfolds all beings and all things, and manifests in man as his creativity; the *Creator God* taking shape in the human mind and identified with the Sun, giver of life and light and illumination; and lastly the *Saviour God*, the divine sacrificial offering of Deity, and of man as a reflection of Deity. These have their roots in the grandest archetypes that the human psyche has been able to apprehend and to project on its mental screen. For Bennett,

tradition has it that in the region between the Caspian and Aral seas, existed

"the seat of the most ancient school of wisdom which united all teachings and all beliefs. Here the Great Mother was understood in her relationship to the Saviour God and here the Great Spirit was known as the link between man and the Creator from which he came." (op.cit.p.37-38)

Is this the dream belief of an idealist or is there a basis of reality? The very ancient R̥gveda answers thus:

"One whole governs the moving and the stable, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation." (III.54.8cd)

"The fair-winged One, who is but one in nature, inspired seers array in many ways by their incantations." (X.114.5)

"To what is One the seers give many a name; they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan." (I.164.46cd)

The ancient seers did hold the vision of oneness, of wholeness, which is holiness.

The books of Kiu-Te have to be completely deciphered, translated and studied and the various sacred texts, mentioned previously, compared in depth with the teachings of the Kiu-Te texts before any worthwhile judgment be passed on H.P.B. The field of study is vast, but her mind was capable of expanding over that very field, to bring out this very *secret tradition* and basic oneness which made her write:

".. there remains enough, even among such mutilated records [as have survived], to warrant us in saying that there is in them every possible evidence of the actual existence of a Parent Doctrine.

Fragments have survived geological and political cataclysms to tell the story; and every survival shows evidence that the now *Secret Wisdom* was once the one fountainhead, the ever-flowing perennial source, at which were fed all its streamlets – the later religions of all nations – from the first down to the last." (S.D. I. p. xliv-xlv)

Where analytical thought which separates holds the field, there can hardly be apprehension of a fundamental oneness. Even though more proof has come about concerning this esoteric tradition of untold antiquity, a doubt remains as to its acceptance as a fact, without further and further proof. The revelation made by D. Reigle in his *Blavatsky's Secret Books* once again harps back to the blockages of prejudices which are most difficult to eradicate. Thus

"The hitherto secret Sanskrit books brought out by the Śuddha Dharma Maṇḍala starting in 1915 did not teach a new or completely different system, but rather provided different interpretations of the known Sanskrit classics. But the opposition to such interpretations from the orthodoxy has so hindered their spread that practically no one today has ever even heard of these books." (op.cit.p.168)

Moreover, as H.P.B. herself admitted

"... the mist will never be cleared away until the treasures of certain hidden *libraries* in the possession of a group of Asiatic recluses shall be given out to the world."

(C.W. vol.3 p.485. Quoted in *Blavatsky's Secret Books*. p.168)

The fact of secrecy has, in our age, aroused antagonism, when everything has to come out in the open. However, considering humanity's backwardness, lack of the higher understanding, prone to perverse criticism and to trampling upon what have been considered *sacred truths* by the ancient sages, (still going on nowadays in translations), and also the evident degradation of those who were supposed to be the custodians of the religions, more interested in enriching themselves than in keeping to the pure spiritual life, it is not surprising that silence was imposed upon these truths - here Christ's statement is appropriate, "do not cast your pearls before swine". All the reactions to new revelations stated just in this chapter, to Anquetil Duperron, to Seth Behramshah, to H.P.B., demonstrate the reason for this.

The question of the passing on of the gnosis is also of great importance as in complete accordance with the *tradition*, such as we note in most religions, through successive generations by means of successive commentaries on the original gnosis, but also and above all as a passing on of some power that will enable the votaries to live and preach the wisdom, such as the apostolic succession among the Christians and the *paramparā* of the Hindus and the Buddhists. One R̥gvedic verse has already been quoted showing this lineage, but two others are also relevant:

"We speak by-reason-of our descent (literally birth) from the ancient father." (R̥gv.I.87.5a)

"Having received from my Father the intuitive-perception

of truth (*ṛta*) I was born like a sun." (R̥gv.VIII.6.10)

It is very noticeable in the Bhagavad Gītā:

"This imperishable yoga I declared to Vivasvat; Vivasvat taught it to Manu; Manu to Ikṣvaku told it.

This, handed on down the line, the King-sages knew.

This same ancient yoga hath been today declared to thee by Me,

for thou art my devotee and my friend; it is the supreme Secret." (Bh.Gītā. 4:1-3)

Such transmission ensures the validity, ancestry and reliability of the teachings. So all the great scriptures refer to such a transmission process, and indeed their authority depends upon a special revelation that occurred in the past and has been transmitted without any break. That special revelation may be a reflection of a previous one with some changes to suit prevalent conditions. In many cases, however, tampering took place as with the Hebrew and the Christian scriptures which fell into rather unworthy hands.

The *Kālacakra* doctrine claims a transmission which is recounted in the *Blue Annals* (or *Deb-ther snon-po*) translated by G. Roerich. Also compare the remark of Alex Wayman concerning the Buddhist Tantras which

"... are composed by taking a previous lore reaching back into the Vedic literature and amalgamating this tradition with various Buddhist tenets ..."<sup>26</sup>

According to B. Laufer, G. Roerich and others, the *Kālacakra* is a most important "system in the religious life of Tibet" with a voluminous literature of which little was known in the West at the end of the 19th century.<sup>27</sup> It is traditionally said to have originated in Śambhala.<sup>28</sup> However, the first preaching of the *Kālacakra* by the Buddha at the Stupa of Śrī-Dhānyakāṭaka in Madras Province is regarded as its first appearance in the world. There King Sucandra of Śambhala is related to have miraculously arrived to hear it. The king subsequently wrote it down in some 12.000 ślokas in a work entitled *Paramādibuddha*, the "Supreme Ādibuddha" which became known as the *Kālacakra mūlatantra*, or root tantra of the wheel of time. Tantra is a word which bears many meanings as recorded in dictionaries, e.g. the literal meaning spanning from "loom", "characteristic feature", "framework", "device" to "main point", "type", "system", "theory". It is explained by A. Wayman thus:

"The Tantra is essentially a practice, with incantations, breath control and so forth, one must evaluate it by the way it is, as set forth in its principal 'revealed' scriptures, authoritative commentaries, and actual practice as can still be observed (e.g. among the Tibetans in India)."<sup>29</sup>

King Sucandra's original Mūlatantra and the further 60.000 line commentary which he wrote, both of which being obviously the original and basic work, are now lost to us. Six centuries later, another king of Śambhala, Yaśas, wrote a condensed version of the Mūlatantra in 1000 verses, called *Laghu* (or short) *Kālacakra* tantra. His successor, King Puṇḍarīka wrote a commentary on the latter, *Vimalaprabhā* or "Immaculate Light", quoting extensively from the *Mūla Tantra*.<sup>30</sup> Both the *Laghu* and *Vimalaprabhā* were taken to India from Śambhala in the 10th century according to tradition and thence to Tibet. The original Sanskrit and its Tibetan translation of these shortened versions are still extant, Tibetan writers quoting from the *Mūla Tantra* as recorded in the shortened version and its commentary. But because the *Kālacakra* teaching is traditionally said to have first been preached by Gautama, the Buddha, it is held by Western scholars to be a recent teaching, though according to the *Mūla Tantra* or quotes from it, the teaching itself, not its wording, goes back much further to dim antiquity. In his *Kālacakra Research Publications*, no.1, 1986, David Reigle excerpts a passage from the *Mūla Tantra* which appears in Nāropa's Commentary, the *Sekoddeśāṭikā*. The following passage is D. Reigle's translation:

"The teaching of the Mantrayāna which was formerly given to us by Dīpaṅkara is now to be given by the virtuous Gautama. Therefore from the place called Śambhala an emanation of Vajrapāṇi, King Sucandra, came by his magical power to the Dharmadhātu."<sup>31</sup>

We notice again the tradition of the passing on or transmission of certain secret teachings by word of mouth before they are to be written down and commented upon.

In her introduction to the *Buddhavaṃsa*, the translator I. Horner<sup>32</sup> quotes the Burmese text of the *Madhurattavilāsīnī* giving a list of the buddhas throughout the cycles or kalpas. It appears that Dīpaṅkara was one of four buddhas who arose in a kalpa separated from our own cycle by incalculable ages. This tradition would then go back aeons ago which to our puny minds is unbelievable and therefore unacceptable. Be that as

it may, whether there was a transmission from Dīpaṅkara to subsequent buddhas prior to Gautama, does not seem to be known.

The 'Mantrayāna' in the quotation translated by D. Reigle refers to the way of the mantra. The Mahāyāna, or Great Vehicle, has another division called the *pāramitāyana*, subdivided into *method* - (first five perfections) and *wisdom (prajña)*.<sup>33</sup> The *Kālacakra* also has a mantra side. In his 5th chapter, "The Wheel of Time", E. Bernbaum explains what the *Kālacakra tantra* is all about.

"The *Kālacakra Tantra* belongs to the highest class, known as the *Anuttara Yoga*, and is probably the most involved and complex of all the tantric teachings ... A major reason for its complexity is that the *Kālacakra* attempts to embrace all phenomena, from the workings of the mind to the layout of the universe, in one all-inclusive system of knowledge and practice. It does so in three parts, called the 'outer', the 'inner' and the 'other' *Kālacakra* ...

Unlike the outer *Kālacakra*, which Tibetan teachers will openly discuss, the other two parts are generally kept secret and revealed only to the initiated: the Lamas feel that they contain ideas and practices that could harm those who might try to dabble in them without the necessary background and preparation. The first of these two parts, the inner *Kālacakra*, deals with the body and mind and how to use them in meditation. It goes into their internal structure, but with a mystical bent ... The inner *Kālacakra* also explains the operation of the psychic nervous system in general and how it relates to the functioning of the various senses and kinds of consciousness ... The last of the three parts, the other *Kālacakra*, directs its attention to the spiritual realm and describes the deities and mandalas of the teaching and how to use them in the practice of visualization ..."<sup>34</sup>

One can see even with these very short glances that the *Kālacakra* is based upon an ageless wisdom tradition.

In a note to her explanation of the Mahāyāna mystic system concerning the manifestations of each Buddha in the three worlds of Being<sup>35</sup>, H.P.B. claims that she is concerned with the "Esoteric teachings alone" and what she gives "is taken from the secret portions of Dus Kyi-Khorlo (*Kāla Cakra*, in Sanskrit, or the 'Wheel of Time' or duration)", which *Kāla Cakra* she refers to on p.311 of her *Esoteric Writings* (C.W. 14, p.402) as "the most important work in the Gyut division of the Kanjur, the division of mystic knowledge". This implies that the *Kālacakra* must have been known to her at least partially at a time when it was unknown in the West. Did she have access to it in its full or only in its abridged version? The *Kālacakra* is the only known Buddhist *tantra* to have a cosmology, but the abridged version of the *tantra* having only an extremely succinct cosmology makes it difficult to compare with that expounded in *The Secret Doctrine*. This may make one suspect that she did have access to the full version. Other questions could be asked: where did H.P.B. find all the "Commentaries" to the Books of Kiute from which she quotes profusely? And from which language – Sanskrit, Tibetan or even Chinese – did she or some one else translate them into English? Who helped her? Indeed who sent her out on her mission, for mission it certainly was. How could a "charlatan" be "initiated" into Māhāyana Buddhism, into the lore of the Tibetan sacred Canon, indeed into the lore of Vedic gnosis, or *veda* whose "door" at that time was still more or less closed to all "barbarians"? That she had a profound understanding of all these is evident from her books and should be evaluated before any real judgment can be passed. For all her extravagant personality, small errors such as slanting some quotes to suit her purpose or omitting to quote her source, H.P.B. was a great mind capable of taking in at one grasp a complex philosophical problem. To dismiss her as a charlatan in the face of her depth of insight, her vast survey of human thought, and the power of her writings, is utterly absurd, a reflection of those whose pettiness of mind could never rise to her stature.

With the documentation now available, for instance as to the work of the Sufis, or certain other esoteric lines of workers, and the documents still to be translated from the Tibetan Buddhist Canon, it may one day become evident that what H.P.B. referred to as an age-old *secret doctrine* enshrined in ancient lore, in hymns such as the Ṛgveda, kept as a sacred heirloom and imparted only to the few, forming the inner core of the teachings of the ancient Sages, has indeed been present on this earth from time immemorial. One knows that in the past centuries any discovery of ancient sacred texts was first denied as authentic. H.P.B.'s message, her unwrapping for us Westerners, what had been so wrapped up in myths, legends and "blinds" as to be so completely misunderstood, reveals a continuous tradition. It awaits further discovery of manuscripts, or translations of further Tibetan manuscripts that might give more clues, for H.P.B. did give essential clues.



Perhaps in the next century, we may come to a better understanding of their legend or dream of Śambhala and its real meaning.

#### APPRECIATIONS OF LAMAS AND SCHOLARS

Certain Tibetan lamas in the past have apparently shown respect for her work and the same can be said of one eminent Western scholar, Edward Conze, who recognized her as *great*, especially by contrast with the dirt thrown at her by those who are only capable of wallowing in their own made-up filth. This comes out in E. Conze's review of J. Symonds' *Madame Blavatsky. Medium and Magician* which he qualifies as "one long sneer", "a singularly impertinent piece of book making" raking up "all the old dirt ... for the umpteenth time". "But when Mr Symonds now comes to measure his intellect against that of the great H.P.B who was so much more than just a 'medium and magician', the essential triviality of his own mental equipment becomes apparent for all to see."<sup>36</sup> This could indeed be taken as a splendid dismissal of all such disgraceful and trivial attacks, and there are many.

Another rather favourable assessment is that of Stephen Prothero of Boston University, who reviewed 6 books on H.P.B. published during the years 1993-5, books falling into 2 camps – those more or less scandal mongering, with "wildly varying degrees of speculation", and contradictory statements and unproven assertions passed over as facts, and those more favourable. He pays H.P.B. what one may well regard as a tribute:

"... Blavatsky may ultimately be understood largely as a key culture broker in the modern encounter of East and West. A New Ager before New Age was cool, she influenced the Indian Renaissance, the Buddhist revival in Ceylon, American and European esotericism, modern Western art, feminist theology, and American religion. In an age when Buddhists and Hindus were widely disdained as 'heathens' and women were expected to confine themselves largely to the home, Blavatsky travelled the world, introducing readers to ideas such as karma and reincarnation and popularizing the view that all religions are one. It was not without cause that an Indian admirer called her 'the white *Yogini* of the West' (Gomes. 284)." ...

The books he reviewed, he claims, make

"... a strong case for Blavatsky as a major figure in the nineteenth century meeting of East and West. They portray a woman who, despite her faults, paved the way for the Western appropriation of Asian religious traditions and ideas. They also anoint Blavatsky as perhaps the key thinker in modern Western esotericism – a woman who, by unveiling the ancient truths of the perennial philosophy, succeeded not only in popularizing its ideas but also in determining its historical course. Why is Huston Smith's *The World's Religions* one of the most widely read books in colleges today? In great measure, these books say, because of the efforts of Madame Blavatsky ...

The books reviewed ... also make it painfully apparent that Blavatsky, despite the hundreds of books either celebrating or reviling her, still awaits a dispassionate historian of *religion* who will give her her due ..."<sup>37</sup>

In the Introduction to W.Y. Evans-Wentz's edition of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, translated "according to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English rendering" is a note to the effect that the same lama

"... was of the opinion that despite the adverse criticisms directed against H.P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of their author's intimate acquaintance with the higher lamaistic teachings into which she claimed to have been initiated."<sup>38</sup>

Coming from a lama who is supposed to know his tradition in depth, this recognition is no idle comment. The sixth Panchen Lama deigned to preface the 1925 Peking edition of *The Voice of the Silence*, another of H.P.B.'s works refused "authenticity" because its source has not been found. The present Dalai Lama in 1993 accepted to write a preface to the German translation of *The Voice of the Silence*. Certain genuine Buddhists have no need of "proving" the source of the work as authentic if it turns out to be *genuine* in its expression of pure Buddhism. Thus in a notice published in *The Middle Way* it is stated that

"... the late Anagarika Dharmapala described it [*The Voice of the Silence*] as a 'pure Buddhist work'" (vol.40.no.2, Aug.1965)

and Dr Suzuki is reported to have sent a copy to Mrs Suzuki remarking "here is the real Māhāyana Buddhism". Could H.P.B. have "invented" the whole book and endowed it with her own Buddhist feeling? There are too many technicalities involved to accept such a view. Bhikṣu Sangharakṣita devoted an 18 page pamphlet to

giving a superb appraisal of it under the title *Paradox and Poetry in the Voice of the Silence*, paradox and poetry being two means of arousing the intuition; paradox through "an attempt to express in terms of logical contradiction that which transcends logic", e.g. dazzling darkness or the voice of the silence; poetry through imagery and rhythm, "images that strike deep root into the very nature of things", and rhythm the very soul of incantation:

"It is as though whenever it has anything of special importance to impart the text either explodes in paradox or erupts into the imagery and starts shaking with the mantra-like vibrations of poetry. The fact that *The Voice of the Silence* consists of, or at least contains, what are really mantras in English, incidentally may account for the circumstance that as a whole it does not correspond to any known Tibetan text, though individual verses seem to have been identified. For as an eminent Tibetologist has suggested to the writer, if the translator of these three fragments from 'The Book of the Golden Precepts' was as much concerned to reproduce the mantronic effect of the original as to translate its literal meaning she may well have found some sacrifice of the letter to the spirit of the text inevitable." (op.cit. p.18)

### CONCLUSION

An author who has been so badly misrepresented, without any substantial cause for it, and too often in biographies whose authors were incapable of assessing the depth of the thought H.P.B. was expounding, ought to have the right of defense. We could start at least by giving her credence for having some knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan sacred books at a time when these texts were unknown, even though that knowledge past scholars have dismissed *a priori* as based upon unknown or non-existent sources. Some of her sources, a very few of which were somewhat known at the end of the 19th century, have turned out to be well authenticated texts of schools of Buddhist thought such as the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka whose texts, either in their Sanskrit original or Tibetan version, had not yet been translated during her lifetime. This is a fact in her favour. Today, as a result of the Chinese invasion of Tibet, Tibetan blockprints and manuscripts have migrated to the West in their thousands, including some sacred books hitherto unpublished and hardly known in Western countries, and some 30 U.S. libraries are now housing a great number of these. Original Sanskrit manuscripts have also been collected from Nepal, many of which are the originals of the Tibetan translations. Such an influx of Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts is quite revealing of a change in the mental atmosphere of the West and bodes well for future deeper understanding and further research. The Institute for Advanced Studies of World Religions at Stony Brook, N.Y. has undertaken the microfilming of many Sanskrit manuscripts from Nepal and putting on microfiche the Tibetan texts salvaged from Tibet. Some are being translated and already a fair amount of work has been done on Tibetan Buddhist texts. While the I.A.S.W.R. at Stony Brook, N.Y. stopped its work in the 1970's, the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project has completely superseded the I.A.S.W.R. in microfilming Sanskrit manuscripts in Nepal and have filmed tens of thousands. It is thus more within our possibility to search for those texts that could be more in line with the Buddhism of H.P.B. Her knowledge of the doctrines of the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra Schools of the Mahāyāna enabled her to explain some of their very abstruse ideas. It is now time, with the accumulation of Tibetan Buddhist manuscripts and their study, the impact of Tibetan lamas on Western intelligentsia, and the translations of and studies on Mahāyāna Buddhism showing a better understanding of the Oriental stand, to turn our attention to this 19th century pioneer of human thought who through her writings brought the philosophical Eastern mind in its deepest aspects within range of the Western mind, with little thanks but too often reiterated and sometimes vitriolic vilification.

The present study, as already stated, will concentrate more on the *Vedic gnosis* and its hidden meaning to bring out, explain and compare its more or less veiled tenets with what is revealed in *The Secret Doctrine*. However, a few insights into Buddhist ideas will have to be discussed at the start, as H.P.B. uses Mahāyāna terms to explain the underlying thought of the first two Stanzas of Dzyan which I comment upon, since they strike the keynote of the profoundly mystical vision of the ancient seers - in some respects similar to Ṛgv.X.129. The *secret doctrine* tradition having been best preserved, as H.P.B. maintained, through both the Hindu and the Buddhist sacred texts in their philosophy and cosmology, she had recourse to their help. However, the *Kabbalah* also has retained some of this *secret doctrine* which H.P.B. fully recognised, and

comparison with it will be useful especially for archetypal Cosmic Man expressed in Puruṣa and Adam Kadmon. Only a few of the Stanzas of Dzyan and excerpts from them will be quoted as in accord with Vedic thought; all the others go far beyond the thrust of the present study.

As one progresses through the book a broader spectrum of humanity's mystical thought, vision and experience, will appear in its varied presentations, until chapter 9 is reached, where the main religions will be examined from the standpoint of their common basis – a vision-revelation of humanity's stand as the link between the earthly and the spiritual – pointing to a foundation of common truths masked by their different presentations or emphasis, sometimes even distortions.

For the benefit of those who are interested in the esoteric wisdom but do not know Sanskrit the following might be helpful:

The problem of transliteration of the Sanskrit alphabet into the roman alphabet had not yet been settled in H.P.B.'s lifetime. In the present book the internationally recognised scholarly transliteration system has been adopted and wherever Sanskrit terms are used in *The Secret Doctrine* they have been altered to suit the international system so as not to confuse the reader unduly with two systems of spelling Sanskrit words. Only names of authors and the title of their books have not been changed: thus Śrī Krishna Prem's *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*. Sanskrit has three letters for our single *s*, two of which are transliterated as *ṣ* and *ś* which in popular books is rendered as *sh* for the former and *s* for the latter making no difference with the third simple *s*. Certain Sanskrit words suffer "vicissitudes" of change for grammatical or euphonic reasons. Such for instance is *vāc* which has been rendered as *vāk*, or *vāch*, all of which have been reduced to *vāc*. The word *ca* which means "and" primarily is rendered *cha* in popular books. Endings of words do vary according to the cases such as to, from, by, in, with, of; also in accordance with the rules of euphonic combinations. Thus *ṛg veda*, but *ṛk saṁhitā* and *ṛk* by itself, the word meaning sacred verse, word or text. These variations cannot be changed. Pronunciation of Ṛg Veda is equivalent to *rig*. Hence one finds Rig Veda in popular books.

All references to the Ṛg Veda are noted thus: I to X (meaning book, there are 10 books or *maṇḍalas*), then the hymn number, e.g. 29 and verse number e.g. 2; hence X.29.2 plus a or b or c or d if only a division of the verse is quoted. When only Ṛgvedic texts are quoted in a chapter or on a page no Ṛgv. will be placed before the number. All other references to the Vedas will have the abridged name of the particular Veda, thus Athv. for Atharvaveda, Yjv. for the Yajurveda with letters VS for the particular recension (there are two). Most translations of the Ṛgveda are my own; where I have used other translations this is noted. Thus R. Panikkar's and A.C. Bose's translations have occasionally been resorted to; also Griffith's, even though he is at times inaccurate. His poetic quality, sadly lacking in some translators, gives a better flavour of the hymns. With respect to Hebrew transliteration (in ch.8, section II) I have kept H.P.B.'s transliteration except for titles of books which have been changed in accordance with the current form used in Gershom Scholem's *Kabbalah* (1974) and Shimon Halevi's *Kabbalah* (1979); so that readers, should they wish, could more easily find and consult these books. For my own text references I have used the transliteration as in Scholem's *Kabbalah* - e.g. *Sefirot* instead of *Sephirōth* as used in *The Secret Doctrine*.

#### CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION:

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> There are several traces of initiation in the Ṛgveda, such as that of Vasiṣṭha in VII.88.2-4. F.B.J. Kuiper recognised that the *kavi*, a word which bears the ancient sense of inspired poet (and not mere juggler of words) was an "initiated seer" to whom "knowing the Cosmic Order" (*ṛtajñā*, *ṛtāvan*, etc.) are attributed. ("Bliss of Āsa". *I. I. J.* vol.8. 1964.p.127) J. Gonda himself in his *Vision of the Vedic Poets* admits: "Applied to human beings the title *kaviḥ* unmistakably denotes those who mentally or spiritually enter into contact with divine power, the transcendent and the world of the unseen." (p.48)
- <sup>2</sup> *Chips from a German workshop*. vol.1, London, 1867. p.77,75. Quoted in *Isis Unveiled* II, p.414-5 and in Spierenburg's *The Veda Commentaries of H.P. Blavatsky*. p.23.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Religions of India*. Trans. from the French by Rev. J. Wood. London, 1882. p.xiii. Partially quoted in S.D.II, p.450-1 (two vol. ed.)  
Quoted in Spierenburg's *The Veda Commentaries of H.P. Blavatsky*. p.16 fn.37.

- <sup>4</sup> Assessments were biased not merely because of a one sided evolutionist theory but also in some cases because of an ingrained superior Christian prejudice among such scholars as could not conceive of something other than an Anthropomorphic deity (e.g. Nève in his survey of Vedic ideas in *Essai sur le mythe des Ṛbhavas*. 1847. p.39)  
For H.P.B. the Ṛgveda was the "Bible of Humanity". (C.W.XIV.p.240)
- <sup>5</sup> *Religions of Ancient India*. p.10.
- <sup>6</sup> Apparently following Max Müller for whom mythology was a "disease of language". Max Müller declared: "... as an affection or disorder of language, mythology may infect every part of the intellectual life of man. True it is that no ideas are more liable to mythological disease than religious ideas because they transcend those regions of our experience within which language has its natural origin and must therefore, according to their very nature, be satisfied with metaphorical expression." ("Lectures on the Science of Language". 2nd ser. London, 1864. p.413)  
According to Gerald Massey "Mythology is the repository of man's most ancient science." (S.D.I.p.304) and according to a follower of C. Jung it is "the repository of man's cosmic sentiency".
- <sup>7</sup> Compare for instance Soma, the bull dwelling on the mountain being *milked* IX.95.4ab. Obviously Soma is *milked* for his *ecstasy* granting.
- <sup>8</sup> Cf. Ṛgv.I.32.11cd; IV.28.1; the piercing of wells or stones or breaking of caves and letting flow of waters is the achievement of Indra. F.B.J. Kuiper in his article "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest" (*Indo-Iranian J.* 4. 1960) draws attention to this aspect of Vedic symbology, the mountain, the vast penfold of the sky, the *kha* which is "... the well which Agni must open to give free course to inspiration from the *hr̥dya-samudra*, the primordial waters in Man's heart (IV.58.5) ..." (p.249) See also my *Cosmic Waters*. pp.255-6. Kuiper's comparison, in the same article, of the Vedic expression "May we foster thy wellspring of Cosmic Truth" with the Avestan "Verily thou art the Well of Cosmic Truth" (Y.10.4) is of great interest as it shows the archetypal image of the well in both scriptures which links the "well of Cosmic Truth" to the Hindu Mahat.
- See also A. Coomaraswami, *Ṛgveda* 10.90.1. (J.A.O.S. 66. 1946) and his discussion of the symbolic meaning of *khāni* (p.156) (see ch.4 pt.2)
- <sup>9</sup> See David Reigle: *The Books of Kiu-te, or the Tibetan Buddhist Tantras*. A preliminary analysis. 1983. I am indebted to David Reigle for some of the data given out here.  
See also H.J. Spierenburg's *The Buddhism of H.P. Blavatsky*. pp.135-143.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Hevajra Tantra: a critical study*. Pt.I. p.17. London. O. U. P. 1959.  
D. Reigle who has made an extensive research into these questions, points out that the *Kālacakra Tantra* colour scheme for its maṇḍala is different from the one in use in other tantras, the *Hevajra* and the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantras* included. "Yet the *Cakrasaṃvara* maṇḍala as described in the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi's commentary follows the *Kālacakra* color scheme." Quoted from a letter dated 25/11/97. So also does the *Hevajra* maṇḍala as described in Vajragarbha's commentary.
- <sup>11</sup> Spierenburg in his *The Buddhism of H.P. Blavatsky*, quotes what he considers to be the original passage taken from *Avataṃsakasūtra*, ch.37, in the translation of T. Cleary, *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, vol.II, Boston and London, 1986, p.315, which if it is the correct original would mean that H.P.B. only gave the gist of it. As to the answer, "The Great Teachers of the Snowy Mountains" Spierenburg gives the following: "Samuel Beal, *A Catena of Buddhist Scriptures from the Chinese*. London, 1871, p.30: "The *Avataṃsakasūtra* says: 'Spirit-Ṛṣis dwell in the mountains. Human Ṛṣis live amongst men'." (op.cit.p.137. fns 340 and 341)
- <sup>12</sup> Bernbaum, E. *The Way to Shambhala*. p.270.
- <sup>13</sup> Quoted in E. Bernbaum, op.cit. ch.2. p.27.
- <sup>14</sup> op.cit. p.38, 40, 46-7.
- <sup>15</sup> *Shambhala*. p.18.
- <sup>16</sup> *The Way to Shambhala*. p.51.
- <sup>17</sup> Ellison, *Men spake from God*. p.14.

- <sup>18</sup> op.cit. p.16-17; 28-29, p.17. Note that *Azara* is the Tibetan phonetic spelling of the Sanskrit *ācārya*, minus the y, used for Indians in general, and that *Kuthumpa* may be *sku-drung-pa*.
- <sup>19</sup> *Shambhala*, p.21,22,23. A full explanation of meditation on the maṇḍala and its meaning is given in Bernbaum's *The Way to Shambhala*, ch.5.
- <sup>20</sup> In her *Esoteric Writings* (vol.5 of the Adyar edition of *The Secret Doctrine*) H.P.B. claimed that the real or original *Kabbalah* can be "found only in the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*, now in the possession of some Persian Sufis" (E.W.p.153 = C.W.14 p.174), a work that seems completely unknown to modern scholars, but of which a few pages were in her possession. In *Isis Unveiled*, after quoting from Ammianus Marcellinus's *Roman History* describing how Darius Hystapes learned from the Brahmins and "transfused" their teachings "into the creed of the Magi" who handed down the whole doctrine "through their descendants to succeeding ages" (op.cit.xxiii.vi) she adds:

"It is from these descendants that the Sufis, chiefly composed of Persians and Syrians, acquired their proficient knowledge in astrology, medicine, and the esoteric doctrine of the ages."  
(op.cit.p.306)

A further quote, this time from C.W. King, *The Gnostics and their Remains*, emphasises

"The Sufi doctrine involved the grand idea of one universal creed which could be secretly held under any profession of an outward faith; and in fact took virtually the same view of religious systems as that in which the ancient philosophers had regarded such matters." (op.cit. p.185. Quoted in *Isis Unveiled*, p.306)

Furthermore, in *A Few Questions to Hiraf* (C.W.I.pp.101-118) H.P.B. asserts that the Oriental *Kabbalah*

"... the practical, the full and only existing copy is carefully preserved at the headquarters" of a particular brotherhood in the East, and "I may safely vouch, will never come out of its possession." (op.cit. p.106, quoted in *Madame Blavatsky: the veiled years*, p.5). To remark that "... the public knows nothing of the Chaldean works, which are translated into Arabic and preserved by some *Sufi* initiates" (S.D.I.p.288)

shows an acquaintance with the existence of some unknown records and their possessors, some Sufis known to her. As concluded by P. Johnson

"As this Chaldean *Book of Numbers* is frequently cited in *The Secret Doctrine* and is unknown to scholars in the West, H.P.B.'s knowledge of it must have been acquired in study with the Sufis to whom she attributes its possession." (op.cit.p.5)

H.P.B. further mentions

"... except in an Arabic work, the property of a Sufi, the writer has never met with a correct copy of these marvellous records of the past – and also of the future – history of our globe."  
(S.D.II.p.430)

These few quotes do admit an acquaintance with Sufis based on common esoteric knowledge. A further remark made by P. Johnson is also quite appropriate:

"The significance she attributes to the Chaldeans is interesting in light of Gurdjieff's reference to the Sarmoun brotherhood as of Babylonian origin." (op.cit.p.5)

To the obvious objection that H.P.B. seemed to have little knowledge of Islam or Sufism, Johnson has the following:

"Blavatsky's teachings stress Buddhist, Hindu, Greek and Kabbalistic elements. Given the frequency of her references to 'blinds' and pledges of secrecy, we cannot dismiss the possibility that she deliberately avoided direct reference to Sufism in order to protect her sources (a procedure apparently adopted by Gurdjieff as well.) ... The actual role of Sufism seems to have been to preserve Neoplatonic, Kabbalistic, Hindu and Buddhist esotericism within and in spite of an Islamic cultural milieu. The Naqshbandis, operating in an area of Afghanistan once the world center of Buddhism, have clearly inherited Buddhist emphases on practices of self-observation and meditation. Particularly in the regions near Tibet, there is no reason to doubt that study of Buddhism would continue in the Sufic schools. The eclecticism of Blavatsky's presentation,

which has led to suspicions of her claim to initiatory training, seems entirely compatible with Sufi methods." (op.cit.p.6-7).

"Only the Sufis, of known esoteric bodies, exemplify the nonsectarian, synthetic approach of H.P.B. and her teachers." (op.cit.p.6)

Lastly, in Johnson's eyes

"The Sufi model of a spiritual teacher as a paradoxical personality using any available means to awaken the student is much more satisfactory in explaining H.P.B than is any Buddhist model of selfless transmission of traditional teachings. Yet an either/or approach to Sufi and Buddhist influences on H.P.B. is quite inappropriate. She clearly studied and highly valued Tibetan lamaistic teachings. What does seem likely, however, is that early and continuing Sufi contacts determined her basic world view as well as her teaching methods." (op.cit. p.3)

This is a very fair conclusion to a rather intractable subject - for those who view it only from appearances.

However, Johnson's attempt in his *The Masters revealed: Madame Blavatsky and the myth of the Great White Lodge*, 1994, as other such endeavours, at pinning down to historical, more or less prestigious figures, those who inspired H.P.B., smacks of trying to frame what was then sensational or preposterous into the straight jacket of earthly names. D.H. Caldwell's answer in *K. Paul Johnson's House of Cards* brings out all the flaws in Johnson's arguments which do not stand the light of mere reason. Such identification falls on the bedrock of H.P.B.'s Oriental esoteric knowledge unknown in the West. None of the high sounding influential personages Johnson examines - not Maharaja Ranbir Singh for all his Vedānta knowledge, not Swamy Dayānanda Sarasvatī who lacked the breadth of mind and vision of H.P.B. - possessed that vast Oriental esoteric erudition capable of opening and directing her mind to the profounder insights she tackled in her books. Only some highly qualified Oriental person(s) could have trained her, but such persons usually shun the limelight, especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when "great souls" or *mahātmas*, were unheard of, and indeed just could not exist in the East.

<sup>21</sup> Reported in I. Shah's *The Sufis*, 1964, reprinted 1971.

According to I. Shah

"The teachings of a continued vein of secret teaching of which the books of philosophers were merely a part without the key, the arguments without the action, was transmitted to the West from the illuminist Sufis of Spain, and possibly the Near East as well. One channel is known to us - from Andalusia the dissemination of this idea has been traced by Asín and his associates to Roger Bacon and Raymond Lully. Others have followed the trail in the work of Alexander Hales and Duns Scotus, and have noted the determining influence upon the so-called Augustinian scholastics of the West. The traditional account of how the teachings are transmitted and from where is partially contained in the *Wisdom of Illumination*, written by the martyr Suhrawardi ..." (op.cit.p.278-9)

This book is analysed and copious extracts of it given in Baron Carra de Vaux's "Philosophie illuminative (*Hikmet el-Ichraq*) d'après Suhrawardi [sic] Meqtoul". Published in *Journal Asiatique*, n.s. tome XIX, 1902. Paris pp.63-94. It shows Suhrawardi as recognising in Plato the prince of philosophy who possessed "power and light". As quoted from Suhrawardi himself:

"Those who came before him [Plato] thought similarly, from the father of wise men, Hermes until his days, the great sages, pillars of wisdom, such as Empedocles, Pythagoras and others. The words of the ancients are symbolic ... one does not refute a symbol. It is also upon this doctrine that the illuminist theory of light and darkness was founded which was that of the sages of Persia ..." (op.cit.p.68-70)

See also the works of Miguel Asín Palacios.

<sup>22</sup> *The Sufis*. p.276.

<sup>23</sup> published in *Systematics*, vol.6, no.4, 1969.

<sup>24</sup> Mentioned in *The People of the Secret*. p.168.

<sup>25</sup> op.cit. See pp.168ff. and 260ff. Permission to quote from this book is no longer granted.

<sup>26</sup> *The Buddhist Tantras*. 1973. p.12.

<sup>27</sup> See "Studies in the Kālacakra" by G. Roerich. *Urusvati Journal*. no.2. 1932.p.11.

<sup>28</sup> ibid. p.16. For the Western scholar this has no weight but is considered as a mere excuse to claim a non-existent antiquity to the teachings. Only further research could validate or invalidate the claim.

<sup>29</sup> *The Buddhist Tantras*. 1973. p.3-4.

<sup>30</sup> For the Kings of Śambhala and their reigns see *Kālacakra Research Publications*, no.1, Feb.1986. "The lost Kālacakra Mūla Tantra on the Kings of Śambhala" by D. Reigle, where the list of names of the kings and their hundred year cycles which seems to be related to the seven ṛṣi cycle of the Great Bear of the Hindus, is discussed:

"This cycle is considered to be mythological, since astronomically the fixed stars do not have any such movement. At best they can be considered to move at the rate of the precession of the equinoxes, approximately one degree in seventy-two years. This unusual cycle is strikingly reminiscent of the one hundred year reigns of the seven Dharmarājas and twenty-five Kalkīs of Śambhala." (op.cit.p.9)

<sup>31</sup> op.cit. p.2. Material on Dīpaṅkara is found in the *Mahāvastu* now translated by J.J. Jones, 3 vols. *Sacred Books of the Buddhists series*. Pali Text Society.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Spierenburg's *Buddhism of H.P. Blavatsky*. p.27-28, fn.58.

<sup>33</sup> See for further explanations A. Wayman's *The Buddhist Tantras*. p.4.

<sup>34</sup> op.cit. p.123, 124. D. Reigle in *New Light on the Book of Dzyan (Symposium on H.P. Blavatsky's Secret Doctrine: Proceedings)*, San Diego, 1984), mentions his suspicion that the *Book of Dzyan*, from which the stanzas in *The Secret Doctrine* were translated, may be the lost *Mūla (Root) Kālacakra Tantra*, gives specimens of verses and their translation from the extant abridged version; this leads to his very pertinent comment that "... despite a correct translation of the words, we still do not know the meaning of the verse[s]". (p.2) He gives a very succinct summary of the *Kālacakra*:

"In the Kālacakra system, the cosmological data given in the first section is followed by detailed correspondences to the microcosm, a human being, in the second section. The next two sections contain practices, based directly on these correspondences, leading to liberation. The fifth and last section, entitled 'Jñāna' concerns the wisdom thus attained, and further applications of this teaching. However, there remains a question of the appropriateness of publishing this traditionally secret material in English translation." (p.11)

This Kālacakra system, from the evidence of E. Bernbaum and D. Reigle, seems to be a self-consistent system in which macrocosm and microcosm and wisdom form a whole that when imparted, and if properly understood and its practices properly performed, could lead a human being to perfect integration, hence wholeness.

D. Reigle points out that

"The genesis of the world-system and its inhabitants is the subject of the first section of the *Kālacakra Tantra*, the only section which may be openly discussed. Likewise, cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis form the subject-matter of *The Secret Doctrine*. Cosmological teachings do not have the same place in other Books of Kiu-te, such as the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*, the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, etc." (p.1)

In this respect, if the *Mūla Kālacakra Tantra* be the original on which is based *The Secret Doctrine*, the latter could be seen as an expanded explanation, in modern language, of ancient cosmology and anthropology, backed by all the many quotes and references to ancient philosophers, ancient religions and mythologies to prove their basic oneness. As becomes apparent in her *Esoteric Writings*, (reprinted in C.W.vol.14) H.P.B. had started to initiate some of her pupils into the esoteric aspects of the human constitution, the abstruseness of correspondences, etc., thereby bringing the teachings down to the level of practicality and proving man as the microcosm of the macrocosm. But this could never be completed. She died in 1891.

D. Reigle's presentation given at the Symposium of H.P.B.'s *Secret Doctrine* was incorporated in *Blavatsky's Secret Books: twenty years research* by D. and N. Reigle, San Diego, Wizard's Bookshelf, 1999.

<sup>35</sup> *Esoteric Writings*. p.305. (C.W.14.)

<sup>36</sup> Published in *The Middle Way*. vol.34. no.3. Nov. 1939. p.139.

<sup>37</sup> *Religious Studies Review*, vol.23. no.3, July 1997. pp.258, 260-1.

<sup>38</sup> *op.cit.*p.7.



**CHAPTER 2: THE MYSTICAL TRADITION**

**PART I THE ANCIENT GNOSIS AND ITS RECORDS**

**THE STANZAS OF DZYĀN, THE ṚGVED, THE EGYPTIAN GNOSIS, etc.**

Stanza

1. The Eternal Parent, wrapped in her Ever-Invisible Robes, had slumbered once again for seven eternities. 2. Time was not, for it lay asleep in the infinite bosom of duration. 3. Universal Mind was not, for there were no Ah-hi<sup>1</sup> (spiritual beings) to contain it. 4. The seven ways to bliss were not. The great Causes of misery were not for there was no one to produce and get ensnared by them. 5. Darkness alone filled the boundless all, for Father, Mother and Son were once more one, and the son had not yet awakened for the new wheel and his pilgrimage thereon. 6. The seven sublime Lords and the seven Truths had ceased to be, and the universe, the son of Necessity, was immersed in *pariniṣpanna* (Absolute Truth) to be outbreathed by THAT which is, and yet is not. Naught was. 7. The causes of existence had been done away with, the visible that was, and the invisible that is, rested in eternal non-Being – the One Being. 8. Alone, the One form of existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in dreamless sleep; and life pulsed unconscious in universal space, throughout that All-Presence, which is sensed by the opened eye of Dangma<sup>2</sup> (the inner spiritual eye). 9. But where was Dangma when the *Ālaya* of the universe (the Universal Soul) was in *paramārtha*, and the great wheel was *anupadaka* (parentless).

Stanza

2. 1. ... Where were the Builders, the Luminous Sons of Manvantaric Dawn? ... In the Unknown Darkness in their Ah-hi *pariniṣpanna*. The producers of form from no-form – the root of the world – the *Devamātri* and *svabhāvat*, rested in the bliss of Non-Being. 2. ... Where was Silence? Where the ears to sense it? No, there was neither silence nor sound; naught save ceaseless Eternal Breath, which knows itself not. 3. The hour had not yet struck; the Ray had not yet flashed into the germ; the *Mātripadma* (Mother Lotus) had not yet swollen. 4. Her heart had not yet opened for the One Ray to enter, thence to fall, as three into four, into the lap of *māyā*. 5. The seven were not yet born from the web of Light. Darkness alone was Father-Mother, *Svabhāvat*; and *svabhāvat* was in darkness. 6. These two are the Germ, and the Germ is one. The universe was still concealed in the Divine Thought and the Divine Bosom.

These stanzas inscribe themselves in the long and ancient tradition of the great mystics of all ages, those who in their life endeavours and aspirations managed to probe certain depths of the Void, the no-thing-ness which faces sooner or later every pilgrim on the way, and come back renewed, invigorated, illumined – a paradox to the mind, a non-sense to the reason, a glory to the intuition!

All Orientals, when they enter a temple, take their shoes off; a symbolic gesture of discarding the dirt one

accumulates as one walks along the pathways of life, not merely at the physical level, but at the personality level: for wrong-doings, all the vices and defects to which humans are prone may be seen as included in this one little gesture. To tread on sacred ground, one should divest one's self of all possible stains. And before one can be taken over and dissolved in the profound mystery of "being" which is "non-being", one has to cast away all preconceptions, all limited notions, all mundane ideas, all thought even, leave the mind totally blank, so that it may start to reflect something of those higher levels which are the inner core of our terrestrial realm, but which lie buried through so much inessential accumulation. Here, in this first stanza which takes us back to the beginning of beginnings, into the arcana of the Great Mystery, when only the All-Presence, the Ineffable, the Indescribable, abides in infinite peace, one treads on the holiest ground of the human heart, of that centre of psyche that wields that capacity to soar to those pinnacles that the mind's wings can just about touch

"whence words return, together with the mind, not attaining it"

says the Taittirīya Upaniṣad (II.4.1). This holy ground is the pathway of the sages and seers, the visionaries of the millennia, the lawgivers, the ṛṣis of ancient India who followed the trackless track that leads to the innermost shrine, the heart of hearts.<sup>3</sup>

Such a state as described above can only be intuited somewhat, "divined" in the deepest moment of contemplation. This is hinted at towards the end of Stanza 1 as that which is "sensed by the opened eye of Dangma", the eye of spiritual perception, that eye which was still opened in the ṛṣis of ancient India, in all the great sages of ancient times.

The Stanzas of Dzyan open with an attempt at describing in material but paradoxical terms a state of Non-being which is Absolute Being, the void of Buddhism, the abyss of Genesis and Norse mythology, the indescribable state which it names "darkness" as so remote from human conception that it can only be likened to darkness. But that darkness is nevertheless the "eternal matrix in which the sources of light appear and disappear" (S.D.I.p.113). In this state of perfect equipoise, utter peace, the universe was "immersed", had dissolved. This state is called *pariniṣpanna*,<sup>4</sup> or absolute reality. Since it is beyond the grasp of the highest intellectual flight, recourse is had to a series of paradoxical statements, such as we find in Hindu<sup>5</sup> and Buddhist writings, also among the great mystics of the West, such as "eternal non-being which is the One Being" and an accumulation of negatives.<sup>6</sup> These latter, in stating what was no more imply what was or has been; thus the Universal Mind was not; the seven ways to bliss were not; the great causes of misery were not. So these were peculiar to the universe when it was?

H.P.B. comments:

"The idea of 'Eternal Non-Being' which is the 'One Being' will appear a paradox to anyone who does not remember that we limit our ideas of Being to our present consciousness of Existence; making it a specific instead of a generic term ... the One Being is the noumenon<sup>7</sup> of all the noumena which we know must underlie phenomena, and give them whatever shadow of reality they possess, but which we have not the senses nor the intellect to cognize at present!" (S.D.I.p.117)

"The idea that things can cease to exist and still be, is a fundamental one in Eastern psychology. Under this apparent contradiction in terms there rests a fact in Nature, to realise which in the mind, rather than to argue about words, is the important thing. A familiar instance of a similar paradox is afforded by chemical combination. The question whether hydrogen and oxygen cease to exist, when they combine to form water, is still a moot one; some arguing that since they are found again when the water is decomposed, they must be there all the while; others contending that as they actually turn into something totally different, they must cease to exist as themselves for the time being; but neither side is able to form the faintest conception of the real condition of a thing, which has become something else and yet has not ceased to be itself ..."

(S.D.I.p.125)

If we examine the word existence itself we find that it is made up of *ex* = out of, plus *sistere* = to stand (out of the one into the many). *existere* - to step forth, standing forth as a separate entity, which implies duality and separation.<sup>8</sup> It is a coming forth out of the oneness, which marks a separation, a delimitation, from which the many emerge. Manifestation, multiplicity, imply separateness, fragmentation, and the search on the part of the fragmented many for the lost wholeness.

Many ancient cosmogonies have resorted to the use of negatives to describe the state of non-being, when

the existent, in all its ramifications, had not yet emerged out of the non-existent or quiescent latency. Thus the Babylonian Enuma Elish recalls a time

"When the heights of heaven and the earth beneath had not been named, and when Apsu their father, and Tiamat, their mother, still mingled their waters; when no field or marsh was formed and no gods had been called into being ..."

Thus the Norse cosmogony:

"In the beginning was a great abyss (Chaos), neither day nor night existed; the abyss was Ginnungagap, the yawning gulf, without beginning, without end. All-Father, the Uncreated, the Unseen, dwelt in the depth of the abyss and willed and what He willed came into being." (*Asgard and the Gods*. p.22)<sup>9</sup>

The Ancient Egyptians worked out a complete philosophy of the Non-existent and a specific negative verbal form to describe what was before creation: the *n sdm t f* which means "when ... had not yet ...". Thus heaven and earth had not yet come into being, SHU who later separates them had not yet accomplished his famous task, the Creator had not yet found a place on which to stand – "a strikingly terse denial of the existence of space",<sup>10</sup> as E. Hornung put it, but only as we understand space. For voidness, vastness, matrix, all these are behind that word space which had to somehow become more manifest, in which objects had to appear more and more concrete, forms, etc. The waters of space in the Egyptian theology of Heliopolis are the primeval ocean NUN, ageless, out of which emerges ATUM the One who completes himself, the Creator who creates out of his limbs the gods, his children. Nun is the limitless expanse within which all possibilities lie latent.

Other expressions such as "when the nature of the gods had not yet been made", and when "there was not announced the name of anything", when "conflict had not yet come into being", all affirm the non-existence of anything known to human beings, but also indirectly assert the separateness, the division, the conflict inevitable upon coming into being, hence the germ of evil is rooted in the very *demarcation line* so to speak between the non-existent and the existent. After creation, for the ancient Egyptian theologians, the non-existent remains the "boundary that cannot be crossed where the efficacy of the gods and of the king reaches its limit."<sup>11</sup> There was a time when such doctrine meant sheer nonsense to Western intellects. But E. Hornung has revealed a remarkable understanding of it and an equal capacity to expound in clear language what for a very long time had remained mere gibberish.

The non-existent, as one and undifferentiated, nevertheless, had its part to play during the time of creation. It acted as a challenge to the living by intruding into the world of creation, but also as a womb for renewal, fertility, rejuvenation from the exhaustion of activity, hence the meaning of *sleep* and *death* into which all beings periodically sink. "The existent is in need of constant regeneration from the depths of the nonexistent."<sup>12</sup> E. Hornung sums up the idea thus:

"One could say that in Egypt 'the nonexistent' signified quite generally that which is inchoate, undifferentiated, unarticulated, and unlimited; or, in affirmative form, the entirety of what is possible, the absolute, the definitive. In comparison with the nonexistent, the existent is clearly defined, and articulated by boundaries and discriminations. It can be set in order and experienced ... the created world is bounded and ordered in time and space, ... it is an island ... 'between nothingness and nothingness'."<sup>13</sup>

This is as remarkable a description of the doctrine of the Ancient Egyptians as of what transpires from the Stanzas of Dzyan expounded by H.P.B., a doctrine which frightened those who attempted to understand it, but which does not seem to have aroused that awe of the limitless in both senses of time and space in E. Hornung.

Notice the "boundary that cannot be crossed" quoted above, an idea which joins the Secret Doctrine's "impassable barrier" at the circumference of the manifested universe, called "Ring-pass-not", as also that boundary between the personal, hence evanescent human ego and its *noumenon*, or transcendental parent Source, a ring "pass not" which none may cross until the "DAY BE WITH US", an expression whose esoteric significance is not understood: when the evolution or unfolding of potentialities of all beings has gone through all its *rounds* of experience, from the most spiritual to the most material and back to the most spiritual, and thereby accomplished its purpose, and the finite creature has opened out fully to its spiritual potentiality to merge back into the Infinite in full consciousness. This is the Secret Doctrine, a *secret doctrine* expressed and more or less distorted variously throughout the ages and the religious revelations. The Day-Be-with-Us which

belongs to the ancient esoteric wisdom and terminology as kept in the initiations of the temples, was also called by the Egyptians "DAY COME TO US" as found in the BOOK OF THE DEAD or COMING FORTH BY DAY, ch.XVII. H.P.B. comments

"The Great Day 'BE WITH US' is an expression peculiar to Esoteric Wisdom, "as hazy for the profane as that of the Egyptians who called the same the 'DAY COME TO US'."14 It refers fundamentally "to that long period of Rest which is called *Parinirvāṇa*."

The Egyptian *non-existent* and *existent* are most probably equivalent to the Vedic *asat* and *sat*, non-being and being. Both are evidently rooted in that very ancient gnosis that regarded the Absolute, the Source of all, as beyond human conception. In Stanza I these two are two aspects of what H.P.B. terms BE-NESS, for want of a better term. This is the primal, the real *being-ness*, out of which all emerges and into which all sinks back, which can only be "divined" in moments of loftiest transcendence. It is, however, important to somewhat grasp the significance of this primal state which for the sages meant *divinity*, for that is what was subsequently de-graded to the status of the all pervading active God, however infinite and lofty, finally cast in the image of man and interfering in human affairs. Says the Secret Doctrine:

"The boundless and infinite Unity remained with every nation a virgin forbidden soil, untrodden by man's thought, untouched by fruitless speculation. The only reference made to it was the brief conception of its diastolic and systolic property, of its periodical expansion, or dilatation, and contraction." (S.D.III.p.54)

Why is the Eternal Parent spoken of in the feminine?

"Ideal Nature, the abstract space in which everything in the universe is mysteriously and invisibly generated, is the same female side of the procreative power in Nature in the Vedic as in every other Cosmogony. Aditi is Sefhira, and the Sophia of the Gnostics, and Isis, the Virgin Mother of Horus. In every cosmogony, behind and higher than the 'Creative' Deity, there is a superior Deity, a Planner, an Architect, of whom the Creator is but the executive agent. And still higher, *over* and *around*, *within* and *without*, there is the Unknowable and the Unknown, the Source and Cause of all these emanations." (ibid.p.54-5)

So the Secret Doctrine posits

"... an Omnipresent, Eternal, Boundless and Immutable PRINCIPLE, on which all speculation is impossible, since it transcends the power of human conception and can only be dwarfed by any human expression or similitude. It is beyond the range and reach of thought – in the words of the Maṇḍukya 'unthinkable and unspeakable'. ... This Infinite and Eternal Cause ... is the Rootless Root of 'all that was, is or ever shall be' ... It is 'Be-ness' rather than Being, Sat in Sanskrit ..." (S.D.I.p.79)

Note the last stanza of Ṛgveda X.129.7:

"Whence this creation originated; whether He caused it to be or not, He who in the highest empyrean surveys it, He alone knows, or else, even He knows not."

As H.P.B. rightly says:

"Man, unable to form a single concept except in terms of empirical phenomena, is powerless from the very constitution of his being to raise the veil that shrouds the majesty of the Absolute. Only the liberated spirit is able faintly to realise the nature of the source whence it sprang and whither it must eventually return." (S.D.I.p.122)

Like their forefathers, the ṛṣis of Āryāvarta had also a transcendental vision of the cosmos, a vision out of all relation to anything we know on earth. How else than in negative terms could they express it? The most solemn of the Ṛgvedic creation hymns, X.129, attempts such a descriptive state, when non-being or non-existence was not, when being or existence was not, when death and its opposite were not; what then was? Vastness beyond understanding, unfathomable. The Ancients seem to have understood these meanings better than we, their descendants; they took it, seemingly, not as the extinction of all life as we do when we refer to non-existence, but as an altogether other state of the essence of life. *Asat* and *sat*, two terms used in the early Veda, are considered by H.P.B.

"... the Alpha and Omega of Eastern Esotericism. Without this key to Aryan Wisdom, the cosmogony of the ṛṣis and the Arhats is in danger of remaining a dead letter to the average Orientalists. *Asat* is not merely the negation of *Sat*, nor is it the 'not yet existing'; for *Sat* is in itself neither the 'existent',

nor 'being'. Sat is the immutable, the ever-present, changeless, and eternal Root, from and through which all proceeds ..."

(S.D.IV.p.15-16)

These words *asat* and *sat*, non-being, being, I have translated as the Unmanifest and the Manifest, to cater for the average reader's lack of understanding of their fundamental meaning, and also in line with the Bhagavad Gītā's verse:

"From the unmanifested (*avyakta*) all the manifested (*vyakta*) stream forth at the coming of day; at the coming of night they dissolve in just that called the unmanifested."

(Bh. Gītā. viii.18)

So the Ṛgvedic hymn goes thus:

"The Unmanifest was not then, or the Manifest; spatial depths or heaven beyond were not. What encompassed, where, who nurtured it? What ocean, profound, unfathomable pervaded?

Death was not then or immortality. Neither night's nor day's confine existed. Undisturbed, self-moved, pulsated that One alone. And beyond that, other than that, was naught." (Ṛgv.X.129.1&2)<sup>15</sup>

Space was not, heaven was not. The verb *vr̥* to cover is used in its intensive imperfect form, what did it cover or conceal? In whose guardianship, translated as "who nurtured it" because of the idea of protection in the word *śarman*, hence the nurturing mother aspect confirmed by the word water, here *ambhas* and further on in stanza 3 as *salila* undulating water. The idea being that all is hidden away in slumber but protected. The poet can only think of water, immense, infinite expanse of water, profound, unfathomable.

As we shall see in chapter 3 *water* was the word for what later came to be called *ākāśa*, translated as space because we have no such equivalent, a word not used in the Ṛgveda, but already appearing in the early Upaniṣads. The "waters" of Ṛgv.X.129 are uncreated, undifferentiated depths (*apraketaṃ salilam* X.129.3) pervading all in darkness, coexistent with and enfolding the One so to speak as veils or robes, as poetical fancy would describe them, giving a picture of movement, that perpetual motion symbolised in the Great Breath, which also in this hymn "breathes soundless (= windless) self-moved" all alone, with its own unfathomable immensity.

One can easily see that these two stanzas are in complete accord with the Stanza of Dzyan, I, both are based upon the mystical vision of the "abyss". Only the Ṛgvedic verses do not give many details. Words are mere pointers; they may point to ideas which in their turn can open out to a vision or flash of insight. But each needs to be interpreted by the reader or hearer and this depends on his/her understanding, insight, or "light"; some lights are very dim indeed ...

H.P.B.'s claim, already quoted, that

"The boundless and infinite Unity remained with every nation a virgin forbidden soil, untrodden by man's thought, untouched by fruitless speculation. The only reference made to it was the brief conception of its diastolic and systolic property, of its periodical expansion, or dilatation, and contraction." (S.D.III.p.54-5)

may be given credence for the few mentions in the Vedas, or Egyptian "non-existent" are not expanded, but this Undisturbed, Self-moved One, the *aja* of the Ṛgveda referred to several times could have been touched upon in the Greater Mysteries, with their imposition of silence upon all participants. The first two stanzas of the Ṛgvedic hymn of creation give us a glimpse of this state of complete and absolute oneness. Another verse in another Ṛgvedic hymn refers to *that* "whose shadow is death, whose shadow is immortality" (X.121.2), a graphic way of depicting a state of being beyond all opposites.

There is a tradition peculiar to all the great mystics of the world whether Oriental or Occidental, yes, even Christians, whereby the deeper one advances in the inner spiritual realms, towards the *sanctum sanctorum*, the more one casts away or loses all landmarks, all conditioning, all images, the more one dissolves into the unity, until nothing remains, but ONE. Only when it comes to putting into words the experience, then some of the old conditionings may reappear in the guise of images, concepts, dogmas which belong to the particular tradition in which the mystic is born; so that for instance the figure of Christ, or Kṛṣṇa, or Buddha, may appear as the essence of the experience, to disconcert the ignorant!

But Jan van Ruysbroeck, the great Flemish mystic (1293-1381), tried to transcend the conditioning mind in the following description:

"... for the abysmal waylessness of God is so dark and so unconditioned that it swallows up in itself

every Divine way and activity, and all the attributes of the persons, within the rich compass of the essential Unity, and it brings about a Divine fruition in the abyss of the Ineffable. And here there is a death in fruition and a melting and dying in the Essential Nudity ... For in this unfathomable abyss of the Simplicity all things are wrapped in fruitive bliss, and the abyss itself may not be comprehended unless by the Essential Unity ... This is the dark silence in which all lovers lose themselves."

(*Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage*, Ch.4)<sup>16</sup>

Note "the abyss of the Ineffable" and "the Essential Nudity" and "Unity", words that could also depict the state described in Stanza I. An overdose of reason shuts the mind to any appreciation of such states and such experiences. Nevertheless these have occurred throughout the ages to different mystical visionaries in different races and some have been expressed by the mystics and seers in accordance with the "mental tools" of their time and religious background. As Plotinus pointed out:

"The act and faculty of vision is not reason but something greater than, prior and superior to reason."  
(*Enneads* VI.9.10)

Plotinus also writes in similar vein:

"This principle is certainly none of the things of which it is the source. It is such that nothing can be predicated of it, not being, not substance, not life because it is superior to all these things." (*Enneads* III.8.10)

The ONE for Plotinus as for the Stanzas and the R̥gvedic hymn of creation is what makes all things possible, but remains what It is, undisturbed, beyond it all. Furthermore

"Our way then takes us beyond knowing; there may be no wandering from unity; knowing and knowable must all be left aside. Every object of thought even the highest we must pass by for all that is good is later than this and derives from this as from the sun all the light of the day.

No doubt we should not speak of seeing; but we cannot help talking in dualities, seen and seer, instead of boldly, the achievement of unity. In this seeing we neither hold an object nor trace distinction; there is no two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor self belonging; he is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It; centre coincides with centre, for on this higher plane things that touch at all are one; only in separation is there duality.

This is why the vision baffles telling; we cannot detach the SUPREME to state IT; if we have seen something thus detached, we have failed of the Supreme which is to be known only as one with ourselves." (ibid. VI.9.4&10)

If all the deepest mystical experiences that have ever been written down were quoted they would make an overwhelming testimony to man's inherent capacity to sense and plunge into the mystery of divinity and come out transformed. Perhaps the slightest appreciation of such attempts at describing the loftiest of mystical states, may make us understand what is meant in the Stanza when it is said:

"Naught was. The causes of existence having been done away with, the visible that was and the invisible that is, rested in eternal Non-Being - the ONE BEING. Alone the one Form of Existence stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in dreamless sleep; and life pulsed unconscious in Universal Space, throughout that ALL PRESENCE which is sensed by the 'opened Eye' of the Dangma."

Stanza 1 gives far more details than R̥gv.X.129.1 & 2, for it aims at describing a vision of what is no longer through what has been, the utter no-thing-ness to which the whole universe is reduced, from our human standpoint, in times of *pralaya*. The ṛ̥ṣi of X.129 in his vision of no-thing-ness concentrated on the darkness as it seemed to him as against the many coloured hues of manifestation, on the undifferentiated depths which to him were the evident signs of quiescence, stillness, of non-manifestation. The void of all differentiations can not be imaged except in terms of darkness. But he suddenly takes a leap:

"Enwrapped in voidness that One which flame-power (*tapas*)  
kindled to existence emerged.

Desire, primordial seed of mind in the beginning arose in That." (X.129.3cd; 4ab)

*Tapas* is here the primary kindler to manifestation. *Tapas*, for early Western exegesis, was one of those little understood technical terms found in the R̥gveda. Based upon human contemplative exertion, it refers in the creation hymns to that blazing contemplation of Deity called *That*, or the *Unborn*; in other hymns to the

ṛṣis' own spiritual exertion. For them, nothing could be loftier than this spiritual blazing forth to manifestation which they experienced in themselves and which they projected on the screen of the cosmos as the Divine Creative Act. In no other known scripture has the act of divine creation been identified with the creative act of contemplation that blazes from the very depth of the human psyche and carries the meditator to transcendental realms. In that supreme illumination the ṛṣis visioned what another seer-prophet, Isaiah, called "the treasures of darkness". Ṛgv.X.190.1 ascribes to this all blazing act of creation the manifestation of Cosmic Order (*ṛta*), and truth (*satya*). Both of these thus, for the ṛṣis, formed the basis, or the blueprint, of the world to unfold. The foundation of the whole universe was thus seen to be securely rooted in the *tapas* of the ONE kindled to activity by that very *tapas*. But that *tapas* aroused *kāma*, desire, primordial seed of mind. Desire which, in the esoteric doctrine, is considered to be the lower aspect of *will*, is indeed the *will-to-be*, to manifest, to experience, to be conscious, to evolve. Without this desire, the universe cannot unfold. The *will* aspect does not appear in Stanza 1, but it may be implied in the Great Breath that irremediably pulsates those periods of activity and repose, of manifestation and dissolution, the Great Breath, hearth of all that is signified by life – the will-to-be.

### **SPACE AS CONTAINER OF ALL SEEDS AND POLARITIES**

It should be observed that *space* which for us is more or less but an abstraction, is for the Secret Doctrine, of vital importance, as the primordial container of all. Hence H.P.B.'s first words in her commentaries:

"The 'Parent' Space, is the eternal, ever-present Cause of all – the incomprehensible DEITY, whose 'invisible robes' are the mystic Root of all matter and of the universe. Space is the *one eternal thing* that we can most easily imagine, immovable in its abstraction and uninfluenced by either the presence or absence in it of an objective universe. It is without dimension, in every sense, and self-existent. Spirit is the first differentiation from THAT, the Causeless Cause of both Spirit and Matter. As taught in the Esoteric Catechism, it is neither 'limitless void' nor 'conditioned fullness', but both. It was and ever will be." (S.D.I.p.109)

Something akin to this notion is found in the *Anugītā* (vol.viii, ch.xiii.p.292 of K.T. Telang's translation in *The Sacred Books of the East*) where it is said:

"Space is the first entity",

the word translated space being *ākāśa*, and the word for entity is *svabhāva*, self existent. Self-existent space depends on nothing and no one, hence H.P.B. regards it as the Deity, but it is not the *Absolute* beyond conception, for that eternal Parent also merges back into the dissolution of *pralaya*.

H.P.B. explains again:

"Space is the *real* world, while our world is an artificial one. It is the One Unity throughout its infinitude; in its bottomless depths as on its illusive surface; a surface studded with countless phenomenal universes, systems and mirage-like worlds." (S.D.II.p.340-1)

The "Eternal Parent" in Stanza 1 is referred to in the feminine, for that Eternal Parent will manifest as the cradle of all seeds to be the bearer of the contents of manifestation, infinite root matter, as H.P.B describes this "Parent" that becomes the "waters of space" of all ancient cosmogonies. As the hour strikes, the "Eternal

Parent" passes out "of its precosmic latency into differentiated objectivity" and "becomes receptive of the Fohatic impress of the Divine Thought" – Fohat being that fiery or electric power which acts upon all levels of matter.

"The male element in nature (personified by the male deities and logoi – Virāj or Brahmā, Horus and Osiris, etc.) is born through, not from, an immaculate source ... The Abstract Deity being sexless, and not even a Being, but BE-NESS or Life Itself." (S.D.I.p.129)

Herein lies the origin of all the "virgin mothers", the "immaculate" source of the great religious messengers. Within that Eternal Parent is the seed of all consciousness, the Father aspect, that which causes all movement, all unfoldment, life. One could say that the Ray as it emerges through the infinite matrix becomes the positive pole of creation, hence the personified male creators; whilst the matrix differentiates into that which substands and contains all seeds to be, the "waters", Aditi of the Vedas, the Infinite, the Boundless Mother, *ākāśa* of Hindu philosophy. These two aspects are indeed the archetypes of the two poles of manifestation, spirit and matter, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* of Sāṅkhya philosophy, the positive and the negative without which no manifestation can occur, the centrifugal or outgoing and the centripetal or ingoing, which most cosmogonies have simply described as Father and Mother, whose interaction produces the "son", Universal Intelligence, Logos, the universe expressive of intelligent activity.

When the Ray of the Absolute or ever Darkness (to our minds) has once more been emitted and thrills through the depths of Space, these depths become active, take on, according to various cosmogonies, various aspects; thus, the effulgent egg (*hiranyagarbha*) or "radiant waters", or Aditi, the Boundless Mother of what has been and what will be, of the Vedas; the chaos of the Greeks; the abyss of the Norse mythology, the face of the Deep of Genesis, etc. The One Ray becomes the active demiurge, or Creator, or Logos, or God, transformed into an anthropomorphic Deity in the more recent religions. The Secret Doctrine's claim that

"In every cosmogony, behind and higher than the 'Creative' deity, there is a superior Deity, a Planner, an Architect, of whom the Creator is but the executive agent. And still higher, over and around, within and without there is the Unknowable and the Unknown, the Source and Cause of all these emanations." (S.D.III.p.54-5)

becomes recognisable in many of the ancient cosmogonies. According to this viewpoint, no cosmogony, not even Genesis when correctly translated, attributed to the Ultimate Divine Principle the immediate creation of our earth (S.D.II.p.157). That Ultimate Source is usually passed over in silence. The Egyptian, Babylonian and Vedic descriptions of what had not yet been separated bear witness to this. In the Ṛgveda, in complete harmony with the Secret Doctrine, the primordial Darkness either is, or conceals, an impersonal That from



which differentiates, through the flame-power of *tapas*, the One who seems to be the "overseer" in the "highest empyrean", who himself may not know the ultimate mystery of the Absolute:

"Who knows the truth, who can here proclaim whence this birth,  
whence this projection? The gods appeared later by this world's  
creation. Who then knows how it all came into being?

Whence this creation originated; whether He caused it to be or not,  
He who in the highest empyrean surveys it,  
He alone knows, or else, even He knows not." (Ṛgv.X.129.6-7)

Perhaps the ultimate secret is locked in the Absolute! But note the various "steppings down", from the "That" to the unnamed "surveyor", or in other hymns to Agni, the flame divine first born of Cosmic Order which flashes forth from the *tapas* of That (X.190.1; X.5.7); or to the All Creator (Viśvakarman X.81&82), called the Father of the Eye, or Vision; Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures (X.121.7) whose name becomes identified with Brahmā in later texts, Varuṇa, the Lord of Cosmic Order, Indra the battling Universal Mind. Here we step completely out of the circle of Cosmic Darkness, out of the circle of the Absolute, to fall into the lap of manifestation, with its separation, demarcation, generation, and anthropomorphic gods, hence *māyā*. "The gods appeared later by this world's creation" (Ṛgv.X.129.6). The ONE has become the many: "In the limitless Waters, Prajāpati toils within the egg" (Taittirīya Āraṇyaka 10.1.1).

H.P.B. explains this in terms of the Purāṇas thus:

"Appearing with every manvantara as *Nārāyaṇa*, or *Svayambhuva*, the Self-Existent, and penetrating into the Mundane Egg, it [the One Ray or Logos] emerges from it at the end of the divine incubation as Brahmā, or Prajāpati, the progenitor of the future universe, into which he expands. He is Puruṣa (Spirit) but he is also Prakṛti (Matter). Therefore it is only after separating itself into two halves – Brahmā-Vāc (the female) and Brahmā-Virāj (the male) – that the Prajāpati becomes the male Brahmā." (S.D.I.p.146)

The duality latent in the ONE who, as It manifests, divides into two opposite polarities, positive and negative, centrifugal and centripetal, whose interaction produces the universe, is taken full note of in the ancient cosmogonies. In the Secret Doctrine it is stated:

"... It will be apparent that the contrast of these two aspects of the Absolute is essential to the existence of the 'Manifested Universe'. Apart from Cosmic Substance, Cosmic Ideation could not manifest as individual consciousness, since it is only through a vehicle, in Sanskrit (*upādhi*), of matter that consciousness wells up as 'I am I', a physical basis being necessary to focus a Ray of the Universal Mind at a certain stage of complexity. Again, apart from Cosmic Ideation, Cosmic Substance would remain an empty abstraction, and no emergence of Consciousness could ensue.

The Manifested Universe, therefore, is pervaded by duality, which is, as it were, the very essence

of its EX-istence as 'Manifestation' ..." (S.D.I.p.81)

The Egyptian Heliopolitan and Hermopolitan systems for instance give a very clear outline of the essential, balanced activity of Nature. the same can be said of certain Vedic verses, as also the Stanzas of Dzyan where the Eternal Parent, on awakening, transforms into

"Father-Mother spin a web, whose upper end is fastened to Spirit, the Light of the One Darkness, and the lower One to its shadowy end Matter ..." (3:10)

The Ṛgveda tells us in no uncertain terms:

"Between the Father and the Mother revolves this whole universe." (Ṛgv.X.88.15)

As soon as manifestation sets in, so does duality. This becomes immediately apparent with the "Waters", the "field" of activity, and Agni, the fiery energy or life-breath that activates them. Their interaction produces the cosmos.

In the Ṛgveda, the *immediate* parents of all are Heaven and Earth whose essential meaning lies in their very names; thus, *dyaus*, from verbal root *div* to shine, light pertains to the spiritual; and *pṛthivī*, from *prath*, to expand, hence the broad, expansion being "matter" in philosophy. Hence spirit and matter, *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* of Sāṅkhya philosophy. Behind these parents, but at a remoter level, stand Dakṣa and Aditi, Intelligence and Boundlessness, the Mover in the Waters of Space, and behind these are *asat* and *sat*. One cannot get away from this duality in manifestation, but with the advent of the anthropomorphic male monotheistic God, Creator of all, this essential law of Nature's activity recedes from human ken with the inevitable consequence of a lopsided view, a lack of respect for Nature and her creatures who are only there for man's use or pleasure, and usually misuse, and worse of all, the present complete rape of our planet ...

Considering these two polar opposites Śri Krishna Prem has something to say which deserves much pondering upon. Referring to the path beyond, called the *puruṣa* in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, i.e. "He who dwells in the *pura* or city of the Mother" he goes on to contrast these two thus:

"As She is the Moon of Night and secret Wisdom, so He is the Sun of Day and open knowledge. When 'together' in the Cosmic Night She is the New Moon who eclipses the Sun, while, when 'separate' during the Day, She is the Full Moon shining in opposition, her whole being illuminated by His rays; though sometimes, indeed, the shadow of her child the Earth intervenes, and, sometimes she, eclipsing the Sun, causes a false night to descend upon us.

He is the Light of Knowledge, She the dark depths of Wisdom; He the Fountain of Unity, She the dark wealth and richness of plurality, the fecund ocean that is the mysterious womb of life."

Śri Krishna Prem admits that these two principles "are on the same level in the hierarchy of being" but from our human point of view, at this stage of our return journey to the Source, Puruṣa is the aim for us, hence

considered "higher" "both as the Source of the Light that we value, and because His unity appears nearer to the Ultimate One than does the diversity or duality."

"In itself the Ultimate Parabrahman is not one but rather O, the mystic zero, the Great Void of the Buddhist Schools. Such a zero is in truth equally and indeed infinitely distant from all the numbers. It is no 'nearer' 1 than 2 and we may also note that the term *advaita*, usually loosely rendered as monism, means actually non-dualism which is not quite the same thing ..."<sup>17</sup>

For those who somewhat understand the gist of the Stanzas of Dzyan, here is a perfect and succinct summing up of one of their meanings. Parabrahman is the zero point wherein merge all dualities, but on re-awakening, the *content* aspect distinguished as Space will manifest in all its glorious diversity and bring forth the polarities, the ONE and the TWO, in their rich contrast, to play out their complementary part on the screen of cosmos.

How did the sages come to their conclusions? Through contemplation, through vision. The Ṛgveda gives us a hint: Ṛgv.X.129.4 tells us that "Sages, seeking in their heart with wisdom discovered the bond of the existent in the non-existent", the relation of being to non-being! "Seeking in their heart" signifies that the ṛṣis were able to probe the very depth of the *psyche*, there where vision of truth is possible, there where psyche merges with its spiritual, divine spark, when the mind is held in abeyance for a moment; afterwards to resume its task of "putting together" according to its own logic, ratio, order, what has been intuited or visioned, in transcendental moments.

Stanza 2 goes on in the same way, stressing what *has been* as no longer *being*, but adding another dimension, if one may call it thus: the builders of the universe, the Dhyan Chohans, those "luminous sons of manvantaric Dawn", were in their own state of bliss, *pariniṣpanna* which, as we learn from H.P.B.'s explanation, means full consciousness in ultimate reality. These

"Ah-hi (Dhyān Chohans) are the collective hosts of spiritual Beings – the Angelic Hosts of Christianity, the Elohim and 'Messengers' of the Jews – who are the vehicle for the manifestation of the divine or universal Thought and Will. They are the intelligent Forces that give to, and enact in Nature her 'Laws', while they themselves act according to Laws imposed upon them in a similar manner by still higher Powers; but they are not the 'personifications' of the Powers of Nature, as erroneously thought."

(S.D.I.p.111)

The Sanskrit equivalent of *ah-hi* is *ahi*, a synonym of which is *nāga*, serpent. The latter word has been used to mean, according to H.P.B., "adepts of wisdom" but whenever "serpents of wisdom" occur in texts Western translators and commentators, taking the word literally, relegate the whole idea to the domain of fables.

"Nāgārjuna is said to have been initiated by the Nāgas (fabulous serpents), the veiled name for an initiate or mahātma" explains H.P.B. (C.W.XIV.p.435)

Further

"The allegory that regarded Nāgārjuna's *Paramārtha* as a gift from the Nāgas (serpents) shows that he received his teachings from the secret school of adepts."

(T.G.p.196. in *Theosophical History*. Jan. 1988. p.162)

The Divine Mother (*devamātri*), the Root of the world, the Eternal Parent wrapped in her ever invisible robes of Stanza 1, has also vanished into the bliss of non-being, later to be compared to the Lotus Mother whose heart will open out for the Divine Ray to enter, thence to fall, as three into four, into the lap of *māyā*."

(2:4) H.P.B. explains *māyā* or illusion as that

"element which enters into all finite things, for everything that exists has only a relative, not an absolute, reality, since the appearance which the hidden noumenon assumes for any observer depends upon his power of cognition. ... Nothing is permanent except the one hidden absolute Existence which contains in itself the noumena of all realities. The existences belonging to every plane of being, up to the highest Dhyān Chohans, are, comparatively, like the shadows cast by a magic lantern on a colourless screen. Nevertheless all things are relatively real, for the cognizer is also a reflection, and

the things cognized are therefore as real to him as himself ..." (S.D.I.p.112-13)

The mention of the Divine Mother takes us one step closer to manifestation for her very substance will form the basis of manifestation, of existence, of those countless stellar galaxies and planetary systems as they emerge from the embrace of blissful rest to unfold another evolution, another DAY of activity. "Space is called the Mother before its cosmic activity, and Father-Mother at the first stage of reawakening" (S.D.I.p.83) for the simple fact that no manifestation can occur without the interactivity of the positive and negative polarities.

The first step from quiescence to activity is glimpsed in the one Ray of light or flame which is to enter into the heart of the "Mother-lotus", the all enveloping space and matrix of life-to-be, waiting its hour, in accordance with the great law of rhythm, of cyclic time, of periodicity, for her "to expand from within without like the bud of the lotus". (Stanza 3:1)

### **CYCLIC TIME AND DURATION**

The first three Stanzas of Dzyan express the arrest of Time as we know it, but not of duration; in fact the underlying thought hinges on eternal recurrence, a typical Oriental conception.

1:2 "Time was not, for it lay asleep in the Infinite Bosom of Duration."

Similarly, in the very first verse of the R̥gvedic hymn of creation R̥gv.X.129.1 the word *tadānīm*, "at that time", or "then", calls for enquiry, as the state described is out of time. Or is it meant as a hint of that eternal cosmic rhythm expressed in the next verse as the One breathing by its own power, *implying* the cycle of manifestation and of non manifestation, of time and timelessness, yet cosmic duration, the Eternal Breathing out and breathing in.

Time as the "succession of events", of change of forms, of seasons, of revolution of the heavenly bodies, as well as of movement in consciousness; time as the "moving image of Eternity" was no more; yet it only lies latent, rooted in the law of cycles in eternal recurrence, merged in the "bosom of duration", and implied in the GREAT BREATH. Time, as cyclic, a conception so alien to Western linear thought, is suggested through such statements as "once again", "For Father, Mother and Son were once more one and the Son had not yet awakened for the new wheel and his pilgrimage thereon"; "the Son of Necessity was immersed in *parinīṣpanna*", etc. "Necessity" implies the chain of causation, the interconnection between the previous series of causes and the

future series of effects to be worked out in a new dispensation or manifestation. Thus

"The Secret Doctrine teaches the progressive development of everything, worlds as well as atoms; and this stupendous development has neither conceivable beginning nor imaginable end. Our 'Universe' is only one of an infinite number of universes, all of them 'Sons of Necessity', because links in the great cosmic chain of universes, each one standing in the relation of an effect as regards its predecessor, and of a cause as regards its successor.

The appearance and disappearance of the universe are pictured as an outbreathing and inbreathing of the 'Great Breath', which is eternal, and which, being Motion, is one of the three symbols of the Absolute – Abstract Space and Duration being the other two. When the Great Breath is projected, it is called the Divine Breath, and is regarded as the breathing of the Unknowable Deity – the One Existence – which breathes out a thought, as it were, which becomes the Kosmos. So also is it that when the Divine Breath is inspired, the Universe disappears into the bosom of the Great Mother who then sleeps 'wrapped in her Ever-Invisible Robes.'" (S.D.I.p.115-116)

Eternal motion<sup>18</sup> implies that all is perpetually on the move, subject to change, to transformation, except during *pralaya* where motion is concentrated in the Great Breath, the Eternal Pulse which is Divine Life. The three inherent qualities of matter, or *prakṛti*, according to Sāṅkhya philosophy, are *inertia*, *mobility*, *rhythm* with all their variations such as fixity, darkness, sleep; activity, passion, anger; goodness, harmony, peace. This idea can be carried over to motion which manifests in three types of vibration: *sluggish*; *acceleration* giving rise to a proliferation of forms thrown up in chaos but to be sorted out and organised into proper order in due time, the whole reaching out to a crescendo of *rhythm*, an overall harmony which, through the fusion of all vibrations finally brings the cycle to a close, back to subjective obscurity. Motion is threefold: rotary; spiral and cyclic. *Rotary* as in the grand movement of the heavenly bodies or in that of the invisible atom; whose effect, on the subtler levels, is to differentiate cosmic matter into seven major planes or spheres of activity and adaptability of subtler and grosser matter, themselves constantly on the move; *spiral* as in the circling around a central focus in ever ascending spiral which applies to series of entities developing consciousness; *cyclic* as in the repetition of ascent and descent along a spiral to ever higher and higher expressions of life.<sup>19</sup>

The Great Breath as the very essence of Life, as the livingness of THAT which is the core of Life, is found in the Ṛgvedic hymn of Creation, thus:

"Breath-less, breathed that One by its own power"; or

"Undisturbed, self-moved (*svadhayā*) pulsated that One-alone." (X.129.2)

In this One alone is indeed encapsulated the whole of Life, the whole of Law, the Will-to-be. It is interesting to note that the will as we know it finds no expression in Stanza I, although eternal duration, being an aspect of the law of being, of alternate cycles, must be rooted in absolute will. The ONE LAW which during the cycle of activity manifests as the Cosmic Order which embraces all, is for us humans, the Divine Will. However H.P.B. explains:

"The *immutably* Infinite, and the *Absolutely* Boundless, can neither will, think nor act. To do this, it has to become Finite, and it does so by its Ray penetrating into the Mundane Egg, or infinite Space, and emanating from it as a finite God ... When the period arrives, the absolute will expands naturally the Force within it, according to the Law of which it is the inner and ultimate Essence." (S.D.II.p.69)

This dynamic Life pulsates, or breathes *in* and *out* in eternal duration, in alternate cycles of subjective obscurity or inactivity (*pralaya*) and objective manifestation or activity (*manvantara*).

"Therefore, the 'last Vibration of the Seventh Eternity' was 'fore-ordained' by no God in particular, but occurred in virtue of the eternal and changeless Law which causes the great periods of activity and rest, called so graphically, and at the same time so poetically, the Days and Nights of Brahmā. The expansion 'from within without' of the Mother, called elsewhere the 'Waters of Space', 'universal Matrix', etc., does not allude to an expansion from a small centre or focus, but means the development of limitless subjectivity into as limitless objectivity, without reference to size or limitation or area."

(S.D.I.p.131)

As the Cosmic Day is reckoned in terms of seven vast aeons, seven<sup>20</sup> being the mystic number of Nature and thereby manifestation, so by implication, the Cosmic Night is said to have its equivalent, even though there is no mind to compute the passing of the aeons. H.P.B. explains the "Seven eternities" as referring to

"... seven periods, or a period answering in its duration to the seven periods of a Manvantara, extending throughout a Mahakalpa or 'Great Age' (100 years of Brahmā), making a total of 311.040.000.000.000 of years; each year of Brahmā being composed of 360 Days and of the same number of Nights of Brahmā (reckoning by the Chandrāyana or lunar year); and a Day of Brahmā consisting of 4.320.000.000 of mortal years." (S.D.I.p.110)

The concept of eternal recurrence is denied by scholars to the Ṛgveda, yet specific verses point to the very opposite. The idea of recurrence and long cycles is well known to the Purāṇas, but cycles or *yugas* are known to the Ṛgvedic ṛṣis. Thus is Ṛgv.X.97.1ab they state that "plants came into being three ages before the gods". Heaven and Earth seem to be fashioned anew, or given a new lease of life. The Atharvaveda refers to the "earth which was previous to this one" (Athv.XI.8.7) and the gods by the time of the Ṛgveda had acquired their immortality, obviously in a previous cycle. Furthermore, Viśvakarman is related to have celebrated the first sacrifice as creation together with the ṛṣis, where did these come from since this sacrifice is creation? (Ṛgv.X.82 and see X.90).

"If there was a planet earth before our own, if the plants came into being three ages before the gods, if there were different generations of gods, if Aditi presented her offsprings to the former generation of the gods, if the gods themselves acquired their immortality, or were granted it by Savitr, by Agni, or by Soma, implying that they were originally mortal, but are now immortal, now implying a different cycle, all these statements refer to facts or events that could only have occurred in previous cycles."<sup>21</sup>

One little Ṛgvedic hymn of creation of three short stanzas shows knowledge of recurrence and gives in concise verse the ṛṣis' idea of evolution, of that unfoldment of a cosmos out of an Unknown, unnamed Cause:

"Cosmic Order and Truth arose out of blazing Flame-power (*tapas*);

thence arose the night; thence the billowy ocean.

From the billowy ocean emerged time, ordainer

of days and nights, master of all that blinks.

And again as before (*yathā pūrvam*) the Creator imaged forth the sun

and moon, heaven, earth, the mid-space and the empyrean." (X.190.1-3)

This hint, in the last verse, has been totally ignored and translated differently, even though the words do mean "as formerly", and they imply that this universe is not the first one. Was this a secret doctrine? The Creator is here the Disposer who remains unnamed, but who "as before" images the sun and moon and the three levels of Vedic cosmogony, and *svar* the higher heaven or solar splendour, translated "empyrean" from its Greek root which implies fire.

Time, ordainer of days and nights, master of what blinks, emerges from the midst of the waters of Darkness. This is quite a revelation of the ṛṣis' vision and quite in keeping with the gist of the Stanzas of Dzyan. Speculation upon time appears in the Atharvaveda:

"Time drives like a horse with seven reins,

a thousand-eyed unaging stallion.

Him the inspired poets mount.

All beings are his chariot wheels.

Time draws this chariot with seven wheels

Seven are the hubs; its axle is nondeath.

At the head of all beings Time proceeds

unceasingly, the first among the Gods.

Above Time is set a brimful vessel.

Simultaneously we see Time here, there, everywhere.

Set face to face with all existences,

Time is throned, men say, in the loftiest realm." (Athv.XIX.53.1-3)

Is this "brimful vessel" set above Time the universal matrix of space wherefrom Time emerges when the hour strikes, and wherein the drama of creation and destruction will be enacted or re-enacted, where atoms, forms, beings will emerge to be smelted to shape, a smelting that can only occur in time? Or is it symbolic of the fullness of life which periodically overflows and thereby gives birth to time and all

creatures? Are the seven reins the seven aeons or periods of activity, each seven, whether wheels, or hubs and reins surely symbolising something.

Another hymn has this to say:

"From time came into being the Waters,  
from time the holy-word, energy and the regions.  
From time (each day) the sun arises,  
in time he goes to rest again.  
By time blows the cleansing wind,  
through time the vast earth has her being.  
The great heaven has his post in time.  
Their son time long ago engendered  
the things that were and that shall be.  
From time came Scripture into being  
and formulas for Sacrifice." (Athv.XIX.54.1-3)<sup>22</sup>

Heaven and Earth and what lies behind them, spirit and matter, have their being in time, in the period of activity, of successions of forms, images, states of being; and yet time is their son, a paradoxical truth, yet a truth nonetheless. Even the sacred-word came into being through time and what thus comes into being must come out of it! Expansion and contraction, activity and rest, outbreathing and inbreathing, centrifugal and centripetal, the Buddhist *vivartakalpa*, rolling outwards or unfolding period, and *samvartakalpa*, rolling up or winding up period, are all contained in essence in these verses. These are expressive aspects of universal life and rhythm whose essence is number, hence ratio, all symbolised in the Great Breath, the mighty Pulse of Universal Life.

## **PART II THE BUDDHIST CONNECTION AND THE VOID**

No one will miss noticing the Buddhist overtones that pervade the first two stanzas. The original (said to have been written in Senzar, the language peculiar to the initiates) may not have had such a Buddhist flavour. H.P.B. admits to combining glosses and commentaries to make a smoother reading, understandable to the European mind. The commentaries written long after were probably the work of Buddhist sages, as indeed were those teachers of H.P.B. who helped her unravel the meaning of the stanzas. But both stanzas are couched in terms of Indian philosophy in both its Hindu and Buddhist form. Thus 1) from the Hindu standpoint, (a) direct and indirect allusions to the concepts of non-being and being (*asat* and *sat*) explained in vol. 4 of the Secret Doctrine, as the "Alpha and Omega of Eastern Esotericism"; (b) to the *kalpas* or enormous cycles of the *Purāṇas*, (c) to the alternation of dissolution (*pralaya*, from *pralī* to become dissolved or reabsorbed) and manifestation (*manvantara* from *manu* + *antara* between humanities), (d) to the law of eternal recurrence in infinite duration, the Days and Nights of Brahmā underlying which is timelessness just as underlying *being* and *non-being* is *reality, truth* – these are tenets of a secret doctrine best preserved to this day in the Vedic/Hindu/ Buddhist scriptures – 2) the Buddhist conception of the "great causes of misery", a typical Buddhist note not alluded to in ancient cosmogonies, and the use of certain Mahāyāna Buddhist technical terms left untranslated but explained in notes or in the commentary, all of which will be examined in this section.

Can the original vision transcribed into *gnosis*, expressed in that one archaic manuscript described by H.P.B. and given to the earliest ṛṣis be considered the source from which Indian thought took its inspiration in very ancient days, the sacred tradition or *gnosis* of which the Vedas themselves are the repository, handed down through the millennia?

The original is said to be in a special language known to the initiates of past ages, subsequently translated and commented upon, through the ages, in Oriental languages, so that H.P.B. chose to use the terms of the language that best expressed these metaphysical concepts, namely Sanskrit:

"Extracts are given from the Chinese, Tibetan and Sanskrit translations of the original Senzar Commentaries and Glosses on the BOOK OF DZYAN – now rendered for the first time into a European language ... To facilitate the reading, and to avoid the too frequent reference to foot-notes, it was thought best to blend together texts and glosses, using the Sanskrit and Tibetan proper names

whenever these could not be avoided, in preference to giving the originals ...

... were one to translate into English, using only the substantives and technical terms as employed in one of the Tibetan and Senzar versions, Shloka I would read as follows:

Tho-ag in Zhi-gyu slept seven Khorlo. Zodmanas zhiba. All Nyug bosom. Konch-hog not; Thyan-Ka m not; Lha-Chohan not; Tenbrel Chugnyi not. Dharmakāya ceased. Tgenchang not become; Barnang and Ssa in Ngovonyidj; alone Tho-og Yinsin in night of Sun-chan and Yong-grub (*Pariniṣpanna*)." (S.D.I.p.87)

It is obvious that the Tibetan translation is extremely succinct and dispenses with many words that our modern languages would need to express thought. But as noted, H.P.B. admits to using the glosses and commentaries so as to make up sentences that might make sense to the more intuitive of her readers, so that the Stanzas are her own rendering of what to us would be mere gibberish! Moreover, she wove a more or less poetic expression, a poetic streak does run throughout the stanzas. That rendering alone was a tremendous task for which her knowledge of Hindu and Buddhist sacred texts and philosophies helped and by means of which she was able to evoke vast vistas of metaphysical thought, at that time unknown to the West.

But where did she get the knowledge of the meaning of the Chinese and Tibetan texts? Who helped her? This is a controversial point which does not really enter into the purpose of this study. H.P.B. never claimed that she "invented" the Stanzas of Dzian or anything of the Secret Doctrine. She merely transmitted what she had been taught and tried to render it into a modern language, English, that language which was to become universal. It is obvious that her statement:

"Gentlemen, I have here made only a nosegay of culled flowers, and have brought nothing of my own but the string that ties them" (S.D.I.p.67)

is the greatest understatement of her life.

She and her helpers may have given that Hindu-Buddhist colouring which distinguishes the Stanzas, since she was a Buddhist and quite impregnated with Hindu-Buddhist philosophy, but also the Commentaries to which she resorted must have been written by Buddhist, or Hindu minded sages. There is another point that should be kept in mind: H.P.B. does say that Hindu and Buddhist sacred texts, however exoteric they may have become, have on the whole best preserved the esoteric themes. But the magnitude of the work, the translations and choices of stanzas which from their conciseness would be meaningless to us, the comments of H.P.B., the erudition, surely entitle her to being recognized as not just a mere medium whom the ignorant have derided in the most despicable manner, but as one of the great minds of the 19th century capable of conceiving and explaining what the average, petty-minded person either vociferates against, or runs away from.

The fact remains that the Stanzas contain an outline of certain deep Cosmic Visions which, at the end of the 19th century, were beyond the grasp and compass of most European minds, of which echoes or reflections appear in most ancient cosmogonies, even in those one might least expect to find, for example the Maoris', with their Heaven and Earth as progenitors, originally one in darkness but torn asunder by one of their children that visibility might prevail, hence light, discernment, and definitely in the Ṛgveda, the most sacred and ancient of the Vedic texts.

Specific Buddhist terms are used in stanza 1 which belong to northern schools of the Mahāyāna tradition, namely the Yogācāra and Madhyamaka, whose texts, with one or two exceptions, had not yet been translated in H.P.B.'s lifetime and were therefore little known. These terms certainly connect the commentators of the stanzas with Mahāyāna Buddhism. Yet "The Buddhism of H.P. Blavatsky", as H.J. Spiereburg has called it, is far from coinciding with orthodox Buddhism. As he puts it, her kind of Buddhism

"... deals with a system of Buddhist teachings which – as a whole – is not to be found in any of the many schools of Buddhism, though the conclusion is warranted that H.P.B.'s Buddhism shows a certain relationship to the Yogācārya School of Buddhism. H.P.B.'s answer to the question: 'Does not the Esoteric Philosophy teach the same doctrines as the Yogācārya School?' 'Not quite' (C.W. X.p.347) at any rate gives one food for thought."<sup>23</sup>

H.P.B.'s Buddhism she called esoteric, and she only divulged a minimal portion of it. However, when one turns to the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition which belongs to the third promulgation of Buddhist teachings, one finds definite links with H.P.B.'s Buddhism.

But why did H.P.B. either choose or choose not to leave these Sanskrit terms in the text when in some



cases she resorted to an approximate equivalent which could be found? Or did she leave them in Sanskrit because of their peculiar connotation as being closer to the inherent significance of stanza 1 than any European language word could be? Three such technical terms, with specific Mahāyāna connotations not found elsewhere are: *pariniṣpanna* (spelled *paranishpanna* in the original edition), *paramārtha* and *ālaya*.

According to Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Madhyamaka School, nothing has inherent (*svabhāva*) or ultimate existence, not even the *dharmas* of the *Abhidharma*, a body of literature attempting to analyse the conventional world to its "ultimate existents" or *dharmas*, something which is real and irreducible, "the building blocks which, through different combinations, we construct into our lived world".<sup>24</sup> Our everyday world is made of objects that arise in the continuous flux of "origination by dependence" upon conditions. This world is conventionally true, but impermanent. There is nothing that is irreducible. *Paramārtha satya* or "ultimate truth" is one of the terms of the Madhyamaka School concerning the "two truths": the conventional or relative (*samvṛtisatya*) truth which refers to the world in which we live, which is nothing but a concatenation of impermanent conditions; and *paramārtha satya* or fundamental truth of the absence of any inherent existence (*svabhāva*), or any unchanging essence, in conditioned existence. This total absence Nāgārjuna called *sūnyatā*. The world as we know it does not exist in reality because it has no unchanging essence. It is *sūnya* of inherent existence. Emptiness is that which is ultimately true, but it is *nothing*, it has no ontological existence.

A permanent essence meant for Nāgārjuna the utterly unchangeable, and that was not to be found. Is the idea found in the present Stanza 1? By implication, inherent existence, if meaning unchangeable, pertains only to that Absolute state of *be-ness* beyond being and non-being, described in stanza 1. But to whom or what would refer the law of periodicity, with its alternation of activity and rest within eternal duration, symbolised in the Great Breath? To that Divine Presence, unthinkable, unknowable, whose being perdures (to use human terms) and manifests to human intuitive vision through a succession of alternate states of activity and repose? Whether that alternation could be viewed as negating an utterly unchangeable essence is debatable. One gets the impression that that which is projected into the manifested world during the phase of activity, which is totally different from the Source, does not alter in any way that Eternal Presence which is, has been and will be, unchangeable, infinite, inconceivable. Note H.P.B.'s comment:

"But the 'Breath of the One Existence' does not ... apply to the *One Causeless Cause* or the 'All-

Be-ness', in contradistinction to All-Being, which is Brahmā, or the universe." (S.D.I.p.125)

The Secret Doctrine stand, in respect to "emptiness" is encapsulated in the following statements: "'*Pariniṣpanna* is the absolute perfection to which all existences attain at the close of a great period of activity, or *mahamanvantara*, and in which they rest during the succeeding period of repose. In Tibetan it is called 'Yong-Grub'. Up to the day of the Yogācārya School the true nature of *parinirvāṇa*, was taught publicly, but since then it has become entirely esoteric; hence so many contradictory interpretations of it. It is only a true idealist who can understand it. Everything has to be viewed as ideal, with the exception of *parinirvāṇa* by him who would *comprehend that state, and acquire a knowledge of how Non-Ego, Voidness and Darkness are three in One, and alone Self-existent and perfect*. It is absolute, however, only in a relative sense, for it must give room to still further absolute perfection, according to a higher standard of excellence in the following period of activity ..." (SD.I.p.115)

This passage implies that there is no end to the eternal transformation that goes on during the cycles of activity and that those cycles of activity and repose are intimately linked: for the accumulation of negative terms expressive of self-existence and perfection indicates that through the plunge back into perfection, a new perfection will emerge, and this endlessly. *Pariniṣpanna* is rendered as "undifferentiated Absolute Reality" by E. Obermiller in his *Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation* (A.O.IX.1931.p.85)

The Yogācāra School of mind-only (*cittamātra*) showed a reaction against the Madhyamaka denial of real existence to anything and claimed that our whole experience of the conventional world can only be known by means of the mind, it is a mental process without which there could be no world. Hence mind, *citta*, is that which really exists, and it is empty of duality, subject and object, perceiver and perceived. *Sūnyata*, for the Madyamikas meant absence of inherent existence; for the Yogācārins absence of duality. There is only a flow of perceptions, of experiences which we construct into subject and object, and thereby dichotomise *ad libitum*.

This kind of conclusion is reached in depth meditation. Hence the three terms of the Yogācāra school concerning the nature of reality: *pariṇiṣpanna* – the Yogācārin's "epistemological ultimate" (used in Stanza 1) – the other two terms which belong to the relative world (and are not used in Stanza 1) being *paratantra*, "dependent", and *parikalpita*, "imagined", "illusory"; *paratantra* being the basis on which we build our world of concepts which have no inherent existence. There is no real subject-object duality save in conceptualisation and the latter is, according to the *Saṁdhinirmocana sūtra* due to the falsifying effect of language, though the basis, or flow of perceptions, does exist. *Pariṇiṣpanna* is the pure nature of reality that underlies the impermanent "dependent" nature of "imagined reality".

The meaning of "absolute perfection" for *pariṇiṣpanna*, is, according to D. Reigle,

"... well enough attested in the Sanskrit Buddhist texts, but almost none of these were published when the *Secret Doctrine* was written. The only one I know of among those containing this term is F. Max Müller's 1883 edition of the *Sukhāvātī-vyūha*. Similarly, the standard Sanskrit dictionaries, such as Monier-Williams' and V.S. Apte's, were all compiled before the publication of any significant number of Buddhist texts. So for these Buddhist technical terms one must consult Franklin Edgerton's 1953 *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, and even this is far from complete, since few texts of Buddhist Tantra, the 'Books of Kiu-te', were then available ... *Pariṇiṣpanna* is, along with *paratantra*, the 'dependent', and *parikalpita*, the 'illusory', one of the three *svabhāvas*, 'natures', or *lakṣaṇas*, 'characteristics', taught by the Yogācāra school. This cardinal Yogācāra doctrine could not be studied authoritatively until the first publication of a primary Yogācāra sourcebook, which occurred in 1907. This was the *Mahāyāna-sūtrālaṅkāra*, 'Ornament of the Mahāyāna Sūtras'.<sup>25</sup>

In her own commentary H.P.B. gives us the underlying meaning of that state of Non-Being which is absolute being:

"*Pariṇiṣpanna*, remember, is the *summum bonum*, the Absolute, hence the same as *parinirvāṇa*. Besides being the final state, it is that *condition of subjectivity* which has no relation to anything but the One Absolute Truth (*paramārthasatya*) on its own plane. It is that state which leads one to appreciate correctly the full meaning of Non-Being which ... is Absolute Being. Sooner or later, all that now seemingly exists, will be in reality and actuality in the state of *pariṇiṣpanna*. But there is a great difference between conscious and unconscious Being. The condition of *pariṇiṣpanna*, without *paramārtha*, the self-analysing consciousness (*svasaṁvedanā*)<sup>26</sup> is no bliss, but simply extinction for seven eternities." (S.D.I.p.124)

The last two sentences give the clue to the meaning and purpose of not merely the whole of evolution, but specifically of human evolution: conscious *parinirvāṇa* as against unconscious. The evolution of consciousness has perforce to pass through humanity.

Concerning the Yogācāra "Mind-only" teaching, D. Reigle makes an important statement: writers and translators

"... are often unaware that there exists another and older tradition of interpretation, which holds that the Yogācāra teachings are not a description of the universe as such, but rather, as the name implies, are an analysis of the universe in terms of consciousness for use in meditation practice ... Tibetan exegetes ... too are often unaware that there exists another tradition of interpretation in Tibet, the 'Great Madhyamaka', which harmonizes the two schools [Yogācāra and Madhyamaka]. This tradition, brought out by the Jonangpa writer Dolpopa, teaches that the primary Yogācāra authors Maitreya, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, as well as the primary Madhyamaka author Nāgārjuna, were all of the 'Golden Age Tradition', and hence in agreement with each other. But the later Buddhist commentators who were not in on the 'Golden Age Tradition' did not understand these authors correctly, and considered them as rivals. This teaching which shows how Madhyamaka and Yogācāra are not mutually contradictory is, in my opinion, essential for a correct understanding of the Stanzas of Dzhan."<sup>27</sup>

The *Tathāgatagarbha*<sup>28</sup> doctrine which seems to have been a reaction to the too nihilistic conclusions of the Mahāyāna schools posited a real existent, an indestructible, permanent, basis to the objective reality, which it named the *tathāgatagarbha*, literally the womb or embryo of the Tathāgata, the seed of Buddhahood. It claimed that this seed is found in all beings, therefore each one has the capacity to become a buddha. This was

interpreted variously and sometimes most erroneously.

One of its texts, the *Śrīmālā devī-siṃhanāda sūtra*, explains emptiness as "absence of defilement" in the *tathāgatagarbha*. Thus, within the Mahāyāna tradition itself, we move from "absence of inherent existence", to "absence of duality", to "absence of defilement" – according to the various schools. The *Śrīmālā* further postulates a permanent, eternal substratum which it differentiates as the *tathāgatagarbha*, (buddha seed) in ignorant sentient beings and as *dharmakāya* (essence body) in enlightened beings. When freed of defilement or all adventitious elements, the *tathāgatagarbha* emerges as the essence of the buddha: the *dharmakāya*. This is

"... beginningless, uncreate, unborn, undying, free from death; permanent, steadfast,

calm, eternal; intrinsically pure, free from all the defilement-store ..." etc.<sup>29</sup>

A third text the *Mahāparinirvāṇa sūtra*, emphasised the positive aspect of reality by teaching a permanent substratum underlying mundane reality and a permanent blissful, pure element beyond egotism, the *tathāgatagarbha*, or Self, *ātman*, the very opposite of what is claimed as original Buddhist teachings. Therein the Buddha is reported to say

"I do not say that all sentient beings lack a Self. I always say that sentient beings have the buddha-nature (*svabhāva*). Is not that very Buddha-nature a Self? So I do not teach a nihilistic doctrine."<sup>30</sup>

This sūtra, as commented upon by Paul Williams,

"is prepared to use the word 'Self' (*ātman*) for this element (of buddhahood)." However one looks at it the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is quite "self-consciously modifying or criticizing the no-Self traditions of Buddhism."<sup>31</sup>

It points to the error of seeing things only from a negative standpoint, thus impermanence where there is permanence, etc., thus adding a very positive dimension to what would otherwise be considered rather nihilistic elements in Buddhist teachings. What was the Buddha's real teaching? According to H.P.B. the real teaching or heart doctrine remained secret and entrusted to only a few disciples, the exoteric garb, the eye doctrine, being preached to all. Are elements of this secret teaching present in these *tathāgatagarbha sūtras*?<sup>32</sup> Possibly only H.P.B. could give the final answer.

The main subject of the *Uttaratantra* [*alias Ratnagotravibhāga*] is its theory of the "fundamental element (*dhātu*) of the Absolute" also called *tathāgata-garbha* which Obermiller renders as the Essence of the Buddha, or the element of his lineage (*gotra*). The teaching is that of

"... the Absolute as the unique, undifferentiated principle, being the negation of the separate reality of all the elements in their plurality, in accordance with the *Prajñāpāramitā* and the *Tathāgata-garbha-sūtra*."

"The central point of this most developed theory is the teaching that the fundamental element of Buddhahood, the Essence of the Buddha (*tathāgata-garbha*) in a living being represents an eternal, immutable (*asaṃskṛta*) element, which is identical with the monistic Absolute and is unique and undifferentiated in everything that lives. This is the main standpoint of the *Uttaratantra*. It is expressed likewise in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, in Haribhadra's Commentary thereon and in numerous other works ... In the Commentary of Tson-kha-pa we have numerous quotations which especially point to the eternal immutable nature of the fundamental element. The most pregnant of these is that of the *Ratnakūṭa* – That in which there is absolutely nothing caused and conditioned (*saṃskṛta*) is (the element) which is eternal and immutable. This element is that of the saintly lineage (*gotra*); it has a resemblance with space, being unique and undifferentiated. It is the true essence (*tathāta* suchness) of all the elements, is uniform (*eka rasa*) and eternal (*nitya*)."

"... as the fundamental element is unique and undifferentiated in everything that lives, and as it is the Essence of the Buddha, the ultimate result of its purification from defilement can be only one, - the attainment of Buddhahood."<sup>33</sup>

The *Uttaratantra* distinguishes two kinds of inherent nature, or *suchness*, the tainted or obscure and the untainted or immaculate. The world is a manifestation of suchness in an impure state, this is the *tathāgata-garbha*, whilst *dharmakāya* is the pure state. Suchness is "unchangeable by nature, sublime and perfectly pure" (Takasaki trans. 1966). Whatever appears tainted is due to ignorance and delusion.

Note how the "eternal and immutable" nature of the fundamental element which is uncaused,

unconditioned, and undifferentiated, "has a resemblance with space", is the true essence of all the elements, etc., is similar in certain aspects to H.P.B.'s description of space:

"The one eternal element, or element containing vehicle, is *space*, dimensionless in every sense, co-existent with which are endless duration, primordial ... matter, and motion – absolute 'perpetual motion' which is the 'breath' of the 'One' element."

(S.D.I.p.125)

Furthermore, as A. Skilton in his *Concise History of Buddhism* remarks,

"... the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* claims to expound a secret teaching of the Buddha that had not been preached before. This teaching is the truth that there is a 'Great Self', which is the permanent element underlying mundane reality ... Whereas the Madhyamaka, in line with the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras, had emphasized the negative qualities of Buddhahood, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* maintains that this led to a one-sided understanding of Enlightenment and reality, and so duly tried to correct this imbalance by placing greater emphasis on positive qualities of Enlightenment. Thus, whereas earlier schools (both Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna) had stressed that delusion lay in seeing permanence where there is impermanence, happiness where there is suffering, self where there is no self, and purity where there is impurity, the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* maintains that the opposite is also true – it is delusion to see impermanence where there is permanence, suffering where there is happiness, no self where there is a self, and impurity where there is purity. In reality there is something which is permanent, blissful, pure, and of the nature of a self, and that is the Tathāgatagarbha – a really existent, pure element totally beyond narrow egotistic greed, hatred, and delusion."<sup>34</sup>

This is in fact the Upaniṣadic doctrine of the pure *ātman*, with different words.

According to Walpola Rahula, in his *What the Buddha Taught*:

"Buddhism stands unique in the history of human thought in denying the existence of such a soul, self or *ātman*. According to the teaching of the Buddha, the idea of self is an imaginary, false belief which has no corresponding reality, and it produces harmful thoughts of 'me' and 'mine', selfish desire, craving, attachment, hatred, ill-will, conceit, pride, egoism, and other defilements, impurities and problems."

This is confusing the egotistic self with the Upaniṣadic universal *ātman* which all too clearly has nothing to do with that little ego, the cause of all problems and evil. But, according to W. Rahula, the Buddha refutes "the universal Atman" as well. Then quoting from H. von Glasenapp, "Vedanta and Buddhism" on the question of *anatta*, in *The Middle Way*, Feb. 1957, p.154:

"The negation of an imperishable *ātman* is the common characteristic of all dogmatic systems of the Lesser as well as the Great Vehicle, and, there is, therefore, no reason to assume that Buddhist tradition which is in complete agreement on this point has deviated from the Buddha's original teaching."<sup>35</sup>

So how can both learned scholars explain certain teachings of the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition, which von Glasenapp equally seems to rule out? Thus

"The *ātman* is the Tathāgatagarbha. All beings possess a Buddha Nature: this is what the *ātman* is. This *ātman*, from the start, is always covered by innumerable passions (*kleśa*); this is why beings are unable to see it."

(London, Mahā-parinirvāṇa sūtra, Pali Text Society, 1976, p.lxxvii.)<sup>36</sup>

One thing is clear, remarks P. Williams:

"The *Mahāparinirvāṇa-Sūtra* teaches a really existing, permanent element (Tibetan *yang dag kham*) in sentient beings. It is this element which enables sentient beings to become Buddhas. It is beyond egoistic self-grasping – indeed the very opposite of self-grasping – but it otherwise fulfills several of the requirements of a Self in the Indian tradition. Whether this is called the Real, True, Transcendental Self or not is as such immaterial, but what is historically interesting is that this *sūtra* ... is prepared to use the word 'Self' (*ātman*) for this element. However one looks at it the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* is quite self-consciously modifying or criticizing the no-Self traditions of Buddhism."<sup>37</sup>

Such doctrines as 1) that the *buddha* seed exists in all living beings as the true essence of all the elements that make up the personality, 2) that the defiling elements cannot affect the element of the Absolute for It alone

is real, without beginning or end and therefore persists in an individual as the element of the spirit of Buddha – implying that all beings have the capacity to attain buddhahood – brings us full circle back (in spite of southern Buddhists' objections) to the transcendental *ātman* of the Upaniṣads, the very essence of being, the substratum of all beings and that which permits human beings to attain liberation from the world of multiplicity.

"That which is the subtle essence – in that have all beings their existence.

That is the truth. That is the *ātman*. And that ... art thou." (Chānd.6.14.3)

The *ātman* has nothing to do with egotistic existence, or with *ahamkara*, the I-making faculty around which, in this terrestrial life, pivots the whole of personal existence. This pivot comes into existence as a result of the clustering of desires and the limitations caused by the vehicles which veil more and more the inner Spirit.

"Having realised that (*ātman*) which is soundless, touchless, formless, tasteless and without smell, permanent, without beginning or end, greater than the Great One

(Mahat),

fixed, one is liberated from the mouth of death." (Kaṭha.Up.13.15)

As Śri Krishna Prem points out,

"But in truth, as Plotinus said, our way takes us beyond knowing. The *ātman* is not an object of any sort that can be 'known' by a subject. It is itself the eternal Subject and consequently anything to which we can point, anything which can be known as such, is not that *Atman*, but, at best, its reflection in something else. The *ākāśa* in which the clouds float can only be 'known' when we can *feel* the clouds floating in our own being, when, that is, we have ourselves become the *ākāśa*"<sup>38</sup>

The Tibetan Buddhists' polemic over the meaning of *emptiness* as exemplified in the different schools of the *Mahāyāna*, some of which are examined by H.P.B., does not resolve the problem of original or ultimate meaning. Thus, for example, for the "dGe-lugs pas" the *Tathāgatagarbha* is empty of inherent existence and is the cause of awakening in sentient beings, leading to buddhahood. A mind which is in continuous flow, hence constantly changing, can be purified and thereby become enlightened. The emptiness of a purified mind is the Buddha's essence body, *dharmakāya* which is also empty of inherent existence, empty of self (*rañ stoñ*); the *tathāgatagarbha* is the cause of awakening the human being, the *dharmakāya* the result; they are not considered identical.

The main clashing point was the idea of "emptiness" of all heterogeneous, relative elements or "void of the other" (*gzan stoñ*) which the Jo-Nan-Pas (another school which arose in the 13th century and lasted until the 17th, see fn.26, maintained as established in "reality" and of explicit meaning, a reality which is absolute, eternal and unchanging, which exists in all sentient beings, though obscured by defilements, which, however, do not affect inherent nature; as against the "emptiness of self" or own being (*rañ stoñ*), empty of inherent existence, hence capable of change and through purification, of attaining buddhahood, but not established as an ultimate absolute reality waiting to be uncovered. Such subtle differences make for endless arguments and a variety of schools of thought in all of which schools the question of what is the truth really remains unanswered: the mind will always find either obstacles to counteract any reasoning, or different ways of looking at a particular point.

One could argue thus: since from the *Saṁdhinirmocana* standpoint, conceptualisation is the effect of the falsification of language; since the "void of the other" and the "void of own being" are, in the last analysis, both concepts built by the mind and thus subject to the flow of mind, what is the point of quarrelling? If the void be the *ultimate* beyond which the human mind cannot reach out, its interpretation will necessarily depend far more on the measure and depth of human insight and intuition than logical argument. The highest wisdom is never attained by logical argument as the Upaniṣads stated long ago. As the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad put it, one should not let one's mind be captured by too many words which are wearisome to the organ of speech, hence arguments are idle (Bṛhad.Up.4.4.21). The deepest reality that we can just about touch, says the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, which it calls the *ātman*, cannot be attained through much study or learning, nor through the intellect nor through listening, the *ātman* is its own means of revelation. (Kaṭha Up.1.2.23) Substitute the word "void" for *ātman* or *brahman*, and certain Upaniṣadic statements will be in line with Buddhist ideas:

"By the purified mind alone is Brahman (or the Void) perceived.

In Brahman (the Void) there is no diversity. He who sees diversity goes

from death to death. (Bṛhad.Up.4.4.19)

To return to the examination of Buddhist technical terms, we find Stanza of Dzyan 2:5 saying "... Darkness was Father-Mother, *svabhāvat*; and *svabhāvat* was in darkness."

The word *svabhāvat*, here identified with Father-Mother, the root-cause of manifestation, is another technical term which has caused a series of problems. As used by H.P.B. it does not appear in Buddhist texts so far translated – for there are many more brought down from Tibet by the Tibetans, awaiting translation. However, so far one meets only *svabhāva* or *svabhāvatā* in Buddhist texts.<sup>39</sup>

What she meant by it is made plain in the following quotations:

"*Svabhāvat* is the mystic essence, the plastic root of physical nature. The name is of Buddhist use." (S.D.I.p.161)

"... At the first flutter of renascent life, *svabhāvat*, 'the mutable radiance of the immutable darkness unconscious in eternity' passes at every new rebirth of cosmos, from an inactive state into one of intense activity." (S.D.II.p.359)

A further explanation is given:

"*Svabhāvat* the 'Plastic Essence' that fills the universe, is the root of all things. *Svabhāvat* is, so to say, the Buddhistic concrete aspect of the abstraction called in Hindu philosophy, *mūlaprakṛti*. It is the body of the soul, and that which ether would be to *ākāśa*, the latter being the informing principle of the former." (S.D.I.p.130)<sup>40</sup>

In a comment to an article by a Vedāntist (T. Subba Row) H.P.B. often quotes from, she again states:

"*Prakṛti*, *Svabhāvat* or *ākāśa* is – SPACE as the Tibetans have it; Space filled with whatsoever substance or no substance at all; i.e. with substance so imponderable as to be only metaphysically conceivable ..." (C.W.vol.3.p.405)

The *svabhāvat* of H.P.B., the self-becoming, is equivalent to *ākāśa*, Father-Mother, Spirit-Matter, Space when it has passed into its active stage.

However, the *sūnyatā* of the Tibetans of the Madhyamaka, the one thousand five hundred year old tradition, is not recognised as something existing in an absolute way, as space is recognised in the Secret Doctrine. The polemic around the meaning of emptiness led to the postulate of the non-existence of nothingness beyond which there can be nothing, to the Western mind a completely nihilistic standpoint, unless having experienced the depths of the void, in meditation, one can have a glimpse into the meaning of emptiness.

The Secret Gnosis clearly posits as basic to manifestation, the *one life*, the *one law*, the *one element*, which implies the one animating principle which, through the one law inherent to itself, organises the one element (inherent to itself) into the building blocks of the universe, all of which dissolve back into the Causeless Cause of all causes during the phases of inactivity. Can these be taken to correspond 1) to the *Tathāgatagarbha* or Buddha essence, 2) to the *dharmakāya* which Obermiller translates as the Cosmical Body, but which literally is the body of dharma,<sup>41</sup> or the law, the cosmic law, and 3) to the *dhātu* or the one element? From one standpoint it may be taken that there is no inherent existence to the universe or its essence since it vanishes back into the ONE; from another standpoint, since there is a periodical manifestation of the one life, one law, one element, there must be inherent existence to the essence of the universe which remains in *pralaya*, just as hydrogen and oxygen are still inherent to water even though they have disappeared as such.

From the particular Tibetan words given out by H.P.B. in Stanza 1, already quoted, three are examined by D. Reigle, in his *Book of Dzyan Research Report: the Doctrine of svabhāva or svabhāvatā and the questions of anātman and sūnyatā*. Thus

"*Barnang* and *Ssa* in *Ngovonyidj*."

"This means [he writes] 'space (*bar-snang*) and earth (*sa*) in *svabhāva* or *svabhāvatā* (*ngo- ba-nyid*)."

The Tibetan word *ngo-bo-nyid* or *no-bo-ñid* is one of two standard translations of the Sanskrit *svabhāva* or *svabhāvatā*. Robert Thurman notes that:

'Where it is used in the ontological sense, meaning 'own-being' or 'intrinsic reality', the Tibetans prefer *ngo bo nyid*. Where it is used in the conventional sense, meaning simply 'nature', they prefer

*rang bzhin* although when it is used as 'self-nature', that is, stressing the *sva-* (*rang*) prefix, they

equate it with *ngo bo nyid*.'

This phrase occurs in stanza I describing the state of the cosmos in pralaya before its periodical manifestation. If space and earth are dissolved in *svabhāva*, it must be the *svabhāva* of something that truly exists, even when the universe doesn't."<sup>42</sup>

The fact that the Tibetan word for *svabhāvatā* does occur surely is most meaningful. H.P.B. has not invented it but transcribed it in her own transliteration. This something must be the "one element" the *dhātu* which withstands the whole of manifestation but disappears at specific times. As D. Reigle puts it

"... there can be little doubt that the *svabhāva* spoken of in the Book of Dzyan is the *svabhāva* of the *dhātu*, the one element. This teaching in Buddhism is focused in a single unique treatise, the *Ratna-gotra-vibhāga* [alias, *Uttaratantra*]. The doctrinal standpoint of the *Ratna-gotra-vibhāga* as understood in the Great Madhyamaka tradition is of all known texts far and away the closest to that of *The Secret Doctrine*, just as the ethical standpoint of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* is of all known texts far and away the closest to that of *The Voice of the Silence*. These facts take us well beyond the realm of probability. Blavatsky indeed had esoteric northern Buddhist sources."<sup>43</sup>

Who introduced her, a "barbarian", to these?

That which is, has been and will for ever be, for *The Secret Doctrine*, is the All Presence, the *prabhavāpyaya*, that plane or Centre whence is the origination and into which is the resolution of all things. (S.D.I.p.118) The Sanskrit word *prabhavāpyaya* is made up of two parts: *prabhava* (from *prabhū* to come forth) which means "prominent" as an adjective, and "cause of existence" or "birth place" as a noun, "source", "origin"; and *apyaya* (from *apī* to enter into, have a share in) "entering into", "vanishing"; the contrary of *prabhava*. Thus two opposite meanings combine to make one word. No wonder H.P.B. had difficulty in finding a corresponding English term. "The One form of existence" is a poor substitute. But the whole is well explained succinctly in the Commentary thus: "the place (or rather plane) whence is the origination and into which is the resolution of all things." (S.D.I.p.118) This is an approximate rendering of what the human mind can conceive of one aspect of the Absolute, the source whence all life originates and to which it returns, or vanishes from human understanding. That "One form of Existence" "stretched boundless, infinite, causeless, in dreamless sleep." Sleep, as pointed out in the Commentary, being one of the seven states of consciousness, "dreamless sleep" expressing "a condition somewhat analogous to that state of consciousness in man ..." (ibid.p.119) which seems a blank as it is not remembered, but it only means that the consciousness has been taken up to much higher levels which the brain cannot reach out to, hence cannot register, which accounts for the blank state on coming back to brain awareness; the whole meaning of human evolution is to reach out to the higher levels in full consciousness.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* sums up the meaning of Stanza 1:

"From the depths of the Imperishable originate the myriads of worlds  
and to the depths of the Imperishable they in turn dissolve."

(Muṇḍ.Up.II.1.1)

This is the teaching of the Upaniṣads and of the age old gnosis.

In its last verse 1:9 Stanza 1 asks:

"But where was Dangma when the *ālaya* of the universe was in *paramārtha* and the great wheel was *anupādaka*?"

Dangma, or he who has reached the depth of spiritual perception, was in bliss, in a state out of all relation to any state of consciousness we may imagine. As to *ālaya* it is another characteristic term of the Yogācāra School which has a somewhat chequered history of change of meaning within the School itself, and which H.P.B., cutting across all variations, defines as "Soul of the world", or *anima mundi*. Sometimes *anima mundi* is used for Mahat, universal mind, hence the world's "store consciousness". *Ālaya* is generally short for *ālaya vijñāna*,<sup>44</sup> first conceived of as "hiding in the material sense faculties", developed from an original meaning of "what is clung to", or "mind-which-is-clung-to" as self, to the "basic constituent of personality" (*āśraya*) equated with "mind-containing-all-seeds" (*sarvabījakaṃ vijñānam*). *Ālaya vijñāna* became known as the "store-house consciousness", its function serving as a repository for the "seeds" of phenomenal existence, an ever changing current that underlies *saṃsāra*.

To the question "what is the belief of the inner Esoteric Schools?" H.P.B. answers:

"Ālaya has a double and even a threefold meaning. In the Yogācārya system of the contemplative Mahāyāna School, Ālaya is both the Universal Soul, *Anima Mundi*, and the Self of a progressed Adept. 'He who is strong in the Yoga can introduce at will his *ālaya* by means of meditation into the true nature of existence.'" (S.D.I.p.121)

The *anima mundi* is the repository of all seeds; it disappears as such during the great dissolution, *pralaya*, but to reappear at the dawn of a new Day with all the latent seeds ready to come to fruition, to unfold in a new cosmos and a new pilgrimage. As a repository of seeds, *Ālaya* or the *Anima Mundi* is equivalent to the womb or cradle of the cosmos, even to the *hiranyagarbha* of the Vedas wherein is contained everything, this cradle that was personified in Aditi, mother and father and son; the two, on superficial glancing, are totally different, but when their meaning is probed, what then?

The great wheel of the cosmos in *pralaya* is parentless: its potentiality for activity has no cause to set it going, since it has merged once again into the one Mysterious Source; it is parentless for "father, mother and son were once more one", and the law of periodicity now inwardly bound had not yet started on its outgoing phase. The word *anupadāka*<sup>45</sup> has caused problems and is just one of those unavoidable errors not due to H.P.B. but to the pioneering works to which she had to resort to find the right expressions, in this case Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet* (1863) to which she turned for the terms she needed. One can blame no one, for pioneering a new language, especially one fraught with psycho-philosophical words of which Europeans had no idea, is profoundly difficult. Authoritative dictionaries of such Sanskrit Buddhist terminology came much later.

Stanza 1 provides glimpses into a vision of vast compass and profound significance for the understanding of a cosmos out of all relation to that posited by science nowadays and to what we know as existence; a universe which, in its potentiality, is for ever, but which in its actuality is breathed out and breathed in, in accordance with a fundamental rhythm that underlies time and duration and is the very foundation of life, a foundation mirrored in every moving creature.

In the words of Śrī Krishna Prem

"The one Reality is not a static absolute as conceived by some philosophers. It is not a gigantic geometric figure laid up somewhere in the heavens, or rather in the void. It is living Being, and the pulsation of its life continues ceaselessly even in, what might seem to us to be, the frozen sterility of the Cosmic Night ...

Just as under verses 2 and 7 we saw that time and being enter into their own hearts and, as it were, emerge in a negative form on the 'other side', so here we should note that the subject-object polarity does not cease during the Night but goes through itself and re-appears in a negative and, to us incomprehensible, intensive form."<sup>46</sup>

The ultimate reality, as "divined" by the sages, has nothing in common with what our brain consciousness with its identification with the form aspect of life, can envisage. The form is but an evanescent aspect to be kissed on the wing, as a poet once said, without pinning it down and clinging to it. For we have to go beyond this form, this tangible aspect, we have to dare to take the final plunge beyond all landmarks into the frightening void most human beings avoid at all costs – even the cost of liberation. For the average person this plunge is impossible and it is no wonder that the orthodox religions do not point to this, they serve the needs of the immature. For him or her who has reached a certain maturity, this is the only way.

The *Void* or *No-thing-ness*<sup>47</sup> which has tantalised the human mind through the ages, which the great mystics of East and West have tried to fathom and done their best to express for the sake of the few who seek to understand, is the name for that Ultimate Mystery, that Absolute Darkness of Stanza 1; that dazzling light which is Absolute Light or Darkness, that zero point from whose depth emerge the dualities, from whose interaction the multitudes of lives come into existence and pass away; and universes emerge, unfold upon the screen of the cosmos and disappear back into the no-thing-ness.

During the process of return to the Source, whether in meditation or actuality, diversities are seen by the eye of Dangma as melting away into unity; unity into no-thing-ness; no-thing-ness into the void, and voidness takes the soul on its powerful vibration into depth after depth of revelation when "veil after veil will be removed". The silence has a sound, the silence vibrates and pilgrim psyche vibrates in unison with it, resonates to its call, rises to its challenge, gets absorbed, merged into that mighty rhythm of the vast All; and at each



passage through depth after depth, illumination awaits to shed its beneficent light, to encourage the pilgrim to take yet another step. "Where was the silence? Where the ears to sense it?" All, in *pralaya*, vanishes into the *Mysterium Tremendum*. There is nothing but no-thing-ness.

As Śri Krishna Prem endeavours to explain:

"True there is nothing beyond, no-thing beyond and not even a 'beyond' in which to seek. Nevertheless there is the mystic Zero, Śūnya or Nothing, within which the Light of Unity and the Darkness of Duality alike abide, the Dark Fire to which are both Light and Darkness, the utterly unspeakable THAT, the O from whose mysterious 'centre' wells up during the Cosmic Day the whole series of numbers, the 2 no less than the 1.

Of that Dark Zero, nothing can be said, nor indeed can any reach it during the Cosmic Day. Those who have reached the Goal have gone to the Father-Sun of the *Śānta Atman*. Beyond it none have gone and none shall go till the coming of the Night. It is the Goal, we need talk of no other. Beyond it there is nothing, nothing that we, or even a God can name. As Lao-Tse has it, 'The Tao which can be named is not the true Tao.'<sup>48</sup>

When given in-depth reflection, Stanza 1 hides far reaching implications, not the least being the nature of the Ultimate Cause, the Infinite and Eternal Source of all; not the least being what happens to human consciousness when the human pilgrimage through the various levels of being is accomplished. One of the best answers to this question of fundamental importance to any thinking human being, is found in Śri Krishna Prem's exegesis of the *Kaṭha Upaniṣad* where the boy Naciketas, who is seeking the ultimate Truth, asks:

"1.20. There is this doubt about a man who has gone Beyond, some saying that he exists, others that he exists no more. This I desire to know as thy disciple. This the third of my boons.'

The meaning of this boon has been missed by almost all translators and commentators. The word which has here been rendered 'gone Beyond' is *prete*, which Śankara bluntly says means *mṛte* – dead – and in this reading nearly every one has followed him. But such a rendering of the word makes no sense in the present context ... Naciketas ... knows that after death man does not perish, but is born again. Since then he has visited the very Halls of Death, and still survives and, moreover, the very nature of his second request shows that he is quite clear that after death man goes – or at least can go – to bliss in the Heaven World ... To translate *prete* as 'died' is to make nonsense of the whole structure of the Upaniṣad.

Actually, the question is not one about survival at all but about what happens to the individual Soul after the attainment of liberation (*mukti*) ... The question is the very one that was asked of the Buddha more than once, whether, in Buddhist terms, the Arhat can be said to exist after *Nirvāṇa*, a question which the Buddha always refused to answer, saying that to affirm that he continued to exist would give rise to one misunderstanding while to deny it would give rise to others.

'Profound, measureless, unfathomable is He who has found the Truth (the *Arhat*, he who has attained *Nirvāṇa*), profound even as the mighty ocean; the term reborn does not apply to him nor not reborn nor any combination of such terms. Everything by which the Truth-finder might be denoted has passed away for him utterly and for ever. (*Majjhima Nikaya*, sutta 72)...

When a man attains to the final Goal, when he dies for the last time, liberated from all the bonds

that bring ordinary men again and again to birth, what happens to him in that utter-passing away that takes place then, the Passing away that has been variously known as *mukti*, *mokṣa*, *kaivalya* and *nirvāṇa*.'

Śri Krishna Prem points out how this question was already asked and treated in the Bṛhad. Upaniṣad where the great Seer Yājñavalkya explains "the mystery of the final state to his wife Maitreyī ...

'As a lump of salt dropped in water would dissolve and no one be able to pick it forth again, but wherever one should attempt to take it from would taste of salt – so truly this Great Being, endless and limitless, is one mass of consciousness. (The separate self) comes out from these elements and into them it vanishes. Having passed beyond (*pretya*) there is no more separate consciousness (*sanjñā*). This is what I say.'

Notice that in this passage the word *pretya* is used corresponding to the *prete* of the Kaṭha and the meaning is the same. The word rendered consciousness (*sanjñā*) is also a technical term meaning a designation, the particular distinguishing sign of anything, hence a concept or clear notion ... It corresponds also to the term Name as used in the compound *nama-rūpa*, Name and Form, and denotes in reality the separate mental being, the Ego."

The Bṛhadāraṇyaka goes on with Maitreyi's question, how can there be no separate consciousness after the Passing On and yet be existence, or something akin to it. Yājñavalkya explains that separate consciousness implies duality.

"But where everything has become the One Self, whom and by what should one see, hear or think.

Through what one should become conscious of that by which there is consciousness of the All.

Whereby should one know the universal Knower?" (Bṛhad Up.2.4.12-14)

Again when a soul has freed itself from every limitation, has become one with the All, how can one speak in terms of existence or none existence? The former means standing out as separate, self and not-self – this and not-this. *Real being* as Sri Krishna affirms "*does not cease because standing forth (existence) ceases* ."49

The point is that the human being who has reached this state of liberation is no longer "human" in the accepted sense of the word, he has been transmuted into another *far grander living centre of power*, a centre which H.P.B. called Dhyān Chohan, Lord of Contemplation, and his consciousness, if it can still be called thus, is out of all relation to human consciousness, so much so that it can no longer be called mere consciousness. The answer to Naciketas' question could be: *man is, and man is not!* Noteworthy is the fact that all these ancient speculations on the same vital point reach the same conclusion.

## CHAPTER 2.

### Part I The Ancient Gnosis and its Records

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 The Ah-hi are considered the building devas, the conscious universal powers expressive of the Universal Mind, who establish the universe in space and time. According to the Secret Doctrine "The Ah-hi (Dhyān Chohans) are the collective hosts of spiritual beings – the angelic hosts of Christianity, the Elohim and 'messengers' of the Jews – who are the vehicle for the manifestation of the Divine or Universal Thought and Will." (S.D.I.p.111) *Ah-hi* is given by H.P.B. as a *Senzar* word equivalent to *ahi* (Sanskrit) meaning serpent, esoterically "dragon of wisdom", pointing to the highest Dhyān Chohans, or Lords of Contemplation.
- 2 *Dangma* is an uncommon Tibetan word (*dwangs-ma*) given out as "the spirit, soul", in Jaschke's Tibetan-English dictionary, although given out as "juice" in other dictionaries. But *juice*, as the Sanskrit *rasa*, may mean essence, hence spirit.
- 3 Cf. Ṛgv.I.146.4; 50.10; 164.21cd; 67.4; VIII.6.8&10; X.129.4cd; 177.1-3. Yajurveda 34:3&4; 32:8; 31:18.
- 4 *Parinīṣpanna* is described as the Yogācārin's "epistemological ultimate" and will be discussed together with H.P.B.'s own explanation in the last section.
- 5 Cf. "It is known to him to whom it is unknown; to him who (thinks he) knows, it is unknown." (Kena Up.2.3). Cf. Ṛgv.X.71.4.
- 6 Cf. the famous *neti neti* of the Upaniṣads, it is not this, it is not that.

- <sup>7</sup> *Noumenon*, a word used by the German Philosopher Kant, derived from the Greek verb *noein*, to think, perceive; the essence of a thing, the thing in itself.
- <sup>8</sup> See *Yoga of Kathopanishad* p.42; and Bṛhd.Up.2.4.12-14. All existents, according to Buddhist thought, are stained by causal conditioning.
- <sup>9</sup> Quoted in S.D.II.p.145.
- <sup>10</sup> For all these examples see E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt* p.172ff.
- <sup>11</sup> op. cit. p.177.
- <sup>12</sup> op. cit. p.182.
- <sup>13</sup> op. cit. p.183.
- <sup>14</sup> H.P.B. refers to the *Book of the Dead* ch.XVII, the French version which is somewhat different from the Wallis Budge version, but both refer to the meeting of the soul with the Sun or Logos in the beyond. (S.D.I.p.192) (Wallis Budge, ch.XVII. p.101-2)
- <sup>15</sup> I have translated this pada as "undisturbed" *avāta*, taking windless to refer to that state of utter stillness which nought may disturb; "self-moved (*svadhayā*), pulsated (*ānīd*), that One Alone", using the verb pulsate, as to breathe is to pulsate.
- <sup>16</sup> op. cit. Quoted in W.T. Stace, *The Teachings of the Mystics*, p.169.
- <sup>17</sup> *Yoga of the Kathopanishad*. p.144-5.
- <sup>18</sup> "It is a fundamental law in Occultism that there is no rest or cessation of motion in Nature."
- <sup>19</sup> This vista of the grand cycle of evolution, given here in a few words, is expounded in the *Secret Doctrine* and the *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* by A.A. Bailey. Compare the "circular errands" of Fohat (S.D.I.p.176) and Jacob's ladder.
- <sup>20</sup> Śri Krishna Prem quotes from the Kabbalistic *Sepher Yetzirah* to show "its use in ancient teachings":  
"These Seven Double Letters He designed, produced and combined, and formed with them the Planets of this Universe, the Days of the Week, and the Gates of the soul in Man. From these Seven He hath produced the Seven Heavens, the Seven Earths, the Seven Sabbaths: for this cause he has loved and blessed the number Seven, more than all things under Heaven." (op. cit. 14.3. Quoted in *Man the Measure of all things*. p.42.) Note the seven earths and the seven heavens and compare with Ṛgv.VIII.41.9 and S.D. I.p.278.
- <sup>21</sup> J. Miller, *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*. p.64-5.
- <sup>22</sup> Both these excerpts from the Atharvaveda are rendered by R. Panikkar, in *The Vedic Experience*, p.217, 219.

## Part II. The Buddhist Connection and The Void.

- <sup>23</sup> *The Buddhism of H.P. Blavatsky*. Compiled and annotated by H.J. Spierenburg. p.vii.
- <sup>24</sup> P. Williams, *Māhāyāna Buddhism*. p.14.
- <sup>25</sup> *Book of Dzyan Research Report. Technical terms in Stanza 1*. 1995. p.2-3. Incorporated in *Blavatsky's Secret Books* p.75.

- <sup>26</sup> One may, from this explanation, understand why H.P.B., in a footnote, equates *paramārtha* with *svasaṁvedana*: "*Paramārtha* is the synonym of the term *svasaṁvedana*, or the 'reflection which analyses itself'. There is a difference in the interpretation of the meaning of *paramārtha* between the Yogācāryas and the Madhyamikas, neither of whom, however, explain the real and true exoteric sense of the expression. (Literally: *sva* - self, *saṁvedana* - *saṁ* and root *vid* - to know; i.e. complete knowledge of the Self.) (S.D.I.p.116.fn.2)
- <sup>27</sup> op. cit. p.4. (On p.76 of *Blavatsky's Secret Books*.) A good exposition of the Jonan pas' thesis is found in D.S. Ruegg's article "The Jo nan pas: a School of Buddhist Ontologists", of which an excerpt follows:  
 "To judge by the accounts of their doctrines given by their critics, the Jo nan pa masters took up a specifically ontological and hence apparently un-Buddhist position by accepting in quite literal terms what appears as an eternal (*nitya*, *śāsvata*) and stable (*dhruva*) element. They taught also a theory of the absolute Gnosis ... undifferentiated between apprehender and apprehended ... which is constant or permanent (*nitya*) and 'substantially' real ... and which is the *pariniṣpanna* or Absolute. Their fundamental doctrine was the Void-of-the-other (*gzan ston*), that is, an absolute which is established in reality and is Void of all heterogeneous relative and phenomenal factors, as against the Void-of-own-being (*ran ston*; *svabhavaśūnya*) of the Mādhyamika which the Jo-nan-pas considered to be a merely preliminary or lower doctrine bearing on the relative (*saṁvṛti*) and not on the absolute meaning (*paramārtha*). Although the Jo nan pas nonetheless considered themselves to be true Mādhyamikas, the Tibetan Mādhyamikas who follow Candrakīrti – in other words the majority of Tibetan scholars – resolutely oppose and refute their theories." (JAOS.83.1963.p.74)

In respect of the various interpretations of the *śūnyata* and *svabhāva* doctrine, D. Reigle also has an excellent overview with clear explanations in his article "The Doctrine of Svabhāva or *svabhāvatā* and the Questions of *Anātman* and *Śūnyatā*". (*Book of Dzyan Research Report*. June 1997). The following is quite instructive:

"This mind-boggling teaching of the Great Mādhyamikas was quite shocking to the orthodoxy when brought out in Tibet by Dolpopa and the Jonangpas in the 14th century. The later Jonangpa writer Tāranātha tells us that at first some found this 'empty of other' doctrine hard to understand, while others were delighted by it. But later when adherents of other schools heard it they experienced 'heart seizure' ... and 'scrambled brains' ... This led finally to the banning of Dolpopa's works by the Gelugpas in the 17th century. As one appreciative recent writer comments:

'Dolpopa's work ... has the glorious distinction of being one of the very few works in Tibet ever banned as heretical.' (G. Sparham "On the proper interpretation of *Prajña-Paramita*". *Dreloma: Drepung Loseling Magazine* no.XXXII-XXXIII, 1994-95, p.20)

Dolpopa was in many ways to 14th century Tibet what Blavatsky was to the 19th century world. The London writer W.T. Stead spoke in a similar vein about Blavatsky's work just after her death:

"... it ... has at least the advantage of being heretical. The truth always begins as heresy, in every heresy there may be the germ of a new revelation." ("Madame Blavatsky", *Review of Reviews* June, 1891). (Op.Cit. p.18. Incorporated in *Blavatsky's Secret Books* p.124.)

- <sup>28</sup> P. Williams (*Māhāyana Buddhism*) refers to the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition rather than school, the root treatise being the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (or *Uttaratantra*) and its commentary *Vyākhyā*. Their allegiance to either Madhyamaka or Cittāmātra school is debatable. The *Tathāgatagarbha sūtra* is a "relatively short *sūtra* consisting almost entirely of nine examples to illustrate the way the Buddha nature is contained hidden within sentient beings". (op. cit. p.97)
- <sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p.101.
- <sup>30</sup> *ibid.* p.99.
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p.99.
- <sup>32</sup> In a letter to A.P. Sinnett, letter no.80, March 3rd, H.P.B. mentions a Secret Book of "Maytreya [sic.]Buddha" *Champai chhos Nga* (in prose) as against the five books in verse which are known and which according to her are "blinds". (*The Letters of H.P. Blavatsky to A.P. Sinnett*. 1925. p.195)
- <sup>33</sup> E. Obermiller, "The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation." *Acta Orientalia*. 9 (1931). pp.94-5; 104; 107-8. Reprinted as *Uttaratantra* or *Ratnagotravibhāga*. Talent, Oregon, Canon Pubs. 1984.
- <sup>34</sup> *op. cit.* p.133.
- <sup>35</sup> *op. cit.* p.51, 55.
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in *Book of Dzryan Research Report: the Doctrine of Svabhāva or Svabhāvātā* etc. p.8. Incorporated in *Blavatsky's Secret Books*. p.114.
- <sup>37</sup> *Māhāyana Buddhism*. p.99.
- <sup>38</sup> *Yoga of Kathopanishad*. p.160.
- <sup>39</sup> In S.D.I.p.160 H.P.B. refers in a footnote to *svabhāvāt*: "as for *svabhāvāt*, the Orientalists explain the term as meaning the universal plastic matter diffused through Space ... But the occultists identify it with 'Father-Mother' on the mystic plane." Who are these Orientalists?
- In S.D.I.p.71, quoting from her previous book, *Isis Unveiled*, she has the following:
- "The Svābhāvikas, or philosophers of the oldest school of Buddhism, which still exists in Nepal, speculate only upon the active condition of this 'Essence' which they call Svabhāvāt, and deem it foolish to theorize upon the abstract and 'unknowable' power in its passive condition."
- This school was noted in Brian Hodgson's essays first published in *Asiatic Research*, 1828ff and then in 1874 as *Essays on the Language, Literature and Religion of Nepal and Tibet*. He, according to D. Reigle, uses the term *svabhāva* to mean what H.P.B. described as *svabhāvāt*. Sylvain Levi did get to Nepal in 1898 but found no such school as the Svabhavikas or any of the other three described by Hodgson. Had they been dissolved, or become secret, at least not to be opened to Westerners? Or did Hodgson's Newari pundit informant misinform him or did Hodgson misunderstand him? If the school really did not exist, why should D. Reigle's Newari Buddhist informant from Nepal, Gautam Vajracharya, be "of the definite opinion that such a school of interpretation actually did exist in Hodgson's time, but he was equally sure that it does not exist at present in Nepal". (*Book of Dzryan Research Report. Technical Terms in Stanza 2*. p.8. Incorporated in *Blavatsky's Secret Books* on p.104.)

- <sup>40</sup> According to H.S. Olcott's *Buddhist Catechism* (question 123) quoted in S.D.II.p.360-61: "Everything has come out of *ākāśa* (or *svabhāvat* on our earth) in obedience to a law of motion inherent in it, and after a certain existence passes away."
- <sup>41</sup> The word *dharma* has developed through the ages many different meanings and nuances, but its meaning is fundamentally *that which is established*, the *underlying order* of things, the *law*, duty, observance of prescribed conduct, righteousness. In Buddhism it came to mean the law or doctrine of the Buddha (as against the Sangha or monastic order), it was primarily conceived as the law of "dependent arising", the proper seeing of which leads to action in harmony with the way of truth. Hence the ethical precepts of Buddhism. Underlying it all is therefore the concept of law which the sages from the Ṛgveda with their *ṛta* or all-inclusive Cosmic Order, or the Hindus with their *Dharma* of primary importance, or the Buddhist *Arhats* with their *dhamma*, inculcated to their followers.
- <sup>42</sup> In *The Doctrine of Svabhāva or Svabhāvatā*. p.21. On p.127-8 of *Blavatsky's Secret Books*.
- <sup>43</sup> op. cit. p.22. On p.128-9 of *Blavatsky's Secret Books*.
- <sup>44</sup> In the *Abhidharmasūtra* and the *Mahāyāna Saṃgraha*, *ālaya vigñāna* is described as the seed basis and support of personal existence of all *dharmas*. In the latter it is conceived as a "container" or "hypostasis of seeds".
- H.P.B. makes quite a few remarks on *ālaya* of which the following: "Thus, while the Yogācāryas of the Māhāyana School say that *ālaya* ... is the personification of the voidness, and yet *ālaya* is the basis of every visible and invisible thing, and that, though it is eternal and immutable in its essence, it reflects itself in every object of the universe 'like the moon in clear tranquil water'; other schools dispute the statement." (S.D.I.p.119-20)
- See also Schmithausen, L. "*Ālaya=Vijñāna*. On the origin and the early development of a central concept of yogācāra philosophy." (*Study of Philologica and Buddhica*). Tokyo International Institute for Buddhist Studies. 1987.
- <sup>45</sup> D. Reigle in his *Book of Dzyan and Research Report: Technical Terms in Stanza 1* traces the origin of this spelling to an article by B.H. Hodgson which appeared in *Asiatic Researches* (vol.16, 1828, p.440) as *anupapādaka*. It seems that *anupapādaka* was miscopied as *anupadaka* in E. Schlagintweit's *Buddhism in Tibet*, 1863. H.P.B. had no other source book of Buddhist terminology to turn to. Monier Williams inscribed the word *anupapādaka* in his dictionary and thus perpetuated the error. The word does not appear in F. Edgerton's *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, but two forms *aupapāduka* and *upapāduka* are there. (See D. Reigle, op. cit. p.7-8. On p.79-80 of *Blavatsky's Secret Books*.)
- <sup>46</sup> *Man, the Measure of All Things*. p.74. This is one of the most perceptive exegeses of the Stanzas of Dzyan available.
- <sup>47</sup> A clear study of the void in all its aspects and phases of unfoldment, entitled *Le Vide, Le Rien, L'Abîme*, by the scholar and mystic Lilian Silburn, was published in *Hermes*, no. 6, 1969, pp.15-61. This gives, in modern terminology, an insight into the perennial experience of the mystics who wrote of it in terms of their particular religious conditioning. Not only did L. Silburn experience the void in meditation, but she was able to describe and analyse its many phases and its meaningful spell. She

gives excerpts from the testimony of contemporary people who themselves experienced something of the inner levels of psyche.

Her article begins thus:

"Spiritual experience is far more an experience of plenitude than an experience of emptiness; yet one is not possible without the other, the mystical life being made of an uninterrupted alternation of emptiness and fullness that go hand in hand in their deepening." This is written from her own vital experience.

<sup>48</sup> *Yoga of Kathopanishad*. p.146.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.* cf. p.40-3.

### CHAPTER 3: SPACE, THE COSMIC MATRIX; THE WATERS, ĀKĀŚA, ADITI, IN THE VEDAS AND THE SECRET DOCTRINE

#### **WHAT SPACE REPRESENTS**

Space, "the all-containing uncontained" which in our century has been reduced to a more or less meaningless, abstract idea, is, according to *The Secret Doctrine*

"... the container and the *body of the Universe* in its seven principles. It is a body of limitless extent, whose PRINCIPLES ... – each being in its turn a septenary – manifest in our phenomenal world only the grossest fabric of *their sub-divisions*. 'No one has ever seen the Elements in their fullness' the Doctrine teaches. We have to search for our Wisdom in the original expressions of the primeval people and in their synonyms. Even the latest of them - the Jews - show in their Kabbalistic teachings this idea, e.g. the seven-headed Serpent of Space, called 'the great Sea'." (S.D. I. p.342)

Space, as the *Cosmic matrix* and *cradle of life* wherein myriads of universes incessantly appear and disappear, is of utmost importance in any cosmogony. H.P.B., in her attempt to make the notion of space in its many faceted-meaning, understandable to readers, even though so out of tune with the modern viewpoint, was at great pains to explain and comment upon it.

"The One Eternal Element, or element-containing Vehicle, is *Space*, dimensionless in every sense: co-existent with which are endless *duration*, primordial (hence indestructible) *matter*, and *motion* – absolute 'perpetual motion' which is the 'breath' of the 'One' Element." (S.D.I. p.55)

"Space is neither a 'limitless void', nor a 'conditioned fullness', but both; being – on the plane of absolute abstraction, the ever-incognizable Deity, which is void only to finite minds, and on that of *māyāvic* perception, the Plenum, the absolute Container of all that is, whether manifested or unmanifested; it is, therefore, that *ABSOLUTE ALL*. There is no difference between the Christian Apostle's 'in Him we live and move and have our being', and the Hindu ṛṣi's 'the Universe lives in, proceeds from and will return to Brahman (Brahmā)'; for Brahma (neuter), the unmanifested, is that Universe *in abscondito*, and Brahmā, the manifested, is the Logos, made male-female<sup>1</sup> in the symbolical orthodox dogmas ... Space is called, in the esoteric symbolism, the 'Seven-Skinned Eternal Mother-Father'." (S.D.I.p.8-9)

Seven, the recurring number in the ancient scriptures, is the number of Nature; space appearing in "seven levels"; with "seven hosts" of beings; within which "seven ways" or landmarks (Ṛgv.X.5.6) are measured, etc. This "seven-skinned eternal Mother-Father" is the "sevenfold ocean foundation" of the Ṛgveda (VIII.40.5 *sapta budhnam arṇavam*), also called the "sevenfold waters",<sup>2</sup> a notion of course incomprehensible to scholars, for philology cannot give the key to its meaning though that clue is found in *The Secret Doctrine*. Number 7 is mentioned frequently enough in the Ṛgveda to hint at an esoteric doctrine summed up in the sevenfold *waters*

or *foundation* of the ocean or universe - still left unexplained in exegesis.

Scholars all too often assert that the later *śruti* should not be taken as giving explanations of the earlier, whereas in so many Ṛgvedic verses a mention is made – e.g. the sevenfold waters – of which the meaning transpires in later texts. Thus, in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (vol.V.p.196-99, Wilson's translation quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*), the seven planes of cosmos are expressed as "the seven forms of nature (Prakṛti) reckoned from Mahat to earth ... these seven successively re-enter into each other" at the time of dissolution. To this quotation H.P.B. adds in a note: "The Seven 'zones' have reference to the Seven Divisions of that Universe..." (S.D.I.p.373.fn).

These "seven" thus refer to seven differentiated basic levels of cosmic matter which, with the lives that ensoul them, are considered worlds in themselves, both from the substance and the intelligences standpoint, i.e. denizens evolving in them; the three lowest levels being the most differentiated and dense, the three highest being more and more ethereal, the fourth holding the equilibrium. This seems to be hinted at in the Ṛgveda, where the seat of Varuṇa is mentioned as being at the source of the "rivers" where he dwells together with his "Seven Sisters" (Ṛgv.VIII.41.2) – an otherwise unintelligible hint. What is striking in these divisions is that they take into account subtler levels of cosmic matter not obvious to our physical senses, but perceived by subtler senses used by the sages in their moment of illumined vision. Their division can therefore not be adapted literally to a materialistic world that presents us only with what is seen by our physical, but unreliable senses. Vedic cosmogony and all ancient cosmogonies, and that of the Stanzas of Dzyan, remain "fanciful" to the modern reader just because we cannot conceive dimensions beyond the visible, whereas the visible for *seers* is but the tip of an iceberg which stretches infinitely beyond its visible tip.

H.P.B. explains that for the *secret doctrine*

"Space is the real world, while our world is an artificial one. It is the One Unity throughout its infinitude: in its bottomless depths as on its illusive surface; a surface studded with countless phenomenal Universes, systems and mirage-like worlds." (S.D.I.p.615)

"Space is called the 'Mother' before its Cosmic activity, and Father-Mother at the first stage of re-awakening." (S.D.I.p.18)

"... the first that re-awakes to active life is the plastic *ākāśa*, Father-Mother, the Spirit and Soul of Ether ..." (ibid.p.18)

In ancient cosmogonies many names have been given to space: the Waters, the Great Abyss, the Mother deep, chaos, Aditi, *ākāśa*, *hiranyagarbha* the golden egg, such expressions referring to that universal matrix in which occurs the drama of creation and destruction, of perpetual formation and transformation. Looked at metaphysically, space is both a void and a fullness; it is both intangible substance out of which are shaped all forms in space, and it is the emptiness of a matrix that gives shape! The idea of water, sea, ocean out of which the worlds are fashioned recurs again and again, hence the notion of space as a fluidic, intangible ocean. Thus the Sumerians for whom out of the primeval sea all things emerged, the Egyptian NUN out of whose dark waters Atum emerges to start creation, the solar-empowered Waters of Space of the Vedic hymns transformed in the Upaniṣads in *ākāśa*, that glowing subtle "substance" or essence which is "woven warp and woof on *akṣara*", the eternal-word, another mystery- sound and *ākāśa* being one, to be explained in chapter 5 on *logos*.

H.P.B. remarks that what

" the world regards simply as cosmic Space, and abstract representation, the Hindu ṛṣi, the Chaldean magus, the Egyptian hierophant held, each and all, as the one eternal Root of all, the playground of all the forces in Nature. It is the fountainhead of all terrestrial life, and the abode of those (to us) invisible swarms of existences ... that surround us on all sides, that interpenetrate the atoms of our Kosmos, and see us not, as we do not either see or sense them through our physical organisms. ... In Space there is not matter, force, nor spirit, but all that and much more. It is the One Element, and that one the Anima Mundi – Space, *Ākāśa*, Astral Light – the Root of Life which, in its eternal, ceaseless motion, like the out- and in-breathing of one boundless ocean, evolves but to reabsorb all that lives and feels and thinks and has its being in it. As said of the universe in *Isis Unveiled* it is:

‘The combination of a thousand elements and yet the expression of a single Spirit – a chaos to the sense, a Kosmos to the reason.

Such were the views upon the subject of all the great ancient philosophers, from Manu down to



Pythagoras, from Plato to Paul' ". (E.W.p.317-18 =C.W.14,p.412)

H.P.B. explains the *Tohu-vah-bohu* of Genesis as

"... the 'Great Deep' ... identical with 'the Waters of Chaos' or the primordial Darkness". (E.W.p.193 = C.W.14, p.235)

"Chaos ... is Theos, which becomes Kosmos; it is Space, the container of everything in the universe. As Occult teachings assert, it is called by the Chaldeans, Egyptians and every other nation Tohu-vah-bohu, or Chaos, confusion, because Space is the great storehouse of creation, whence proceed not forms alone, but also ideas, which could receive their expression only through the Logos, the Word, Verbum, or Sound." (E.W. p.198. C.W.14, p.243)

It is important to remember that a distinction is made between "matter" in "abscondito" as the "unmanifest essence", or Root of all and "primordial matter", the first differentiation, though invisible and intangible to us, hence the first manifestation, subject to the limits of the law of cycles, "the eternal and changeless law which causes the great periods of activity and rest." This eternal, changeless Law causes "primordial matter" to assume transformations – the *degrees* of matter which become the *levels* or planes of the cosmos, or the "seven-skinned eternal Mother-Father" whose differentiations *make* space. Hence the fullness during manifestation and the void when all disappears into the bosom of Parabrahman. This unmanifest essence, or "matter *in abscondito*" is regarded as

"... the eternal Root of all, the *mūlaprakṛti* of the Vedāntin, and the *svabhāvat* of the Buddhist, the divine Essence, in short, or Substance; the radiations from this are periodically aggregated into graduated forms, from pure Spirit to gross matter; the Root, or space, is in its abstract presence the Deity itself, the Ineffable and Unknown One Cause." (E.W.p.192 =C.W.14, p.234)

"*Svabhāvat*<sup>3</sup> is the mystic Essence, the plastic root of physical Nature – 'Numbers' when manifested; the Number, in its Unity of Substance, on the highest plane. The name is of Buddhist use and a synonym for the four-fold Anima Mundi, the Kabbalistic 'Archetypal World', from whence proceed the 'Creative, Formative, and Material Worlds' ..." (S.D.I.p.98-99)

*The Secret Doctrine*, as explained in ch.1, here parts company with Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta as they are known to us, yet stands close to the *Ratna-gotra-vibhāga*. Nevertheless, this Eternal Essence is said to withdraw completely from manifestation during the period of *pralaya* where

"Alone the 'One form of Existence' stretched boundless, infinite, causeless ...".

The "One form of Existence" is H.P.B.'s rendering of *Prabhavāpyaya* which she then explains :

"The Sanskrit word is Prabhavāpyaya, 'the place (or rather plane) whence is the origination, and into which is the resolution of all things' ... The Purāṇic Commentators explain it by Kāraṇa, 'Cause' - but the Esoteric philosophy, by the *ideal spirit of that cause*. It is, in its secondary stage, the Svabhāvat of the Buddhist philosopher, the eternal cause and effect, omnipresent yet abstract, the self-existent plastic Essence and the root of all things, viewed in the same dual light as the Vedāntin views his Parabrahman and Mūlaprakṛti, the one under two aspects." (S.D.I.p.46)

"It is called 'Substance-Principle', for it becomes 'substance' on the plane of the manifested Universe, an illusion, while it remains a 'principle' in the beginningless and endless abstract, visible and invisible SPACE. It is the omnipresent Reality; impersonal, because it contains all and everything.

*Its impersonality is the fundamental conception* of the System. It is latent in every atom in the Universe, and is the Universe itself." (S.D.I.p.273)

Whatever may be the bone of contention between the Vedāntins, <sup>4</sup> the Buddhists and *The Secret Doctrine* regarding this Substance-Principle whose substance belongs to the plane of illusion, disappears regularly, but whose principle is everlasting, it remains true that the Ṛgveda (X.129) shows the ṛṣis' idea of an ABSOLUTE THAT hidden by darkness, indistinguishable as *water*, hidden by the *void* from which emerges the ONE through *tapas*. What are these "waters", what is this "void", or darkness but terms trying to express the inexpressible state beyond being, beyond non-being? When faced with this inconceivable ultimate state, all the quarrels about terms, whether Vedāntic or Buddhist, or Christian, fade into insignificance and the wisdom of the line of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad becomes most meaningful:

"whence words return together with the mind, not attaining it." (Tait.II.4.1)

Three specific points are implied concerning space in the above quotes to be examined in connection with

the Vedas:

- 1) Space as *essence* or *primordial substance* (though intangible and invisible at our level of differentiation), called "water" in the Ṛgveda, implying an imponderable essence, or solar-empowered waters, also personified in Aditi, later in the Upaniṣads to be called *ākāśa*, and later called *aether* by the Greeks, out of which all things are born and to which they all return.
- 2) Space as the *aggregate of atomic lives* from the subtlest to the grossest plane of manifestation; space as self-existent, inclusive and nurturing; hence space as variously personified in many of the Mother goddesses – Aditi, Tiamat, Aphrodite, Venus issuing out of the foaming sea; the Canaanite goddess Asherah called 'Lady of the Sea', the Sumerian Nammu of the primordial ocean, Isis "born in the all-wetness"; the Virgin Mary, "star of the sea" whose esoteric significance is quite lost to Catholics.
- 3) Space as the *field of vibration*, the medium through which vibrates the *logos*, that formative power which moulds all things out of the essence which is space, and through the activity of those hosts of celestial beings, the devas and asuras of the Ṛgveda, born of space, "organises space". This will be examined in the chapters on Logos (ch.5) and on the organisation of space (ch.7).

The whole graded differentiation of Root-matter from beyond the unmanifest to the manifest is explained in *The Secret Doctrine* in terms of *mūlaprakṛti*, – "the first abstract idea one can form of Parabrahman"; the "primary aspect" being undifferentiated chaos, referred to in the various ancient cosmogonies, some of which start with this aspect; from this proceeds "dual natured *ākāśa*" whose grosser aspect is the Aether of the Greeks. Notwithstanding these finer distinctions and indeed to simplify these, "aether" is often used by H.P.B. as a synonym for *ākāśa*, even for primordial matter, (and ether, without the *a*, is used for its lower manifestation, the fifth element of the Greeks and the Hindus. But H.P.B. does not always keep to these finer distinctions; we have to remember this, otherwise there may be confusion). Of this primordial substance she writes:

"... We touch and do not feel it; we look at it without seeing it; we breathe it and do not perceive it; we hear and smell it without the smallest cognition that it is there; for it is in every molecule of that which, in our illusion and ignorance, we regard as Matter in any of its states, or conceive as a feeling, a thought, an emotion. In short, it is the '*upādhi*', or vehicle, of every possible phenomenon, whether physical, mental or psychic. In the opening sentences of *Genesis*, as in the Chaldean Cosmogony; in the *Purāṇas* of India, and in the *Book of the Dead* of Egypt; it opens everywhere the cycle of manifestation. It is termed 'Chaos', and the face of the waters, incubated by the Spirit proceeding from the Unknown, under whatever name." (S.D.I. p.330)

H.P.B. sums up the meaning thus:

"... 'Waters' is another name of the 'Great Deep', the primordial Waters of space, or *Chaos*, and also means 'Mother', *Ambā*, meaning Aditi and *Ākāśa*, the Celestial Virgin-Mother of the visible universe." (S.D.I. p.460)

#### *SPACE AS "WATER" IN THE VEDAS*

Space conceived as "waters" is earlier in its expression than space conceived as *ākāśa*. It appears in the Ṛgveda where the word *ākāśa* is not yet used. It is obviously not "water" in our sense of the word, but the term may have been chosen because the endless expanse of ocean with its perpetually seething motion suggested a tremendous power behind it all, a mirror of the heavens and their infinitude of space in whose depths countless universes revolve in circle, appear and disappear endlessly.

In the Ṛgvedic hymns of creation figure night, darkness, void, billowy waters, ocean-depths concealing *That which is* (Ṛg.V.X.190, 129, 121, etc.), all expressive of that state of being which the Greeks called chaos, *Genesis* the Face of the Deep, and the Norse cosmogony the Abyss.

The "celestial waters" (*apo devīh*) are in Ṛgveda X.109.1 stated to be first born by means of the Law which is the Cosmic Order (*prathamajā ṛtena*). We have already seen how Order and Truth were "born of blazing *tapas*" thereby forming the blueprint of this universe. Here the assertion is again that everything unfolds in accordance with the Great Law which is the fundamental Law from which derive all other laws: the "waters" become manifest from their state of latency as void to their state of activity as primordial substance called "water", in accordance with the one law of unfoldment and eternal becoming to which the universe is subject. In the Atharvaveda the same is repeated with a slight variation which occurs in the alteration of the case ending

of the word *ṛta* which here takes on the genitive. Thus:

"The waters are the first born of the Cosmic Order" (Athv.V.17.1 *prathamajā* *ṛtasya*).

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa explains:

"The flowing of the waters is a manifestation of eternal truth.

It is the waters indeed that were made first of this universe; hence when the waters flow, then everything whatsoever exists is produced here." (Śat.Br.VII.4.1.6)

"For water is the foundation of this universe." (Śat.Br.VI.8.2.2) 5)

H.P.B. has an important comment concerning the term "water":

"In all Cosmogonies 'Water' plays the same important part. It is the base and source of material existence. Scientists, mistaking the word for the thing, understood by water the definite chemical combination of oxygen and hydrogen, thus giving a specific meaning to a term used by Occultists in a generic sense, and which is employed in Cosmogony with a metaphysical and mystical meaning." (S.D.I.p.64)

Naïve literalism such as is evident in most modern interpretations of the ancient cosmogonies prevents their understanding in the sense that they were meant. The specific qualification of the waters as "radiant", "igneous", which can be traced back to the Ṛgveda where Agni, the seed of life, is generated by the Waters (Ṛgv.X.91.6b; X.121.7) is succinctly and clearly worded in one of the earliest Upaniṣads:

"The waters are flame"; or "the waters are radiant" (*āpo vā arkaḥ* . Brh.Up.I. 2.2)

which shows that the waters are not literal waters, but something different. This will be examined in due course.

The Naighaṅṭuka (1.12) identifies the waters with the womb of *ṛta*, Cosmic Order. The waters being the cradle of all, and subject to the one Law, harbour Law, Order, or *ṛta*, the divine signature *in principio*; hence orderly unfoldment towards a differentiated manifestation is impressed upon them at the very beginning. 6)

One Ṛgvedic hymn of creation enquires

"What seed primeval did the waters conceive wherein all the gods appeared together?"

The answer comes:

"That seed primeval which the waters conceived wherein all the gods appeared together, [is] the ONE set within the core of the UNBORN, wherein stand all the worlds."

(Ṛgv.X.82.5-6)

This is a most esoteric verse quite in line with the *secret doctrine*. Here is marked a distinction between the ONE and the UNBORN, the former being the active or manifest Deity, the Creator; the latter, the unmanifest, the ABSOLUTE; a distinction far too often ignored by Western exegesis, 7) - also by later Brahmanic texts, and one that reveals that aspects of the *secret doctrine* were known to the ṛṣis. In Ṛgv.I.164.6 a similar distinction is also drawn in the question:

"What was that One who in the image of the Unborn established these six regions?"

8)

This is the distinction between the One that arose through the impact of *tapas* in X.129.3 and That which stands behind the One, here called Unborn. The One is a manifestation of the Unborn through the intermediary of the "waters" that conceive the seed through which the One emerges from the core of the Unborn to existence. This distinction was soon to be lost sight of, but it is hinted at in such verses as the above, and in Stanza of Dzyan I, explained by H.P.B. thus:

"... in Occult metaphysics, there are, properly speaking, two 'ONES' - the One on the unreachable plane of Absoluteness and Infinity, on which no speculation is possible; and the Second 'One' on the plane of Emanations. The former can neither emanate nor be divided, as it is eternal, absolute, and immutable. The Second, being, so to speak, the reflection of the first One (for it is the Logos, or Īśvara, in the Universe of Illusion), can do all this. It emanates from itself - as the upper Sephīrōth Triad emanates the lower seven Sephīrōth - the seven Rays or Dhyāni-Chohans; in other words, the

Homogeneous becomes the Heterogeneous, the 'Protyle' differentiates into the Elements ..."

(S.D.p.130)

The idea that beyond the waters is the impersonal Absolute, the Unborn, or That (*ta*) clearly appears in the earlier *śruti*, in the Ṛgveda, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the Taittirīya Saṁhitā: thus the Creators are born from the Waters, they emerge to manifestation through the waters, e.g. Viśvakarman, the All-creator, identified with Prajāpati, is said to "be born of the primeval Waters" (Tait.S.IV.6.2.3). In Śat.Br.II.1.6.1-11, the golden egg is born in the Waters, as though the Waters shaped it; in lines 1 to 2, the desire to create the universe is ascribed to the Waters themselves, as they produce a golden egg:

"In the beginning this 'universe' was nothing but the undulating waters (*salilam*). They with the desire to reproduce themselves toiled and became heated, when a golden egg was born of them. The year was not yet born; but this egg floated about as long as a year, bringing forth Prajāpati at the end."

(Śat.Br.II.1.6.1-2)

There is no doubt that here Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, is the offspring of the Waters, born out of them, emerging to activity through them as indeed the One of Ṛgv.X.129. But the opposite is also expressed. In many other passages of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Prajāpati is shown as desiring to create, and toiling produces the waters. 9) And this becomes the norm in later texts.

The golden egg or matrix formed by the unfurling of the Waters implies the coming into activity of primordial matter. It is the first step. In Ṛgv.X.121.7 the Waters break forth from their state of latency to give birth to Agni. They either assume the shape of the world egg, which H.P.B. calls the "mundane egg" – the word *garbha* in Sanskrit meaning seed, egg, womb, matrix, embryo – and conceive the fire which is inherent to them, or they conceive the embryo which becomes Agni:

"When indeed unfurled the mighty waters bearing the universal egg,  
generating Agni; thence was the one life-breath of the gods evolved." (X.121.7)

Note the one life-breath of the *devas* being evolved after Agni, the flame divine, emerges as an entity out of the "Waters", this one life-breath being an emanation of the flame and inherent to the *devas*.

A comparison of this aspect of the Waters with the ancient Heliopolitan cosmogony of Egypt is also instructive as it once again corroborates *The Secret Doctrine*'s claim of a primeval wisdom, part of the legacy handed down to humanity, influencing all ancient cosmogonies. Thus the Egyptian Creator God, Atum, is shown rising out of the "Waters", NUN. His toiling is depicted as an arising as a high hill:

"O Atum! When you came into being you rose up as a high Hill ...  
Hail to you O Atum! Hail to you, O Becoming One who came into being of

himself!

You rose up in this your name of High Hill,  
You came into being in this your name of 'Becoming One'."  
(*Pyramid Texts*. Utterance no.600 & 587)

How the Egyptians envisaged the travailing of the High God is also found in the *Coffin Texts*:

"I was the (spirit in) the Primeval Waters,  
he who had no companion when my name came into existence.  
The most ancient form in which I came into existence was as a drowned one.  
I was (also) he who came into existence as a circle,  
he who was the dweller in his egg.  
I was the one who began (everything),  
the dweller in the Primeval Waters." (C.T.714) 10)

Noteworthy are the archetypes of circle and egg, but equally is the idea of the drowned one who has not yet risen to consciousness. Strange premonition that consciousness had to be developed through existence in matter. H.P.B. comments upon the archetype of the "egg":

"The 'Mundane Egg' is, perhaps, one of the most universally adopted symbols, highly suggestive as it

is, equally in the spiritual, physiological, and cosmological sense. Therefore, it is found in every world-theogony ... The mystery of apparent self-generation and evolution through its own creative power repeating in miniature, the process of Cosmic evolution in the egg, both being due to heat and moisture under the efflux of the unseen creative spirit, justified fully the selection of this graphic symbol. The 'Virgin-Egg' is the microcosmic symbol of the macrocosmic prototype - the 'Virgin Mother' – Chaos or the Primeval Deep." (S.D.I. p.65) 11)

The Waters of Space of the Vedas are said to be "bright", "brilliant", "lustrous", "radiant" 12); they are the "divine mothers", the nurturing goddesses who pour honeyed, rich milk on their devotees. They have the brightness of the sun (Tait.S.I.8.11.1). They possess fiery energy or splendour (*tejas*), light ( *jyotis*), creative vitality (*ojas*) (Athv.I.35.3), they have the brilliant energy (*varcas*) of the solar power, hence they are solar powered (*svarvatīh*) (Ṛgv.I.10.8; V.2.11), they have the gift of life and light which they convey in their billowy depths. "Fire is in the depths of the Waters" (Tait.S.V.6.4.4); within these "is immortality, is heavenly balm" (Ṛgv.I. 23.19). Within these dwell and move the luminous deities, Agni, Sūrya-Savitṛ, both aspects of the solar deity, as well as Pūṣan, the glowing eternal pilgrim, Lord of pathways; also the Aśvins, the heavenly travellers who circumnavigate the heavens on their golden path each morn with Uṣas, the brilliant and mighty Dawn, as also Varuṇa, Lord of Cosmic Order, Mitra, Indra, in fact all the gods that grant light, illumination, inspiration, ecstasy. 13) The gods feed and thrive on the exhilarating "vigour" inherent to the Waters 14) which are not just anything at all, not thin air, not nothing, but something of vast import to the well-being of all denizens of the celestial spaces. Within them shines with divine effulgence Agni their seed or embryo, the "Son of the Waters", Apām Napāt (Ṛgv.III.1.5), the active, fiery power hidden in the passive waters. Such descriptive epithets point to a fiery energy, an inherent luminosity as of the very essence of the "waters", an igneous quality that tells us that the "waters" stand for something quite different from their literal meaning, that there is here a "technical" term that takes us to the future term *ākāśa*.

The Vedas use many words for *water*, but *waters* is usually *āpaḥ* meaning both terrestrial and celestial waters, that out of which forms are shaped, the very substratum of all. But these *waters* also mean "the waters of life", and the "waters of inspiration" to which the solar-powered waters (*svarvatīh*) lead: those that grant illumination. Other words are *salila* with the connotation of flowing, undulating water (used in Ṛgv.X.129.3); *samudra*, ocean, whose other dimension comes out in the expression, *samudra hṛdaya*, the ocean of the heart. The cosmic ocean may belong to the *devas*, but the inner ocean, its mirror, certainly belongs to humanity. Hence the flights of inspiration and divine revelations that form the basis of mythology, the "repository of man's cosmic sentiency". But far away "to the billowy ocean" (*samudram arṇavam*) of space goes the human spirit and the ṛṣi endeavours to call him back (X.58.5) here below.

The conquest of waters is *arṇasāti* (cf.II.20.8; IV.24.4) and parallels the conquest of the sun (*sūryasya sāti* II.19.4) and of the sacrifice (*medhasāti*), all expressive of an inner conquest of profound significance. For *svarmīlha*, the reward of *sva* or illumination, is the result of the conquest of the waters! (I.63.6). The latter are the seething waters of the "unconscious". A further word, infrequent in the Ṛgveda, yet used in X.129.1 is *ambhas* evoking an abyss whose depths are ever unplumbed. It came to mean power and fruitfulness, the original qualities ascribed to the waters, *āpaḥ*. Its plural *ambhāmsi* was applied in due course of time to the four groups of beings: gods, men, ancestors (*pitaras*) and *asuras* (by then degraded to demons). In the Taittirīya Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa the "waters are all the deities" (*āpo vai sarvā devatāḥ*) for the *devas* emerged out of them (ô Ye who were born of the waters and of aditi... ô X..63.2) and are made of their very substance; to these may refer an invocation in the Ṛgveda:

"I call upon the celestial and the earthly generations, the Waters, to the banquet."

(V.41.4)

Concerning the four groups of beings called *ambhamsi*, H.P.B. has a noteworthy comment:

"The 'four orders of beings' are referred to sometimes as '*ambhāmsi*', which Wilson renders as 'literally Waters', and believes it 'a mystic term'. It is one, no doubt; but he evidently failed to catch the *real* esoteric meaning. 'Waters' and 'water' stand as the symbol for *ākāśa*, the 'primordial Ocean of Space', on which Nārāyaṇa, the self-born Spirit, moves: reclining on that *which is its progeny*. (See *Manu*, 1.10.) 'Water is the body of Nāra; thus we have heard the name of water explained. Since *Brahmā* rests on the water, therefore he is termed Nārāyaṇa.' (See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Wilson. vol.1.p.56-

7.)

... At the same time Water is the third principle in material Kosmos, and the third in the realm of the Spiritual: *Spirit* of Fire, Flame, *ākāśa*, Ether, Water, Air, Earth, are the cosmic, sidereal, psychic, spiritual and mystic principles, *pre-eminently occult*, on every *plane* of being. 'Gods, Demons, Pitris and men' are the four orders of beings to whom the term *ambhāmsi* is applied (in the *Vedas* it is a synonym of gods,) because they are all the product of WATERS (mystically), of the *ākāśic* Ocean, and of the Third Principle in nature ...

Water is, in another sense, the feminine principle. Venus-Aphrodite is the personified Sea, and the mother of the god of love, the generator of all the gods, as much as the Christian Virgin Mary is Mare (the sea) the mother of the Western God of Love, Mercy and Charity. If the student of Esoteric philosophy thinks deeply over the subject, he is sure to find out all the suggestiveness of the term *Ambhāmsi*, in its manifold relations to the Virgin in Heaven, to the Celestial Virgin of the Alchemists, and even to the "Waters of Grace' of the modern Baptist." (S.D.I .p.458 fn)

The divine waters (*āpo devīh*), nurturing mothers bringing blessings, healing and immortality (X.30.12; I. 23.19) are "radiant" with that sun that brings inspiration to the poets who, in establishing their vision, win the sun in the waters (Ṛgv.V.45.11), another meaningful image. Psychologically, the light of insight emerges from the depths of the "unconscious". But in the "midst of the waters [of space] moves King Varuṇa looking down upon the truth and deceit of men" (VII.49.3ab). The waters that act like the celestial, mirror-like glory of the Avestan *hvareno* into which only the pure of heart can gaze, are like a glass in which "the inspired sages watch over their intuition refulgent as heavenly light" (X.177.2). Such are the waters of the Vedas; they constitute the matrix and cradle of cosmos, wherein the sages read into their own psyche, receive their inspiration, see the past and the future, and read some of the mysteries of life and death. For as said in *The Secret Doctrine* (II.p.502) space is the realm of divine knowledge where "dwell the intelligent Powers which invisibly rule the Universe". Their compass is far extending and deep indeed; they engulf all and they bring all to life; in them, psyche, their child, emerges as the mirror and the kindler of that which is hidden in their unfathomable depths. But they are not literally waters!

As mentioned earlier, the Waters are described as "radiant" in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (1.2.2). The curious word used here is *arka*: *apo va arkaḥ*, which conceals a whole insight into the subtler levels of Nature and of the ṛṣis' visioning powers, a knowledge which has been lost to us ever since. The word means both 1) *light* and, in its verbal form, *shining* or *glowing*, and 2) *sound* and *singing*. It also means lightning. For the ṛṣis who were *seers* their songs or hymns "shone", their radiance "sang", light and sound fusing at the inner and subtler levels of visionary insight. The singers "bring light in their mouth" as they chant their mantras (Ṛgv.X.67.10). *Arka* is the flashing hymn, and Indra's thunderbolt is *arka*, it flashes and sings (X.153.4), or *arka* is a thunderbolt! The poet excites himself by such words: "Sing forth" or "shine forth a bright hymn" (*citram arkam*). By means of fire-hot songs (*agnitapobhir arkaiḥ*) the Lord of Prayer, Brahmaṇaspati, shattered the darkness and revealed its treasure.

That the Waters are *arkaḥ* may be interpreted as the waters being radiant as well as singing, a most esoteric expression which is left unexplained, but which paves the way for the later *ākāśa*, where glow is inherent to the verbal root *kaś*, and whose "property" is *sound*, according to the *śruti* itself. (See J.U.B. I.23.1-2 etc) This shows *water* as precursor, in terminology, to the later *ākāśa*. In the Waters is therefore the flame power of life and death, of creation and destruction, Apām Napāt conceived by the Waters themselves; as well as the constructive and destructive power of sound vibration (*in akṣara is ākāśa woven warp and woof*. Bṛhad Up.III.8.11)

Gradually the special meaning of the "Waters" with their inherent mystery faded away from men's ken, although it still appears e.g. in the Bṛhad. Upaniṣad where the word *ākāśa* is also used: "This universe was but water in the beginning." (Bṛhad.Up.V.5.1) Śāṅkara comments thus:

"That water, which is the seed of the universe, remains in its undifferentiated form.

This entire universe, differentiated into name and form, was just this water in the beginning ..."

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad explains further:

"This earth, the air, the heavens, the mountains, gods and men, domestic animals and birds, plants and trees, wild creatures down to worms, flies and ants are nothing but this water under solid conditions,

they are all nothing but this water under solid conditions." (Chând.Up.VII.10.1)  
A quaint explanation indeed, but one which shows "water" as the material out of which all things are formed; it is quite in agreement with *The Secret Doctrine* according to which

"Metaphysically and esoterically, there is but One ELEMENT in nature, and at the root of it is the Deity; and the so-called seven elements, of which five have already manifested and asserted their existence, are the garment, *the veil, of that deity*, direct from the essence whereof comes MAN, whether physically, psychically, mentally or spiritually considered. Four elements only are generally spoken of in later antiquity, five admitted only in philosophy. For the body of ether is not fully manifested yet ..." (S.D.I. p.460) 15)

In both the quotes from the Bṛhad. and the Chândogya Upaniṣads *water* as essence in its original undifferentiated state is the ultimate source of matter. On this sweet essence (*madhuścutaḥ*) thrive the gods (Ṛgv.VII.49.3,4), the one "element" being both the habitat and the ambrosia of the gods.

### THE WATERS OF SPACE AS ĀKĀŚĀ

A new word was coined to describe those "waters" on which feed the gods, of whose blessings, as celestial goddesses, the ṛṣis sang: *ākāśa*.

"In *ākāśa* are both the sun and the moon, the lightning and the stars and fire.

Through

*ākāśa* one calls out; through *ākāśa* one hears; through *ākāśa* one answers ... In

*ākāśa*

one is born." (Chând.Up.VII.12.1)

"All these beings verily arise out of *ākāśa* and are finally absorbed in *ākāśa*; *ākāśa*

is

verily greater than any of these: *ākāśa* is the final resort." (Chând.Up.I.9.1)

The ultimate habitat of all is "radiant water" – or *ākāśa*.

"That which is above the heaven ... and that which is beneath the earth, and that which is the heaven and the earth and what is between them, and that which they say was, is and shall be, that is woven within and throughout in *ākāśa*." (Bṛhad.Up.III.8.4)

*Ākāśa* is here raised beyond all other elements and indeed all things, to their very source, back to the *prima materia*. What was visioned in the Ṛgveda as the undulating waters, generating fire, is now called *ākāśa*: "In the beginning (all) this was *ākāśa*, and that is so even now." (J.U.B.I.23.3)

H.P.B. identifies *ākāśa* with

"... PRIMORDIAL SUBSTANCE (*Ākāśa*, in Sanskrit)", this being "the *upādhi* [vehicle] of DIVINE THOUGHT ... the latter would be better named COSMIC IDEATION- Spirit; the former, COSMIC SUBSTANCE, matter. These, the Alpha and Omega of Being, are but the two *facets* of the one Absolute Existence." (S.D.I.p.326)

Here again the positive and negative polarities are shown as inherent to any manifestation of which the various expressions in the Ṛgveda have already been mentioned.

*Ākāśa* is thus described in *The Secret Doctrine*:

"... *ākāśa* - of which Ether is the grossest form - the fifth universal Cosmic Principle (to which corresponds and from which proceeds human *Manas*) is, cosmically, a radiant, cool, diathermanous plastic matter, creative in its physical nature, correlative in its grossest aspects and portions, immutable in its higher principles. In the former condition it is called the Sub-Root; and in conjunction with radiant heat, it recalls 'dead worlds to life'. In its higher aspect it is the Soul of the World; in its lower – the DESTROYER." (S.D.I.p.13 fn)

From *The Secret Doctrine*'s viewpoint, the real *ākāśa* is the sub-root of *mūlaprakṛti*, or root-matter, which is here called the one "element" as it is the substratum of all the 7 elements which unfold from it, two of which have not yet unfolded. These distinctions should be kept in mind as there is often confusion between *ākāśa* and the fifth element as manifested on earth, *ether*, as known to the Ancients, which is but an ultimate

differentiation of *ākāśa* on this our plane of matter, and not even fully unfolded and so denied existence by modern science. So once again H.P.B. endeavours to clarify the subject:

"... once *ākāśa*, an almost homogeneous and certainly universal principle, is translated ether, then *ākāśa* is dwarfed and limited to our visible universe, for assuredly it is not the ether of space. Ether, whatever modern science makes of it, is differentiated substance: *ākāśa*, having no attributes save one – SOUND, of which *it is the substratum* – is no substance even exoterically and in the minds of some Orientalists, but rather chaos, or the great spatial void. Esoterically *ākāśa* alone is Divine Space, and becomes ether only on the lowest and last plane, or our visible universe and earth. In this case the blind is in the word 'attribute' which is said to be sound. But sound is no attribute of *ākāśa*, but its primary correlation, its primordial manifestation, the LOGOS, or divine ideation made Word, and that 'WORD' made 'flesh'. Sound may be considered an 'attribute' of *ākāśa* only on the condition of anthropomorphizing the latter. It is not a characteristic of, though it is certainly as innate in it as the idea 'I am I' is innate in our thoughts." (E.W.p.395-6 = C.W. 12, p.611)

This *sound*, as a correlation of *ākāśa* rather than an attribute, refers to statements made in the Hindu *śruti*:

"In the beginning (all) this was *ākāśa*: and this is so even now.

What this *ākāśa* is, that is the word. Therefore the word speaks from *ākāśa*.

This same word the Lord of beings pressed and from it when pressed out streamed forth the sap. That became these worlds." (J.U.B.1.23.1-2)

The *Anugītā*, part of the *Aśvamedha Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, put it simply thus:

"Now *ākāśa* has one quality and that is stated to be sound only." (ch.35)

This aspect of *ākāśa*, as *logos*, the creative vibration, the voice, or *Vāc* of the *Ṛgveda*, will be studied in chapter 5 on *Logos*.

*Ākāśa* as a philosophical term of importance first appears in one of the oldest of the *Upaniṣads* as quoted above, and seems to be equivalent to the later term *mūlaprakṛti*, but its meaning varies in the *Upaniṣads* themselves where consistency is often lacking, perhaps because a metaphysical vocabulary had not yet been settled. Its verbal root being *kaś*, it is evident that the basic sense of the word is to glow, or shine. This brings out the idea of luminosity, so peculiar to *Aditi* as we shall see in the next section. It is that which appears first and is luminous by its very nature, the luminous essence of the inwardness of space, if one can put it thus. A similarity may be seen in the root of the Greek word *aither* (*aitho* I make light) which is related to the gleaming or brilliancy of fire. *Ākāśa* is thus akin to fire in its essential nature, or could one say that it is the noumenon of fire? 16) One thing is certain: whether the *Ṛgveda* uses the word "water" or the *Upaniṣads* the word *ākāśa*, the vision is one of the radiant, luminous or fiery depths of space, something similar to the vision of the Stanzas of *Dzyan* – "the shoreless sea of fire" of the "upper space" (3:7), which H.P.B. describes as "the super-astral (i.e. noumenal) Light, the first radiation from the Root, the *mūlaprakṛti*, the undifferentiated Cosmic Substance which becomes Astral matter. It is also called the 'Fiery serpent' ..." (S.D.I. p.75)

This *ākāśa* which is both space as matrix and the substance of space, is thus further described by H.P.B.:

"*Ākāśa*, the astral Light- can be defined in a few words; it is the Universal Soul, the Matrix of the Universe, the '*Mysterium Magnum*' from which all that exists is born by separation or *differentiation*. It is the cause of existence; it fills all the infinite Space, is *Space itself*, in one sense, or both its *Sixth* and *Seventh* principles. But as the finite in the Infinite, as regards manifestation this light must have its shadowy side ... And as the Infinite can never be manifested, hence the finite world has to be satisfied with the *shadow alone*, which its actions draw upon humanity and which men attract *and force to activity*. Hence, while it is the *universal Cause* in its unmanifested unity and infinity, the Astral Light becomes, with regard to Mankind, simply the effects of the causes produced by men in their sinful lives. It is not its bright denizens – whether they are called Spirits of Light or Darkness – that produce Good or Evil, but mankind itself that determines the unavoidable action and reaction in the great magic agent. It is mankind which has become the "Serpent of *Genesis*", and thus causes daily and hourly the Fall and sin of the 'Celestial Virgin' – which thus becomes the Mother of gods and devils at one and the same time; for she is the ever-loving, beneficent deity to all those who stir her *Soul and Heart*, instead of attracting to themselves her shadowy manifested essence, ... which kills



and destroys. Humanity, in its units, can overpower and master its effects; but only by the holiness of their lives and by producing good causes. It has power only on the manifested *lower* principles." (S.D.II.p.511-12)

The Ṛgvedic hymn of creation (X.129) hints at a clear division in very succinct terms:

"Their vision's rays stretched afar. There was indeed a below, there was indeed an above. Seed-bearers there were, mighty powers there were. Energy below, will above." (X.129.5)

In his commentary on Taittirīya Up. II.1.1 Śāṅkara makes it clear that *ākāśa* has been identified with that state that pervades in the highest heaven (*parame vyoman*) and with that space which is the hidden spot of the heart, the *ākāśa* of the heart where *puruṣa* is said to lie (cf. Kāṭha Up.II.20 and Bṛhad Up.II.1.17). Śāṅkara comments:

"*Ākāśa* here means the supreme Self, which is identical with its own self. It [*puruṣa*] lies in that Supreme Self, which is its own nature and transcendent; not in the ordinary ether... " 17)

One of the Commentators, Ānanda Giri, perceptibly notes that "the element *ākāśa* cannot be called *parama* (supreme), it being an effect of unmanifest *ākāśa*"; thus admitting to the two levels of meaning which he qualifies as unmanifest-manifest. As he points out, in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, it is the unmanifest *ākāśa* which is bound to the "immutable Brahman" (*akṣara*, the eternal-word) and not the element *ākāśa*. This shows clearly that *ākāśa* in its primordial sense was still known as different from *ākāśa* as the fifth element, at that time, and was not yet confused with the fifth element. With the loss of the original meaning of *ākāśa*, 18) came misunderstanding of these primeval teachings, and then garbled explanations.

#### SPACE AS ADITI IN THE ṚGVEDA

Space, which is the only poor translation of *ākāśa* that we have, is an ocean of energies; hence of activity centred around focal points all inter-related, all vibrating to particular frequencies in sympathetic resonance or rejection, in a vast network of magnetic interplay; some shaping forms from nebulae to starry galaxies, to solar systems, to planets, to atoms and their infinitesimal subdivisions; forms within forms; other shaping pathways through the vast spaces, others transformed into the medium in which all moves and pulsates. For the *esoteric tradition*, as for its Hindu expression, space is a vibrant entity, the living abode of high intelligences, each with its unique quality, each an integrating centre, in all of which we move and breathe and think; hence the constant interaction of intelligence-consciousness-awareness-reaction-contact and substance which itself is fully impregnated with quality, and made more responsive, constantly transformed as a result of this perennial interplay. Says the Chāndogya Upaniṣad:

"What is considered space (*ākāśa*) is the accomplisher of name and form."

(Chānd.Up.VIII.14.1),

the translator reminding us that name and form are equivalent to the modern term "individuality". It is thus through and because of *ākāśa* that all things have a form enshrining a life or vital core. *Ākāśa* has thus a vital function to perform, it accomplishes creation, it is the womb of life and its multi-variegated expressions. H.P.B. describes it as the Universal Soul, the *mysterium magnum*, for it is the vehicle of life. It thus becomes somewhat more comprehensible why the poetic mind of visionary sages could envisage this celestial "veil", *ākāśa*, behind which looms the majesty of the ever Unknowable Absolute, as the "Universal Mother", the Celestial Virgin as H.P.B. calls her, fashioning the galaxies and bearing all seeds of life.

"Upper Aether, or *ākāśa*, is the celestial virgin and mother of every existing form and being from whose bosom, as soon as 'incubated' by the Divine Spirit, are called into existence Matter and Life, Force and Action. Aether is the Aditi of the Hindus and it is *ākāśa* ... Who knows where ends the power of this protean giant – Aether; or whence its mysterious origin? Who, we mean, that denies the spirit that works in it, and evolves out of it all visible forms?" (S.D.I.p.332)

"'Ideal Nature', the abstract Space in which everything in the Universe is mysteriously and invisibly generated, is the same female side of the procreative power in Nature in the Vedic as in every other Cosmogony. Aditi is Sēphīrāh, and the Sophia-Akhamōth of the Gnostics, and Isis, the Virgin Mother of Horus." (S.D.II.p.43)

Who is Aditi? What does she represent in the Vedas? Can she in any way be equivalent to *ākāśa*, a philosophical concept? Aditi is so little known except to a handful of Vedic specialists that she does not appear in such books as *The Great Mother* or *The Myth of the Goddess*,<sup>19</sup> although she should have her place of honour in such well researched studies, her place as the Aryan Great Mother, a figure of lofty ideal which our 19th century sceptical scholars found difficult to admit. 20) One may ask, how did H.P.B. know of her meaning and place in Vedic cosmogony when hardly any real study had been written about her? She described her as

"... very properly called the 'Mother of the Gods', *deva-mātr*, as it is from her Cosmic matrix that all the heavenly bodies of our system were born - Sun and Planets." (S.D.I. p.99)

Described in the Nirukta (IV.22) as the divine Mother of noble-minded gods, Aditi appears in the Ṛgveda as the Mother of the luminous deities, "the lords of truth", who are "vast, profound, mighty through the law" (II.27.2, etc.), who wax strong by means of the *ṛta*, which is truth, who are born of that Order as the very embodiment of the Law which they serve; for they are the "herdsmen of the Supreme-Law whose decrees are truth" (V.63.1ab). Dawn is the "face" or "splendour" of the boundless (I.113.19 *aditer anīkam*), the word *aditi* being generally derived from *a* (negative) + *dā* to bind, = the unbound or boundless.

A peculiarity of Aditi emerges from the fact of her motherhood of the luminous deities of truth and order: she is the matrix of that order, its very light, "queen of the Cosmic Order", "spouse of the Law". Therein she "upholds the races of men" (I.136.3) and "grants them protection". Hence hers are inviolable statutes (VII.66.6), even like her son, Varuṇa, Ruler of the *ṛta* whose statutes are fixed as on a mountain (VIII.47.9b). She is in the Vedas the Great Mother whose most frequent epithets are *luminous*, *celestial*, *sun-possessing* or *solar-powered* (*svarvatī* from *svar*, the solar glory), and true (*ṛtāvarī*). These are far from meaningless epithets, but each gives us far more than a glimpse into her stature as envisaged by the ṛṣis. Her three main attributes, those of *motherhood*, *spaciousness* or *boundlessness* and *light*, make of her the all embracing divine Mother in whose light men find life, the very personification of space. Note that a) *hiranyagarbha*, the "golden egg" which is space, the effulgent matrix; b) *svar*, the solar splendour of illumination; and c) *aditi*, the infinite which, personified as the Mother, becomes the Giver of light, luminosity, protection and nurture; the truth; all this implies that human beings, according to the Vedas, live and move and have their being in light, in the effulgence of infinite divinity, a conception which joins, as the next chapter will show, that of the Universal Mind of the Stanzas of Dzyan. As St Paul also remarked ages later, we live in the divine, however little we may realise or are capable of grasping this. A verse from the Atharvaveda stresses the idea of freedom which is "bound up" with the "boundless":

"Open yourself, create free space; release the bound one from his bonds!  
Like a new born child, freed from the womb,  
Be free to move on every path." (Athv.VI.121.4) (R. Panikkar's translation)

As shown in my book on Cosmic Order,

"Freedom is a recurring theme in Vedic prayers, freedom from all limitations, from all that which hampers the free flow of life, that freedom that removes all obstacles, physical, moral, mental, all transgressions against the law, all diseases, poverty or oppression, and darkness; that freedom whose basis is purity, harmony, well-being ...  
'May we be free, (may we be) sons of freedom, (may we be) a stronghold midst gods and mortals, ye luminous gods.' (VII.52.1ab)" 21)

A refrain asking for the boon of freedom and completeness in Ṛgv.X.100 could be rendered thus: "We choose freedom and wholeness", a request implying the wish for the total integration of the human being in the cosmic harmony. So Aditi is asked for protection, for shelter:

"May Aditi protect us, may Aditi grant us shelter." (VIII.47.9ab)  
"O gods, O sons of freedom, O ye that transcend all evil, from distress  
there is freedom, for the sinless a treasure." (VIII.67.7)  
"The enemy has no hold over those to whom Aditi's sons give their eternal  
light to live." (J. Gonda's rendering of X.185.2&3)

In the Yajurveda, Aditi is

"The Great Mother on whom the universe of life has settled." (Yjv.v.s.18.30);  
 "The Queen of Order, strong ruler, far-extending, ne'er decaying,  
 Aditi, gracious guide and good protectress." (Yjv.v.s.21.5)

She is in the Atharvaveda

"The Queen of righteousness, of powerful authority, immovable,  
 wide extending, of good protection and safe guidance." (Athv.VII.6.2)

Her *light*, one of her most important gifts, being the light of solar splendour *svar*, is indestructible, dazzling, free from danger; mystically this means illumination.

"I call upon Aditi's incomparable portion, unlimited, solar-splendoured,  
 worthy of worship." (Ṛgv.I.185.3ab)

"May divine, irresistible (*anarvā*) Aditi help us." (Ṛgv.II.40.6; cf. VII.40.4)

"With Aditi, the luminous, celestial upholder of the people", the Ādityas, those sleepless watchers whose dominion is light, are called upon to come to the altar each day (Ṛgv.I.136.3). As she is the Queen of Cosmic Order, she represents truth, *ṛta*, a little word of many faceted meanings: ultimate truth, Cosmic Order, law and righteousness in so far as humans are concerned. In her protection are freedom and harmlessness. As Aditi and the Ādityas stand for moral order, a human being who dwells in the light of Aditi, cannot transgress against the Law, he is "true", "righteous" and cannot be harmed, he is "inviolate" (*ariṣṭa*).

"Light and righteousness are, in this inner sense, one. The gods of light are not to be deceived, they are truthful, righteous and can read the human heart. This is the essence of Ṛgvedic ethics and the secret of the light of Aditi and its safeguard and protection against all transgressions ... Truth and light in both their ethical and cosmogonical sense combine in her in a masterly way to outline one of the grandest of goddesses that the human mind has ever projected, one in whom the demarcation lines between the ethical and the cosmogonical are not as sharp as with us, perhaps to our greater loss for such sharp separations veil the vision of wholeness." 22)

Thus Aditi holds in herself the significance of "wholeness". Plenitude and undividedness do imply wholeness, without flaws, hence holiness, even innocence. In herself, she meets that enunciation of a profound truth given out in a much later century by one of the greatest of wise ones: "the truth will make you free". In this wholeness, free from fear, from separativeness, is freedom, the plenitude of life, the gift of Aditi. The whole vision of Aditi, as luminous Mother of truth, queen of Cosmic Order, has never been surpassed. This is another of the ṛṣis' far visioned conception hardly acknowledged.

Moreover, Aditi in the Ṛgveda is the womb of all beings, of all things, of the past and the future. This is stated unequivocally in one verse of far reaching implications :

"Aditi is heaven, Aditi is the mid-region, Aditi is mother and father and son. Aditi is all the gods,  
 Aditi is the five human races. Aditi is all that has been born and all that is to be born." (Ṛgv.I.89.10;  
 cf. Athv.VII.6.1)

Obviously Aditi as space would be, as implied here, the matrix or container wherein emerge the universes, the past and the future, all seeds of life, and the threefold main divisions of Vedic cosmogony, the spiritual, or heaven, the mid-region *antarikṣa*, that which is seen from within, or the psycho-mental world, and the physical. She contains all aspects of manifestation, everything is present in her *in potentia* to bear fruit in the future, in due time. All aspects: creation, dissolution, life and death, growth and decay, the great cycles of time and dissolution, are implied in the words "Aditi is all that has been born and all that is to be born", even though the aspect of decay and dissolution is not spelled out in her as a goddess. Note the five human races; according to *The Secret Doctrine* there have been so far 5 root-races developing on earth, two are yet to come. Aditi is thus the personification of infinite space which is the womb of the *ṛta* woven throughout space.

There is one aspect to the word *aditi* seldom taken note of in most writings. On the authority of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad itself, the word can be derived from *ad* to devour, engulf, a derivation in keeping with the idea of Bṛhad.Up.I.2.5 where all is said to be covered by death or hunger, the great engulfing abyss of space that brings all things to birth and engulfs them back into its womb. This is indeed at the very basis of the "Great Mother" of ancient cosmogonies. For the Bṛhad.Upaniṣad, whatever the Lord of Beings,

Prajāpati "projected, he resolved to devour. Because he devours everything,  
 therefore *aditi* is so called." (Bṛhad Up. I. 2.5)

This perpetual engulfing process spells the "devouring" concept of the Upaniṣads which Śrī Aurobindo summed up as "the eater eating is eaten" is the "truth, pregnant and terrible" that the ṛṣis faced. In Aditi, infinite space, Mother of Gods and men and regent of Cosmos, this generally dark aspect has disappeared. Her absence of hostility (*anarvan*), her unequivocal beneficence, innocence and luminosity, make her the "friend of all men" (VII.10.4), and the most outstanding of the Mother Goddesses. The darker side of cosmos is relegated to Nirṛti, goddess of dissolution, sometimes to Pṛthivī, sometimes to Uṣas who, from showing the beautiful countenance of Aditi, and inspiring hymns and lavishing good fortune on the poets, suddenly assumes, on just a few occasions, a darker face, a strange conduct. The *ghorā tanū* or awful mien of later expressions of the Indian World Mother as is portrayed in Kālī or Durgā, does not belong to Aditi. Her purity and lofty truth mark her out as of spiritual greatness, a grandeur far removed from our world of violence, lust, aggression, bloodshed and incomprehension of spirituality. Yet, she was realistic enough to the ṛṣis.

The Ṛgvedic ṛṣis envisaged space according to two ideas: that of the somewhat personified Mother-Queen of all, matrix or cradle from whom all is born, and that of the "essence", later called *ākāśa*; but in the Ṛgveda described as the "waters", those waters that unfurled at the beginning of creation, slightly personified as goddesses. There is a definite differentiation between Aditi and the Waters of space, the latter possessing treasures of milk, the honey-sweet- yielding waters, bright, purifying and healing, but having nothing to do with the Cosmic Order as such and human alignment with the ṛta in order to reach out to higher spheres. The "Waters" of space could be taken as Aditi's "depths", her "billows", her "garment", that out of which she is thought to have woven the framework of all things in manifestation, if the Vedic poets went so far in their personification. The Waters' gift is nourishment, physical and spiritual, they bring health and invigoration, they have that healing quality that drives away disease, washes away sin, that balm that brings men back to wholeness (X.137.6). They possess the solar power, they carry and convey its light and life. Aditi restores to wholeness through forgiveness, through declaring innocence, after due repentance and changing of ways. The contrast between both is there, even though they overlap somewhat. In fact they complement and contrast each other; they are both solar-powered, helpful, protective and demand righteousness, though in the case of the "Waters" only indirectly. But the word *aditi* is never juxtaposed to *hiranyagarbha*, golden matrix or egg, although effulgent light is Aditi's gift, she being the luminous matrix whence emerge the universes.

It is in the domain of ethics that Aditi towers above the Waters for she embodies in herself *ṛta* and her sons, the Ādityas, are "herdsmen of the Supreme-Law" whose ordinances are secure (II.29.1 *dhṛtavratā ādityā*). She is the "Spouse of the Law" (*ṛtasya patnīm* Athv.VII.6.2 = Yjv.VS.21.5). Among such contrasting and complementary ideas, what strikes most in Aditi is her all enfolding cradle of life, nurturing, healing and orderly, implying Law, from which derive all fruitfulness, joy, righteousness, which none may infringe without harming himself.

When all this is considered, compare the quotation already given concerning Aditi in the Ṛgveda:

"Aditi is heaven, Aditi is the mid-region, Aditi is mother and father and son.  
Aditi is all the gods, Aditi is the five human races. Aditi is all that has been born  
and all that is to be born." (Ṛgv.I.89.10)

with the following three quotations from the Upaniṣads:

"That which is above the heaven ... and that which is beneath the earth, and that which is the heaven and the earth, and what is between them, and that which they say was, is and shall be, that is woven within and throughout in *ākāśa*." (Bṛhad.Up.III.8.4)

*Ākāśa* is here the philosophical term taken to mean the ultimate source of all things, the *prima materia*, that through and by means of which all things are fashioned, or "woven warp and woof" by the supreme *akṣara*, the word or Logos.

"All these beings verily arise out of *ākāśa* and are finally absorbed in *ākāśa*.

*Ākāśa* is verily greater than any of these. *Ākāśa* is the final resort." (Chānd.Up.I. 9.1)

"In *ākāśa* are both the sun and the moon, the lightning and the stars and fire.

Through *ākāśa* one calls out; through *ākāśa* one hears; through *ākāśa* one answers

...

in *ākāśa* one is born." (Chānd.Up.VII.12.1)

Change the word *ākāśa* to *aditi* and the same idea comes out from the Upaniṣads as from the Ṛgveda.

H.P.B.'s identification of "Aditi, or Cosmic Space" (S.D.I.p.53 fn) with *ākāśa* (S.D.I.p.332), at a time when few studies had been written on Aditi, is in itself quite remarkable and perfectly correct.

For H.P.B. Aditi is space and space is *ākāśa* in the Vedas.

"In the ṚgVeda, Aditi 'the Boundless' or infinite Space ... is the equivalent of 'Mother-Space', co-eval with 'Darkness'. (S.D.I.p.99)

"In the *Vedas* Aditi is the primitive light, the *ākāśa* of the phenomenal world."

(S.D.II.p.42 fn)

For H.P.B. Aditi, "the Mother of the Gods" is

"Shekhīnah, eternal light – in the world of Spirit, the 'Great Deep' and CHAOS; or primordial Substance in its first remove from the UNKNOWN, in the manifested Kosmos." (S.D.II.p.527)

The main difference between the presentation of Aditi and *ākāśa* is obviously that *ākāśa* is an abstract philosophical term whereas Aditi stands, as we have seen, for the grandest of archetypes of Motherhood, the living Great Mother, Queen and Guardian of Cosmic Order to whom men turn in their need or distress, whose great Son, Varuṇa is also Lord of ṛta to whom men turn in their despair. Note that this ṛta, "born of blazing *tapas*", born of the contemplative exertion of the ONE, which to the ṛṣis was the "toiling" of the Lord of Creation (X.190 and X.129), this Order thanks to which all unfolds in accordance with the Law, has its very basis, support and reflection in Aditi, not only the "boundless", but also the "mother", the "spouse" of *ṛta*. In this Order, both abstract and personalised, there is room for the Infinite and for compassion, forgiveness, love, which our logic and divisive mind have separated. Aditi was identified with the Vedic symbol of cosmos and nature, the Cosmic Cow from whose udders streams the nurturing milk of life and in whose "abode was born the mighty eternal-word" (Ṛgv.III.55.1), which, whether as *Vāc* or *akṣara*, came to be realised as one with *ākāśa*; hence Aditi's identification with *Vāc*, i.e. with the *Word* that shapes all forms within space, the *word* that fashions the universes as the "waters flow along", and finally with Pṛthivī, identified with the Earth.

Aditi's grand figure, expressive of that vision that looked up to the infinite cosmos, Aditi, the living embodiment of wholeness, of truth and light in both their ethical and cosmogonical sense, whose final and innermost gift is that freedom which is herself, is that inwardness of truth whose outer garb is "innocence", the transparency of truth; Aditi, queen of cosmos, regent of the human heart and safeguard against evil, slowly dwindled away from man's cosmic perception – like the vision of Cosmic Order that the ṛṣis intuited and of which they chanted in their hymns which, in coming down to the human level, split into two aspects, *karma* and *dharma*, and thereby lost that touch of *cosmic majesty* which had belonged to it. Aditi became identified with Pṛthivī the broad, in its sense of Mother Earth who herself becomes the Great Mother (Śat.Br.13.1.6.1) 23)

But enough hints remain in many verses of the three Vedas, Ṛg, Yajur and Atharva Vedas, to show us the grandeur of the ṛṣis' conception of Space: matrix and cradle of life's transformations, nurturing substance on which feed the intangible and luminous denizens of what we call the "beyond" who really are "within" rather than "beyond"space; Mother and Queen of all to whose merciful heart turns the sinner, Aditi whose ultimate "descendent", completely anthropomorphised and personalised, emerges in the figure of the blessed Virgin Mary of Catholics, Mother of the Lord of Christianity, "Star of the Sea" and also *Mater dolorosa*.

Underneath it all looms a supreme archetype constellated throughout the ages from which the human mind cannot escape but from which it draws sustenance and comfort.

#### FROM ADITI TO THE CHRISTIAN MADONNA

The great realities of the spiritual world to which we, for the most part, have lost the key, are reflected as archetypes in the depth of the human psyche. Because these can never be seen by physical eyes, they have been likened to points of luminous energies scintillating brightly or dimly, overbearingly and all engulfingly or just fleetingly. How to read them or understand them correctly? When brought into contact with the light of the conscious mind they immediately assume contours taken from the environment which the form-making faculty of the mind endows them with. This partially explains why the language of the scriptures relies upon natural

objects for expression, which become symbols of something quite beyond them. The archetypes have that peculiar characteristic that they hold all opposites together, the good and bad, the terrible and the gracious, the high and the low, as obvious in the Mother goddesses of the Ancients, or the many Creator Gods. This very inclusiveness makes them ambiguous, strange, unaccountable. The two opposite poles, birth and death, creation and destruction, spirit and matter, are seen as two inseparable aspects of the One, like the yin and yang that form the circle of wholeness in Chinese philosophy.

The Cosmic Matrix or ocean of Space is experienced in vision as the infinitude of fiery mists or the indistinguishable vastness of billowy space, but archetypally as the Dragon of wisdom, that knows the past and foresees the future, for all is "written" in its folds; or as the coils of the serpent of eternity, of that all containing but undifferentiated, divine substance, as with the Hindus or the Ancient Egyptians; and finally as the Universal Mother, later Father 24) the All Encompasser, bringing forth her offspring, devouring them back into herself but to bring them forth again – the wheel of life and death, of eternal recurrence. Of this, the serpent with its repeated sloughing off of its skin in perpetual rejuvenation is the supreme symbol. In the *Book of Sarparājñī* this Cosmic Ocean is thus described:

"In the beginning before Mother became Father-Mother, the Fiery Dragon moved in the infinitudes alone." (Quoted in S.D.I.p.74)

In the Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* a similar configuration finds expression thus:

"I am the outflow of the Primeval Flood, he who emerged from the waters. I am the Provider of attributes' serpent with its many coils. I am the Scribe of the Divine Book which says what has been and effects what is yet to be." (Pyramid Text.1146)

From *The Secret Doctrine* one gathers that the Dragon of Wisdom found a mirror in the heavenly vault as the "seven headed Draco" each of whose head was a star in a particular constellation and represented as well the 7 principles, the 7 planes of the cosmos, the 7 zones of post-mortem ascent. In the substance of space, in *ākāśa*, is inscribed the whole history of our planet and of cosmos as each unfolds its panorama woven of the very essence of life – hence the line:

"I am the scribe of the Divine Book which says what has been and effects what is yet to be."

Among these ancient archetypal images that go far back into the dimness of time, looms large on the screen of cosmos the Mother Goddesses in whose vast mantle was seen to throb the heavenly constellations rising on the horizon, revolving across the heavens and disappearing in endless succession, but to rise again. This vast cosmic order spelled out the transformations occurring within the body of the Great Mother, Space, and these were mirrored on earth as eternal becoming. As E. Neumann put it

"... that is why ... the Great Mother, adorned with the moon and the starry cloak of night, is the goddess of destiny, weaving life as she weaves fate ... The primordial mystery of weaving and spinning has also been experienced in projection upon the Great Mother who weaves the web of life and spins the threads of fate, regardless whether she appears as one Great Spinstress or, as so frequently, in a lunar triad." 25)

So Aditi, as all encompassing Mother, as Cosmic Cow from whose udders stream the milk of life; identified with Vāc, the vibrating word fashioning the universe; identified with the Vedic altar to which converge all universal forces, godly and human; identified with Pṛthivī, the Earth; plainly shows us the evolution of our *human reading* of a vast luminous archetype whose constellations ramify to all the world's Mother goddesses, the all nurturing and the all engulfing, and whose root digs deep into our very psyche.

Pṛthivī, the earthly mirror of Cosmic Aditi, thereby bringing down to earth the cosmic vision, still kept something of the latter's grandeur. As beneficent Mother, wise, patient, kind and gracious, to whom a superb hymn is dedicated in the Atharvaveda (XII.1), she bears power, bounteousness, and is the fulfiller of wishes. But she too has her shadowy side, as expressed in the Yajurveda:

Pṛthivī "to whom people give praise as earth (*bhūmi*)

I know thee everywhere as *nirṛti*" (dissolution. Yjv.vs.12.64)

Pṛthivī's variegated aspects and cycles of recurrence make of her an embodiment of the Law that to human beings appears as unremitting, powerful and terrible (*ugra*). Thus in the darkness of the soil germinate those seeds that will bring forth their fruit and feed millions of creatures born of the soil and going back to that very

soil of Earth. In the vast depths of space appear, intensify and disappear the myriads of starry constellations and universes. In the darkness of the human psyche is born and brought to maturity the great conceptions of philosophy or masterpieces of poetry and art that rejoice human beings or enlighten them, but to be cast away into the dust of bygone ages, just as in the darkness of the maternal womb is conceived, nourished and brought to birth the miracle of life, an infant, to grow, live and be killed or die and go back to the darkness of Earth. In this constant parallelism between the higher and the lower, between the abstract and the concrete, the illusive and the perennial, the self-assertion and the self-oblivion, the circuit of the offering and the taking, the eternal sacrifice, the ancient seers read the wisdom of the ages:

"Vast truth, unremitting order (*rtam ugram*), consecration, contemplative-exertion (*tapas*), prayer, sacrificial offering, these uphold the earth" (Athv.XII.1.1)

is the supreme vision of the interlocking of cosmic order and human aspiring activity in one vast offering which makes of the earth the central altar and mirror of the celestial Harmony, the holy ground wherein is voiced the call of the Divine to the human and the human response to the Divine.

This vision born of all embracing space and emerging out of space to take root on earth is not alone that of Vedic India, but Egypt had it in full in its supreme sense of Cosmic Order and righteousness whose effigy, as Maat, Pharaoh offered to the gods as token of his rule in accordance with *Truth* and *Order*, and Greece inherited it, though perhaps not so fully.

One of the oldest of Egyptian goddesses, Neith had the following inscription in her temple at Sais: "I am all that has been and is and shall be, and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered," 26) a worthy parallel to Aditi's claim to be everything that is and that will be. Self-sustaining and self-existent, unknown, secret, all pervading Neith personified the primeval Waters, the great abyss, in short the all fruitful matrix of space in which all is born and to which all returns, the infinite "veil" of Deity. She was to be identified with Nut, the sky goddess and with Isis. Nut, with her elongated body arched like the sky vault over the earth, represented the whole creation which she contained in herself. As starry heaven she swallowed the sun at dusk, marking the 12 hours of the night as the 12 suns in her body but to give them birth again at dawn. She too is the great encompasser who takes back into herself her children as depicted on the inside lids of sarcophagi wherein the dead were laid thus embraced to repose by the heavenly Nut.

Supreme among the Egyptian mother goddesses, Isis emerges not only as Mother-wife-sister, not only as the rich slime deposits from which new life could spring, but as the very embodiment of Nature with all its mysteries and uncanny powers; and, adding another dimension to herself, supremely as the symbol of the human psyche. As her hieroglyph of the throne implies, she is the basis, hence the vehicle, just as the horse is the support and vehicle of the horseman; in other words, she is the vehicle of that spiritual spark which cannot manifest at this lower level except through such a support. Osiris' hieroglyph is also that of the throne, but on it sits the eye, sign of insight, or the sun disc, sign of illumination. He thus represents the Heavenly Man, the *puruṣa* of Sāṅkhya philosophy, the divine flame creating through the soul, his vehicle, his "son" Horus. Through Isis, that spiritual spark can manifest here and light the way. So the initiated candidate became first Isis through his knowledge and mastery of nature, then Osiris through having crossed the gates of death to finally conquer death, to become Horus and enter into his heritage of the splendour of the solar light.

We have come a long way from Space, impersonal matrix, yet Celestial Virgin, in whom manifest and disappear all galaxies and universes. Yet Isis, in her supreme nature, reflects that highest mystery of life born in the very depths of space, as in earth, symbol of virginity and fecundity, of that impersonal power that brings all things to fruition, of that immensity wherein nature's generous fruitfulness finds a personal, human mirror in the ineradicable archetypal image of the mother and her child. But on the way, the original celestial virgin and the livingness of space completely disappeared from human consciousness.

Isis lives on, for her archetypal image of mother and child is now transformed into that of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her child Jesus, crowned Queen of Heaven and Star of the Sea, Mother of mercy and compassion, or *Mater dolorosa*, thereby adding to herself that aspect of the human plight and human suffering which her predecessors had not emphasised, and finally called "Mother of God" among Catholics.

Statues of Black Virgins appeared in southern France, Spain, Switzerland and Poland, probably brought over by the Crusaders around the 10th century from the Orient as the Virgin Mary, but were they? with the regal, serene or far off look, some of whom with open chests revealing the face of God??? or of Christ??? or the

world??? are mute yet eloquent witnesses to the ancient archetype that may change its garb, yet remains the same fundamentally, the all enfolding Mother Space, Queen of the heavens and Star of the Sea. The seated black virgin, with her son on her lap or in her arms, like Isis herself, emerges from the night of time as queen of that silent darkness wherein the miracle of birth and resurrection, and transformation and unfoldment is slowly being accomplished. Why black, the colour of mourning and renunciation? Its broader and fundamental meaning goes back to the dark soil that receives and holds the seed to bring it forth, and to the inner silence the daring pilgrim has to cross and master to find the pearl of great prize hidden behind. It points also to carbon, progenitor of the many faceted diamond, carbon the basis of organic substance, hence of living matter.

"Mother of God"? No average Roman Catholic seems ever to query such an absurdity! How can the causeless Cause of all Causes, the ONLY ONE have a mother? Does it not degrade the very conception of Deity to our human level? Or is there a mystery behind this title? We glimpse here the expression of a very ancient revelation which only *The Secret Doctrine* has somewhat elucidated for us. Thus one of the Stanzas of Dzyan cryptically tells us:

"Darkness radiates light, and light drops one solitary Ray into the Waters, into the Mother-deep. The Ray shoots through the virgin egg, the Ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal germ, which condenses into the world-egg." (3:3)

Darkness here symbolises the Absolute on whom no human speculation is possible. At a lower level, darkness is the matrix of all conceptions, at a higher, it represents the Absolute; the "egg", as already mentioned, is the archetype of the matrix of space, also expressed as the "Waters" and the "Mother-Deep". The Divine Ray dropped by the Light which is periodically irradiated from the DARKNESS shoots through these "Waters" or Celestial Virgin, and the starry universes emerge out of the substance of the Mother Deep through the vibration or word of the Ray now become the Logos, God in manifestation. Thus is the Mother-Deep, the Celestial Virgin called the Mother of God, behind whom looms the Ineffable, Causeless Cause of all causes, untouched by human speculation, "unthinkable" and "unspeakable", (Muṇḍaka Up. III.1.7,8) "whence words return together with the mind, not attaining it" (Tait.Up.II.4.1). Thus is the majesty of the Absolute preserved in the immaculate shrine of the Celestial Virgin reflected on earth as the mother goddesses; reflected as Mary, the madonna in the cradle of the human heart. Deep into the darkness of humanity's past and deep into the dark root of our psyche, the mystic senses the luminous archetype, ineradicable root of the Great enfolding Mother whose mantle is infinite Space with its starry galaxies, Lady of Wisdom, Sophia, Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, through whom we are born, nourished, reared, uplifted and resurrected into another dimension: for in our very depth the luminous spark, the *flame-divine*, the *word incarnate*, casts its light and calls on every one to "be free to walk on every path" for *every path of return* converges on the ONE WITHOUT A SECOND.

### CHAPTER 3 SPACE, THE COSMIC MATRIX, THE WATERS,

#### ĀKĀŚA, ADITI, etc. FOOTNOTES

1. H.P.B. refers us in a note to Manu's account of Brahmā separating his body into male and female, the latter, Vāc, in whom he creates Virāj; and to compare this with the esotericism of chapters 2, 3 and 4 of Genesis (S.D. I. p.9 fn) - that is, if one can read Genesis with the esoteric key.
2. Ṛgv.X.104.8. Cf.III.1.4&6; VIII.96.1.
3. The difficulties about this word *svabhāvat* have been outlined in ch.1. For all the research done on this term see D. Reigle's *Book of Dzyan Research Report: technical terms in Stanza II*. 1997. p.1-8.
4. See Śaṅkara's commentary on Brahma-sūtra 1.1.5ff; 1.4.28; 2.1.1ff. etc. where he refutes the idea of substance principle. Compare H.P.B.'s explanation in S.D. I. p.62.
5. Cf. Śat. Br. XII.5.2.14; VIII.2.3-4.
6. Cf. Ṛgv. IX.86.25cd *apām upasthe ... ṛtasya yonā*.
7. Of the Western scholars, Bergaigne was aware of the difference between the Unborn and the first born. See *Religion Védique*. III. p.21.



8. The "six regions", or elsewhere the "six directions" of space are shown in *The Secret Doctrine* as symbolised in the "Double Triangle", "the junction and blending together of pure spirit and matter, of the *arūpa* and the *rūpa*, of which the Triangles are a Symbol. This double Triangle is a sign of Viṣṇu; it is Solomon's seal, and the Śrī-yantra of the Brahmans." (S.D. I.p.118)
9. Cf. Śat. Br. VI.1.3; X.6.5.2. Cf. Manu 1.8. See also F.D.K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ*. 1960. Ch.II, for an appraisal of the waters.
10. Quoted in Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, p.74. See also his comments on these "primordial images expressing the evolution of the divine life before it became fully conscious and began to move."
11. A whole chapter of *The Secret Doctrine* treats of the "Mundane Egg" and its meaning in the various world cosmogonies. (S.D. I. p359ff.)
12. Cf. Tait. Br. III.7.14.2; Tait. S. I.8.11.1; Tait. Ā. I. 24.2; Bṛhad Up. I.2.2: *āpo vā arkaḥ*; Athv.I.33.1; Ṛgv.I.10.7&8: *svarvatīr āpaḥ*.
13. Cf. S.D. II. p.502: "Space in its abstract sense was called the 'realm of divine knowledge', and by the *Chaldees* or Initiates *Ab Soo* [=Apsu], the habitat (or father i.e. the source) of knowledge, because it is in space that dwell the intelligent Powers which *invisibly* rule the Universe".
14. Cf. Ṛgv.VII.49.4; 47; X.9.1&6.
15. " ... Occult science recognizes Seven Cosmical Elements - four entirely physical, and the fifth (Ether) semi-material, as it will become visible in the air towards the end of our Fourth Round, to reign supreme over the others during the whole of the fifth." (S.D. I.p.12)
16. It may be of interest to students of the *esoteric tradition* that in the *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (A. Bailey) *ākāśa* is thus described:  
"Ākāśa, in manifestation, expresses itself as Fohat, or divine Energy, and Fohat on the different planes is known as aether, air, fire, water, electricity, ether, *prāṇa* and similar terms. *Ākāśa* is called 'the first differentiation of pregenetic matter' (op.cit. p.43) or the "sea of fire" of the Stanzas of Dzyan, the equivalent of the "radiant waters" of the Bṛhad Upaniṣad.
17. See *Eight Upaniṣads* p.311-12, fn2. Note also that the *Ākāśādhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtra* (1.1.22) identifies *ākāśa* with *brahman*. In the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* the Absolute is designated as *cid* and its first manifestation is *cidākāśa*, all of which substantiate H.P.B.'s comments on Cosmic Ideation and Cosmic Substance (S.D. I. 325ff).
18. A succinct history of the identification of *brahman* with *ākāśa* in its original sense and its subsequent modification of sense is found in Rao Bahadur Divanji's "Brahma-Ākāśa equation"; summary of a paper read in the Indian Philosophy Section of the XIXth session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, Lucknow, 1944. (*Poona Orientalist*. X. nos.1&2, 1945).
19. *The Great Mother: an analysis of the archetype*, by Erich Neumann, 1974; and *The Myth of the Goddess*, by Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, 1993.
20. Hints as to Aditi's character are few and scattered throughout the three Vedas and this accounts for the early scholars' lack of appreciation of her grandeur, integrity and wholeness, as conceived by the ṛṣis, to the point of referring to her "low profile" (Keith), as though the most striking feature about her, or to her name having been invented to account for the Ādityas! However, Ph. Colinet noted her "rather complex character" but kept to a more or less etymological analysis of Aditi (*Le Muséon*. XII.1.1893). R. Roth observed in her "the eternal, the imperishable principle which supports the Ādityas and is supported by them" as *light*, the light of the empyrean (ZDMG. VI) - a remarkable insight. But A.A. Macdonell (*Vedic Mythology*. 1897) did not seem to find this important. Since then appreciation has grown.
- Before H.P.B.'s death, there were some studies on Aditi, but no scholar seems to have realised the metaphysical implications of Aditi and her link with *ākāśa* and the Waters of space. Among the older studies are:
- D'Anselme, H. "Diti et Aditi des Hindous". *Annales. Philosophie Chrétienne*. 1877.
- Hillebrandt, A. *Über die Göttin Aditi (vorwiegend im Rigveda)*. Bresl. 1876.
- Macdonell, A.A. *Vedic Mythology*. 1897.

Among the more recent ones:

Przyluski, J. "The Great Goddess in India and Iran". *Indian Historical Quarterly*. 10 (3) 1934; 14. 1938.

For this author Aditi's unlimited sovereignty means that "she is superior to the gods", a doubtful surmise as her son Varuṇa seems to have the hegemony.

Werner, K. "Symbolism in the Vedas and its conceptualisation". In *Numen*. Fasc.3. 1977. Werner perceptibly observed that "the Motherhood of Aditi symbolises the mystery of creation and also the experience of the mystic of being an offspring of the infinite..."

Brereton, J.P. *The R̥gvedic Ādityas*. New Haven. 1981.

21. *Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*. 1985. p.179.

22. *Cosmic Waters in the Vedas*. p.93-4 (manuscript)

23. In R̥gv.I.72.9 ambiguity is seen in a reference to the broad mother Aditi, or to the infinite Mother Earth. In the Atharvaveda XIII.1.38 and elsewhere *pr̥thivī* means the broad world, the world of expansion, hence matter, rather than our earth which is *bhūmi*. In the Nighaṇṭuka - the vocabulary prefixed to the Nirukta, Aditi is shown as a synonym of *pr̥thivī*, *vāc*, *go* (cow). In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa "Aditi is this earth, she is this supporter" (Śat.Br.II.2.1.19) and "Pr̥thivī is the word or vāc". Pr̥thivī becomes the Great Mother (*mahī mātā pr̥thivī* Śat. Br. XIII.1.6.1) to whom humans look up and Aditi slowly fades out of the Vedic cosmic vision just as that cosmic vision also disappears. H.P.B. points out: "Venus is the later mythological variant of Gaea, Gaia, the Earth, which in its higher aspect is Prakṛti, Nature and metaphysically Aditi, and even *mūlaprakṛti*, the root of *prakṛti*, or its noumenon." (S.D.II.p.65). All these goddesses, and indeed philosophical conceptions, have one common source, that archetypal image of Space, the Cosmic Matrix in which appear and disappear the endless chains of universes.

24. Note how Uranus destroys his children by Gaea; Kronos, Time, mutilates Uranus, produces Titans by Rhea but to devour them; allegorical tales pointing to Nature's various attempts at producing offsprings and races, and their inexorable end.

25. *The Great Mother*. p.226, 227.

26. Quoted in Plutarch. *De Iside et Osiride*. This was later ascribed to Isis who superceded all the goddesses.

## CHAPTER 3

## SPACE, THE COSMIC MATRIX; THE WATERS,

ĀKĀŚA, ADITI, IN THE VEDAS AND THE SECRET DOCTRINE  
WHAT SPACE REPRESENTS

Space, "the all-containing uncontained" which in our century has been reduced to a more or less meaningless, abstract idea, is, according to *The Secret Doctrine*

"... the container and the *body of the Universe* in its seven principles. It is a body of limitless extent, whose PRINCIPLES ... – each being in its turn a septenary – manifest in our phenomenal world only the grossest fabric of *their sub-divisions*. 'No one has ever seen the Elements in their fullness' the Doctrine teaches. We have to search for our Wisdom in the original expressions of the primeval people and in their synonyms. Even the latest of them - the Jews - show in their Kabbalistic teachings this idea, e.g. the seven-headed Serpent of Space, called 'the great Sea'." (S.D. I. p.342)

Space, as the *Cosmic matrix* and *cradle of life* wherein myriads of universes incessantly appear and disappear, is of utmost importance in any cosmogony. H.P.B., in her attempt to make the notion of space in its many faceted-meaning, understandable to readers, even though so out of tune with the modern viewpoint, was at great pains to explain and comment upon it.

"The One Eternal Element, or element-containing Vehicle, is *Space*, dimensionless in every sense: co-existent with which are endless *duration*, primordial (hence indestructible) *matter*, and *motion* – absolute 'perpetual motion' which is the 'breath' of the 'One' Element." (S.D.I. p.55)

"Space is neither a 'limitless void', nor a 'conditioned fullness', but both; being – on the plane of absolute abstraction, the ever-incognizable Deity, which is void only to finite minds, and on that of *māyāvic* perception, the Plenum, the absolute Container of all that is, whether manifested or unmanifested; it is, therefore, that *ABSOLUTE ALL*. There is no difference between the Christian Apostle's 'in Him we live and move and have our being', and the Hindu ṛṣi's 'the Universe lives in, proceeds from and will return to Brahman (Brahmā)'; for Brahma (neuter), the unmanifested, is that Universe *in abscondito*, and Brahmā, the manifested, is the Logos, made male-female<sup>1</sup> in the symbolical orthodox dogmas ... Space is called, in the esoteric symbolism, the 'Seven-Skinned Eternal Mother-Father'." (S.D.I.p.8-9)

Seven, the recurring number in the ancient scriptures, is the number of Nature; space appearing in "seven levels"; with "seven hosts" of beings; within which "seven ways" or landmarks (Ṛgv.X.5.6) are measured, etc. This "seven-skinned eternal Mother-Father" is the "sevenfold ocean foundation" of the Ṛgveda (VIII.40.5 *sapta budhnam arṇavam*), also called the "sevenfold waters",<sup>2</sup> a notion of course incomprehensible to scholars, for philology cannot give the key to its meaning though that clue is found in *The Secret Doctrine*. Number 7 is mentioned frequently enough in the Ṛgveda to hint at an esoteric doctrine summed up in the sevenfold *waters* or *foundation* of the ocean or universe - still left unexplained in exegesis.

Scholars all too often assert that the later *śruti* should not be taken as giving explanations of the earlier, whereas in so many Ṛgvedic verses a mention is made – e.g. the sevenfold waters – of which the meaning transpires in later texts. Thus, in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* (vol.V.p.196-99, Wilson's translation quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*), the seven planes of cosmos are expressed as "the seven forms of nature (Prakṛti) reckoned from Mahat to earth ... these seven successively re-enter into each other" at the time of dissolution. To this quotation H.P.B. adds in a note: "The Seven 'zones' have reference to the Seven Divisions of that Universe..." (S.D.I.p.373.fn).

These "seven" thus refer to seven differentiated basic levels of cosmic matter which, with the lives that ensoul them, are considered worlds in themselves, both from the substance and the intelligences standpoint, i.e. denizens evolving in them; the three lowest levels being the most differentiated and dense, the three highest being more and more ethereal, the fourth holding the equilibrium. This seems to be hinted at in the Ṛgveda, where the seat of Varuṇa is mentioned as being at the source of the "rivers" where he dwells together with his "Seven Sisters" (Ṛgv.VIII.41.2) – an otherwise unintelligible hint. What is striking in these divisions is that they take into account subtler levels of cosmic matter not obvious to our physical senses, but perceived by

subtler senses used by the sages in their moment of illumined vision. Their division can therefore not be adapted literally to a materialistic world that presents us only with what is seen by our physical, but unreliable senses. Vedic cosmogony and all ancient cosmogonies, and that of the Stanzas of Dzyan, remain "fanciful" to the modern reader just because we cannot conceive dimensions beyond the visible, whereas the visible for *seers* is but the tip of an iceberg which stretches infinitely beyond its visible tip.

H.P.B. explains that for the *secret doctrine*

"Space is the real world, while our world is an artificial one. It is the One Unity throughout its infinitude: in its bottomless depths as on its illusive surface; a surface studded with countless phenomenal Universes, systems and mirage-like worlds." (S.D.I.p.615)

"Space is called the 'Mother' before its Cosmic activity, and Father-Mother at the first stage of re-awakening." (S.D.I.p.18)

"... the first that re-awakes to active life is the plastic *ākāśa*, Father-Mother, the Spirit and Soul of Ether ..." (ibid.p.18)

In ancient cosmogonies many names have been given to space: the Waters, the Great Abyss, the Mother deep, chaos, Aditi, *ākāśa*, *hiraṇyagarbha* the golden egg, such expressions referring to that universal matrix in which occurs the drama of creation and destruction, of perpetual formation and transformation. Looked at metaphysically, space is both a void and a fullness; it is both intangible substance out of which are shaped all forms in space, and it is the emptiness of a matrix that gives shape! The idea of water, sea, ocean out of which the worlds are fashioned recurs again and again, hence the notion of space as a fluidic, intangible ocean. Thus the Sumerians for whom out of the primeval sea all things emerged, the Egyptian NUN out of whose dark waters Atum emerges to start creation, the solar-empowered Waters of Space of the Vedic hymns transformed in the Upaniṣads in *ākāśa*, that glowing subtle "substance" or essence which is "woven warp and woof on *akṣara*", the eternal-word, another mystery- sound and *ākāśa* being one, to be explained in chapter 5 on *logos*.

H.P.B. remarks that what

" the world regards simply as cosmic Space, and abstract representation, the Hindu ṛṣi, the Chaldean magus, the Egyptian hierophant held, each and all, as the one eternal Root of all, the playground of all the forces in Nature. It is the fountainhead of all terrestrial life, and the abode of those (to us) invisible swarms of existences ... that surround us on all sides, that interpenetrate the atoms of our Kosmos, and see us not, as we do not either see or sense them through our physical organisms. ... In Space there is not matter, force, nor spirit, but all that and much more. It is the One Element, and that one the Anima Mundi – Space, *Ākāśa*, Astral Light – the Root of Life which, in its eternal, ceaseless motion, like the out- and in-breathing of one boundless ocean, evolves but to reabsorb all that lives and feels and thinks and has its being in it. As said of the universe in *Isis Unveiled* it is:

'The combination of a thousand elements and yet the expression of a single Spirit – a chaos to the sense, a Kosmos to the reason.

Such were the views upon the subject of all the great ancient philosophers, from Manu down to Pythagoras, from Plato to Paul' ". (E.W.p.317-18 =C.W.14,p.412)

H.P.B. explains the *Tohu-vah-bohu* of Genesis as

"... the 'Great Deep' ... identical with 'the Waters of Chaos' or the primordial Darkness". (E.W.p.193 = C.W.14, p.235)

"Chaos ... is Theos, which becomes Kosmos; it is Space, the container of everything in the universe. As Occult teachings assert, it is called by the Chaldeans, Egyptians and every other nation Tohu-vah-bohu, or Chaos, confusion, because Space is the great storehouse of creation, whence proceed not forms alone, but also ideas, which could receive their expression only through the Logos, the Word, Verbum, or Sound." (E.W. p.198. C.W.14, p.243)

It is important to remember that a distinction is made between "matter" in "abscondito" as the "unmanifest essence", or Root of all and "primordial matter", the first differentiation, though invisible and intangible to us, hence the first manifestation, subject to the limits of the law of cycles, "the eternal and changeless law which causes the great periods of activity and rest." This eternal, changeless Law causes "primordial matter" to assume transformations – the *degrees* of matter which become the *levels* or planes of the cosmos, or the "seven-skinned eternal Mother-Father" whose differentiations *make* space. Hence the

fullness during manifestation and the void when all disappears into the bosom of Parabrahman. This unmanifest essence, or "matter *in abscondito*" is regarded as

"... the eternal Root of all, the *mūlaprakṛti* of the Vedāntin, and the *svabhāvat* of the Buddhist, the divine Essence, in short, or Substance; the radiations from this are periodically aggregated into graduated forms, from pure Spirit to gross matter; the Root, or space, is in its abstract presence the Deity itself, the Ineffable and Unknown One Cause." (E.W.p.192 =C.W.14, p.234)

"*Svabhāvat*<sup>3</sup> is the mystic Essence, the plastic root of physical Nature – 'Numbers' when manifested; the Number, in its Unity of Substance, on the highest plane. The name is of Buddhist use and a synonym for the four-fold Anima Mundi, the Kabbalistic 'Archetypal World', from whence proceed the 'Creative, Formative, and Material Worlds' ..." (S.D.I.p.98-99)

*The Secret Doctrine*, as explained in ch.1, here parts company with Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta as they are known to us, yet stands close to the *Ratna-gotra-vibhāga*. Nevertheless, this Eternal Essence is said to withdraw completely from manifestation during the period of *pralaya* where

"Alone the 'One form of Existence' stretched boundless, infinite, causeless ...".

The "One form of Existence" is H.P.B.'s rendering of *Prabhavāpyaya* which she then explains :

"The Sanskrit word is Prabhavāpyaya, 'the place (or rather plane) whence is the origination, and into which is the resolution of all things' ... The Purāṇic Commentators explain it by Kāraṇa, 'Cause' - but the Esoteric philosophy, by the *ideal spirit of that cause*. It is, in its secondary stage, the Svabhāvat of the Buddhist philosopher, the eternal cause and effect, omnipresent yet abstract, the self-existent plastic Essence and the root of all things, viewed in the same dual light as the Vedāntin views his Parabrahman and Mūlaprakṛti, the one under two aspects." (S.D.I.p.46)

"It is called 'Substance-Principle', for it becomes 'substance' on the plane of the manifested Universe, an illusion, while it remains a 'principle' in the beginningless and endless abstract, visible and invisible SPACE. It is the omnipresent Reality; impersonal, because it contains all and everything.

*Its impersonality is the fundamental conception of the System. It is latent in every atom in the Universe, and is the Universe itself.*" (S.D.I.p.273)

Whatever may be the bone of contention between the Vedāntins,<sup>4</sup> the Buddhists and *The Secret Doctrine* regarding this Substance-Principle whose substance belongs to the plane of illusion, disappears regularly, but whose principle is everlasting, it remains true that the Ṛgveda (X.129) shows the ṛṣis' idea of an ABSOLUTE THAT hidden by darkness, indistinguishable as *water*, hidden by the *void* from which emerges the ONE through *tapas*. What are these "waters", what is this "void", or darkness but terms trying to express the inexpressible state beyond being, beyond non-being? When faced with this inconceivable ultimate state, all the quarrels about terms, whether Vedāntic or Buddhist, or Christian, fade into insignificance and the wisdom of the line of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad becomes most meaningful:

"whence words return together with the mind, not attaining it." (Tait.II.4.1)

Three specific points are implied concerning space in the above quotes to be examined in connection with the Vedas:

- 1) Space as *essence* or *primordial substance* (though intangible and invisible at our level of differentiation), called "water" in the Ṛgveda, implying an imponderable essence, or solar-empowered waters, also personified in Aditi, later in the Upaniṣads to be called *ākāśa*, and later called *aether* by the Greeks, out of which all things are born and to which they all return.
- 2) Space as the *aggregate of atomic lives* from the subtlest to the grossest plane of manifestation; space as self-existent, inclusive and nurturing; hence space as variously personified in many of the Mother goddesses – Aditi, Tiamat, Aphrodite, Venus issuing out of the foaming sea; the Canaanite goddess Asherah called 'Lady of the Sea', the Sumerian Nammu of the primordial ocean, Isis "born in the all-wetness"; the Virgin Mary, "star of the sea" whose esoteric significance is quite lost to Catholics.
- 3) Space as the *field of vibration*, the medium through which vibrates the *logos*, that formative power which moulds all things out of the essence which is space, and through the activity of those hosts of celestial beings, the devas and asuras of the Ṛgveda, born of space, "organises space". This will be examined in the chapters on Logos (ch.5) and on the organisation of space (ch.7).

The whole graded differentiation of Root-matter from beyond the unmanifest to the manifest is explained in

*The Secret Doctrine* in terms of *mūlaprakṛti*, – "the first abstract idea one can form of Parabrahman"; the "primary aspect" being undifferentiated chaos, referred to in the various ancient cosmogonies, some of which start with this aspect; from this proceeds "dual natured *ākāśa*" whose grosser aspect is the Aether of the Greeks. Notwithstanding these finer distinctions and indeed to simplify these, "aether" is often used by H.P.B. as a synonym for *ākāśa*, even for primordial matter, (and ether, without the *a*, is used for its lower manifestation, the fifth element of the Greeks and the Hindus. But H.P.B. does not always keep to these finer distinctions; we have to remember this, otherwise there may be confusion). Of this primordial substance she writes:

"... We touch and do not feel it; we look at it without seeing it; we breathe it and do not perceive it; we hear and smell it without the smallest cognition that it is there; for it is in every molecule of that which, in our illusion and ignorance, we regard as Matter in any of its states, or conceive as a feeling, a thought, an emotion. In short, it is the '*upādhi*', or vehicle, of every possible phenomenon, whether physical, mental or psychic. In the opening sentences of *Genesis*, as in the Chaldean Cosmogony; in the *Purāṇas* of India, and in the *Book of the Dead* of Egypt; it opens everywhere the cycle of manifestation. It is termed 'Chaos', and the face of the waters, incubated by the Spirit proceeding from the Unknown, under whatever name." (S.D.I. p.330)

H.P.B. sums up the meaning thus:

"... 'Waters' is another name of the 'Great Deep', the primordial Waters of space, or *Chaos*, and also means 'Mother', *Ambā*, meaning Aditi and *Ākāśa*, the Celestial Virgin-Mother of the visible universe." (S.D.I. p.460)

#### SPACE AS "WATER" IN THE VEDAS

Space conceived as "waters" is earlier in its expression than space conceived as *ākāśa*. It appears in the Ṛgveda where the word *ākāśa* is not yet used. It is obviously not "water" in our sense of the word, but the term may have been chosen because the endless expanse of ocean with its perpetually seething motion suggested a tremendous power behind it all, a mirror of the heavens and their infinitude of space in whose depths countless universes revolve in circle, appear and disappear endlessly.

In the Ṛgvedic hymns of creation figure night, darkness, void, billowy waters, ocean-depths concealing *That which is* (Ṛgv.X.190, 129, 121, etc.), all expressive of that state of being which the Greeks called chaos, *Genesis* the Face of the Deep, and the Norse cosmogony the Abyss.

The "celestial waters" (*apo devīh*) are in Ṛgveda X.109.1 stated to be first born by means of the Law which is the Cosmic Order (*prathamajā ṛtena*). We have already seen how Order and Truth were "born of blazing *tapas*" thereby forming the blueprint of this universe. Here the assertion is again that everything unfolds in accordance with the Great Law which is the fundamental Law from which derive all other laws: the "waters" become manifest from their state of latency as void to their state of activity as primordial substance called "water", in accordance with the one law of unfoldment and eternal becoming to which the universe is subject. In the Atharvaveda the same is repeated with a slight variation which occurs in the alteration of the case ending of the word *ṛta* which here takes on the genitive. Thus:

"The waters are the first born of the Cosmic Order" (Athv.V.17.1 *prathamajā ṛtasya*).

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa explains:

"The flowing of the waters is a manifestation of eternal truth.

It is the waters indeed that were made first of this universe; hence when the waters flow, then everything whatsoever exists is produced here." (Śat.Br.VII.4.1.6)

"For water is the foundation of this universe." (Śat.Br.VI.8.2.2) 5)

H.P.B. has an important comment concerning the term "water":

"In all Cosmogonies 'Water' plays the same important part. It is the base and source of material existence. Scientists, mistaking the word for the thing, understood by water the definite chemical combination of oxygen and hydrogen, thus giving a specific meaning to a term used by Occultists in a generic sense, and which is employed in Cosmogony with a metaphysical and mystical meaning." (S.D.I.p.64)

Naïve literalism such as is evident in most modern interpretations of the ancient cosmogonies prevents their

understanding in the sense that they were meant. The specific qualification of the waters as "radiant", "igneous", which can be traced back to the Ṛgveda where Agni, the seed of life, is generated by the Waters (Ṛgv.X.91.6b; X.121.7) is succinctly and clearly worded in one of the earliest Upaniṣads:

"The waters are flame"; or "the waters are radiant" (*āpo vā arkaḥ* . Brh.Up.I. 2.2)

which shows that the waters are not literal waters, but something different. This will be examined in due course.

The Naighaṅṭuka (1.12) identifies the waters with the womb of *ṛta*, Cosmic Order. The waters being the cradle of all, and subject to the one Law, harbour Law, Order, or *ṛta*, the divine signature *in principio*; hence orderly unfoldment towards a differentiated manifestation is impressed upon them at the very beginning. 6)

One Ṛgvedic hymn of creation enquires

"What seed primeval did the waters conceive wherein all the gods appeared together?"

The answer comes:

"That seed primeval which the waters conceived wherein all the gods appeared together,

[is] the ONE set within the core of the UNBORN, wherein stand all the worlds."

(Ṛgv.X.82.5-6)

This is a most esoteric verse quite in line with the *secret doctrine*. Here is marked a distinction between the ONE and the UNBORN, the former being the active or manifest Deity, the Creator; the latter, the unmanifest, the ABSOLUTE; a distinction far too often ignored by Western exegesis, 7) - also by later Brahmanic texts, and one that reveals that aspects of the *secret doctrine* were known to the ṛṣis. In Ṛgv.I.164.6 a similar distinction is also drawn in the question:

"What was that One who in the image of the Unborn established these six regions?"

8)

This is the distinction between the One that arose through the impact of *tapas* in X.129.3 and That which stands behind the One, here called Unborn. The One is a manifestation of the Unborn through the intermediary of the "waters" that conceive the seed through which the One emerges from the core of the Unborn to existence. This distinction was soon to be lost sight of, but it is hinted at in such verses as the above, and in Stanza of Dzyan I, explained by H.P.B. thus:

"... in Occult metaphysics, there are, properly speaking, two 'ONES' – the One on the unreachable plane of Absoluteness and Infinity, on which no speculation is possible; and the Second 'One' on the plane of Emanations. The former can neither emanate nor be divided, as it is eternal, absolute, and immutable. The Second, being, so to speak, the reflection of the first One (for it is the Logos, or Īśvara, in the Universe of Illusion), can do all this. It emanates from itself – as the upper Sephīrōthal Triad emanates the lower seven Sephīrōth – the seven Rays or Dhyāni-Chohans; in other words, the Homogeneous becomes the Heterogeneous, the 'Protyle' differentiates into the Elements ..."

(S.D .1.p.130)

The idea that beyond the waters is the impersonal Absolute, the Unborn, or That (*tat*) clearly appears in the earlier *śruti*, in the Ṛgveda, the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the Taittirīya Samhitā:

thus the Creators are born from the Waters, they emerge to manifestation through the waters, e.g. Viśvakarman, the All-creator, identified with Prajāpati, is said to "be born of the primeval Waters" (Tait.S.IV.6.2.3). In Śat.Br.II.1.6.1-11, the golden egg is born in the Waters, as though the Waters shaped it; in lines 1 to 2, the desire to create the universe is ascribed to the Waters themselves, as they produce a golden egg:

"In the beginning this 'universe' was nothing but the undulating waters (*salilam*). They with the desire to reproduce themselves toiled and became heated, when a golden egg was born of them. The year was not yet born; but this egg floated about as long as a year, bringing forth Prajāpati at the end."

(Śat.Br.II.1.6.1-2)

There is no doubt that here Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, is the offspring of the Waters, born out of them, emerging to activity through them as indeed the One of Ṛgv.X.129. But the opposite is also expressed. In many other passages of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Prajāpati is shown as desiring to create, and toiling produces the waters. 9) And this becomes the norm in later texts.

The golden egg or matrix formed by the unfurling of the Waters implies the coming into activity of primordial matter. It is the first step. In Ṛgv.X.121.7 the Waters break forth from their state of latency to give birth to Agni. They either assume the shape of the world egg, which H.P.B. calls the "mundane egg" – the word *garbha* in Sanskrit meaning seed, egg, womb, matrix, embryo – and conceive the fire which is inherent to them, or they conceive the embryo which becomes Agni:

"When indeed unfurled the mighty waters bearing the universal egg,  
generating Agni; thence was the one life-breath of the gods evolved." (X.121.7)

Note the one life-breath of the *devas* being evolved after Agni, the flame divine, emerges as an entity out of the "Waters", this one life-breath being an emanation of the flame and inherent to the *devas*.

A comparison of this aspect of the Waters with the ancient Heliopolitan cosmogony of Egypt is also instructive as it once again corroborates *The Secret Doctrine's* claim of a primeval wisdom, part of the legacy handed down to humanity, influencing all ancient cosmogonies. Thus the Egyptian Creator God, Atum, is shown rising out of the "Waters", NUN. His toiling is depicted as an arising as a high hill:

"O Atum! When you came into being you rose up as a high Hill ...  
Hail to you O Atum! Hail to you, O Becoming One who came into being of

himself!

You rose up in this your name of High Hill,  
You came into being in this your name of 'Becoming One'."

(*Pyramid Texts*. Utterance no.600 & 587)

How the Egyptians envisaged the travailing of the High God is also found in the *Coffin Texts*:

"I was the (spirit in) the Primeval Waters,  
he who had no companion when my name came into existence.  
The most ancient form in which I came into existence was as a drowned one.  
I was (also) he who came into existence as a circle,  
he who was the dweller in his egg.  
I was the one who began (everything),  
the dweller in the Primeval Waters." (C.T.714) 10)

Noteworthy are the archetypes of circle and egg, but equally is the idea of the drowned one who has not yet risen to consciousness. Strange premonition that consciousness had to be developed through existence in matter. H.P.B. comments upon the archetype of the "egg":

"The 'Mundane Egg' is, perhaps, one of the most universally adopted symbols, highly suggestive as it is, equally in the spiritual, physiological, and cosmological sense. Therefore, it is found in every world-theogony ... The mystery of apparent self-generation and evolution through its own creative power repeating in miniature, the process of Cosmic evolution in the egg, both being due to heat and moisture under the efflux of the unseen creative spirit, justified fully the selection of this graphic symbol. The 'Virgin-Egg' is the microcosmic symbol of the macrocosmic prototype - the 'Virgin Mother' – Chaos or the Primeval Deep." (S.D.I. p.65) 11)

The Waters of Space of the Vedas are said to be "bright", "brilliant", "lustrous", "radiant" 12); they are the "divine mothers", the nurturing goddesses who pour honeyed, rich milk on their devotees. They have the brightness of the sun (Tait.S.I.8.11.1). They possess fiery energy or splendour (*tejas*), light (*jyotis*), creative vitality (*ojas*) (Athv.I.35.3), they have the brilliant energy (*varcas*) of the solar power, hence they are solar powered (*svarvatīh*) (Ṛgv.I.10.8; V.2.11), they have the gift of life and light which they convey in their billowy depths. "Fire is in the depths of the Waters" (Tait.S.V.6.4.4); within these "is immortality, is heavenly balm" (Ṛgv.I. 23.19). Within these dwell and move the luminous deities, Agni, Sūrya-Savitṛ, both aspects of the solar deity, as well as Pūṣan, the glowing eternal pilgrim, Lord of pathways; also the Aśvins, the heavenly travellers who circumnavigate the heavens on their golden path each morn with Uṣas, the brilliant and



mighty Dawn, as also Varuṇa, Lord of Cosmic Order, Mitra, Indra, in fact all the gods that grant light, illumination, inspiration, ecstasy. 13) The gods feed and thrive on the exhilarating "vigour" inherent to the Waters 14) which are not just anything at all, not thin air, not nothing, but something of vast import to the well-being of all denizens of the celestial spaces. Within them shines with divine effulgence Agni their seed or embryo, the "Son of the Waters", Apām Napāt (Ṛgv.III.1.5), the active, fiery power hidden in the passive waters. Such descriptive epithets point to a fiery energy, an inherent luminosity as of the very essence of the "waters", an igneous quality that tells us that the "waters" stand for something quite different from their literal meaning, that there is here a "technical" term that takes us to the future term *ākāśa*.

The Vedas use many words for *water*, but *waters* is usually *āpaḥ* meaning both terrestrial and celestial waters, that out of which forms are shaped, the very substratum of all. But these *waters* also mean "the waters of life", and the "waters of inspiration" to which the solar-powered waters (*svarvatīḥ*) lead: those that grant illumination. Other words are *salila* with the connotation of flowing, undulating water (used in Ṛgv.X.129.3); *samudra*, ocean, whose other dimension comes out in the expression, *samudra hrdaya*, the ocean of the heart. The cosmic ocean may belong to the *devas*, but the inner ocean, its mirror, certainly belongs to humanity. Hence the flights of inspiration and divine revelations that form the basis of mythology, the "repository of man's cosmic sentience". But far away "to the billowy ocean" (*samudram arṇavam*) of space goes the human spirit and the ṛṣi endeavours to call him back (X.58.5) here below.

The conquest of waters is *arṇasāti* (cf.II.20.8; IV.24.4) and parallels the conquest of the sun (*sūryasya sāti* II.19.4) and of the sacrifice (*medhasāti*), all expressive of an inner conquest of profound significance. For *svarmīḥa*, the reward of *svar* or illumination, is the result of the conquest of the waters! (I.63.6). The latter are the seething waters of the "unconscious". A further word, infrequent in the Ṛgveda, yet used in X.129.1 is *ambhas* evoking an abyss whose depths are ever unplumbed. It came to mean power and fruitfulness, the original qualities ascribed to the waters, *āpaḥ*. Its plural *ambhāmsi* was applied in due course of time to the four groups of beings: gods, men, ancestors (*pītaras*) and *asuras* (by then degraded to demons). In the Taittirīya Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa the "waters are all the deities" (*āpo vai sarvā devatāḥ*) for the *devas* emerged out of them (ô Ye who were born of the waters and of aditi... ô X..63.2) and are made of their very substance; to these may refer an invocation in the Ṛgveda:

"I call upon the celestial and the earthly generations, the Waters, to the banquet."

(V.41.4)

Concerning the four groups of beings called *ambhamsi*, H.P.B. has a noteworthy comment:

"The 'four orders of beings' are referred to sometimes as '*ambhāmsi*', which Wilson renders as 'literally Waters', and believes it 'a mystic term'. It is one, no doubt; but he evidently failed to catch the *real* esoteric meaning. 'Waters' and 'water' stand as the symbol for *ākāśa*, the 'primordial Ocean of Space', on which Nārāyaṇa, the self-born Spirit, moves: reclining on that *which is its progeny*. (See *Manu*, 1.10.) 'Water is the body of Nāra; thus we have heard the name of water explained. Since *Brahmā* rests on the water, therefore he is termed Nārāyaṇa.' (See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Wilson. vol.1.p.56-7.)

... At the same time Water is the third principle in material Kosmos, and the third in the realm of the Spiritual: *Spirit* of Fire, Flame, *ākāśa*, Ether, Water, Air, Earth, are the cosmic, sidereal, psychic, spiritual and mystic principles, *pre-eminently occult*, on every *plane* of being. 'Gods, Demons, Piṭris and men' are the four orders of beings to whom the term *ambhāmsi* is applied (in the *Vedas* it is a synonym of gods,) because they are all the product of WATERS (mystically), of the *ākāśic* Ocean, and of the Third Principle in nature ...

Water is, in another sense, the feminine principle. Venus-Aphrodite is the personified Sea, and the mother of the god of love, the generator of all the gods, as much as the Christian Virgin Mary is Mare (the sea) the mother of the Western God of Love, Mercy and Charity. If the student of Esoteric philosophy thinks deeply over the subject, he is sure to find out all the suggestiveness of the term *Ambhāmsi*, in its manifold relations to the Virgin in Heaven, to the Celestial Virgin of the Alchemists, and even to the "Waters of Grace" of the modern Baptist." (S.D.I .p.458 fn)

The divine waters (*āpo devīḥ*), nurturing mothers bringing blessings, healing and immortality (X.30.12; I. 23.19) are "radiant" with that sun that brings inspiration to the poets who, in establishing their

vision, win the sun in the waters (Ṛgv.V.45.11), another meaningful image. Psychologically, the light of insight emerges from the depths of the "unconscious". But in the "midst of the waters [of space] moves King Varuṇa looking down upon the truth and deceit of men" (VII.49.3ab). The waters that act like the celestial, mirror-like glory of the Avestan *hvareno* into which only the pure of heart can gaze, are like a glass in which "the inspired sages watch over their intuition refulgent as heavenly light" (X.177.2). Such are the waters of the Vedas; they constitute the matrix and cradle of cosmos, wherein the sages read into their own psyche, receive their inspiration, see the past and the future, and read some of the mysteries of life and death. For as said in *The Secret Doctrine* (II.p.502) space is the realm of divine knowledge where "dwell the intelligent Powers which invisibly rule the Universe". Their compass is far extending and deep indeed; they engulf all and they bring all to life; in them, psyche, their child, emerges as the mirror and the kindler of that which is hidden in their unfathomable depths. But they are not literally waters!

As mentioned earlier, the Waters are described as "radiant" in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (1.2.2). The curious word used here is *arka*: *apo va arkaḥ*, which conceals a whole insight into the subtler levels of Nature and of the ṛṣis' visioning powers, a knowledge which has been lost to us ever since. The word means both 1) *light* and, in its verbal form, *shining* or *glowing*, and 2) *sound* and *singing*. It also means lightning. For the ṛṣis who were *seers* their songs or hymns "shone", their radiance "sang", light and sound fusing at the inner and subtler levels of visionary insight. The singers "bring light in their mouth" as they chant their mantras (Ṛgv.X.67.10). *Arka* is the flashing hymn, and Indra's thunderbolt is *arka*, it flashes and sings (X.153.4), or *arka* is a thunderbolt! The poet excites himself by such words: "Sing forth" or "shine forth a bright hymn" (*citram arkam*). By means of fire-hot songs (*agnitapobhir arkaiḥ*) the Lord of Prayer, Brahmaṇaspati, shattered the darkness and revealed its treasure.

That the Waters are *arkaḥ* may be interpreted as the waters being radiant as well as singing, a most esoteric expression which is left unexplained, but which paves the way for the later *ākāśa*, where glow is inherent to the verbal root *kaś*, and whose "property" is *sound*, according to the *śruti* itself. (See J.U.B. I.23.1-2 etc) This shows *water* as precursor, in terminology, to the later *ākāśa*. In the Waters is therefore the flame power of life and death, of creation and destruction, Apām Napāt conceived by the Waters themselves; as well as the constructive and destructive power of sound vibration (*in akṣara is ākāśa woven warp and woof*. Bṛhad Up.III.8.11)

Gradually the special meaning of the "Waters" with their inherent mystery faded away from men's ken, although it still appears e.g. in the Bṛhad. Upaniṣad where the word *ākāśa* is also used: "This universe was but water in the beginning." (Bṛhad.Up.V.5.1) Śāṅkara comments thus:

"That water, which is the seed of the universe, remains in its undifferentiated form.

This entire universe, differentiated into name and form, was just this water in the beginning ..."

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad explains further:

"This earth, the air, the heavens, the mountains, gods and men, domestic animals and birds, plants and trees, wild creatures down to worms, flies and ants are nothing but this water under solid conditions, they are all nothing but this water under solid conditions." (Chānd.Up.VII.10.1)

A quaint explanation indeed, but one which shows "water" as the material out of which all things are formed; it is quite in agreement with *The Secret Doctrine* according to which

"Metaphysically and esoterically, there is but One ELEMENT in nature, and at the root of it is the Deity; and the so-called *seven* elements, of which five have already manifested and asserted their existence, are the garment, *the veil, of that deity*, direct from the essence whereof comes MAN, whether physically, psychically, mentally or spiritually considered. Four elements only are generally spoken of in later antiquity, five admitted only in philosophy. For the body of ether is not fully manifested yet ..." (S.D.I. p.460) 15)

In both the quotes from the Bṛhad. and the Chāndogya Upaniṣads *water* as essence in its original undifferentiated state is the ultimate source of matter. On this sweet essence (*madhuścutaḥ*) thrive the gods (Ṛgv.VII.49.3,4), the one "element" being both the habitat and the ambrosia of the gods.

#### THE WATERS OF SPACE AS ĀKĀŚA

A new word was coined to describe those "waters" on which feed the gods, of whose blessings, as celestial goddesses, the ṛṣis sang: *ākāśa*.

Through  
*ākāśa*  
*ākāśa*  
 is  
 The ultimate habitat of all is "radiant water" – or *ākāśa*.  
 which  
 was, is  
 and shall be, that is woven within and throughout in *ākāśa*." (Bṛhad.Up.III.8.4)  
*Ākāśa* is here raised beyond all other elements and indeed all things, to their very source, back to the *prima materia*. What was visioned in the Ṛgveda as the undulating waters, generating fire, is now called *ākāśa*: "In the beginning (all) this was *ākāśa*, and that is so even now." (J.U.B.I.23.3)

H.P.B. identifies *ākāśa* with

"... PRIMORDIAL SUBSTANCE (*Ākāśa*, in Sanskrit)", this being "the *upādhi* [vehicle] of DIVINE THOUGHT ... the latter would be better named COSMIC IDEATION- Spirit; the former, COSMIC SUBSTANCE, matter. These, the Alpha and Omega of Being, are but the two *facets* of the one Absolute Existence." (S.D.I.p.326)

Here again the positive and negative polarities are shown as inherent to any manifestation of which the various expressions in the Ṛgveda have already been mentioned.

*Ākāśa* is thus described in *The Secret Doctrine*:

"... *ākāśa* - of which Ether is the grossest form - the fifth universal Cosmic Principle (to which corresponds and from which proceeds human *Manas*) is, cosmically, a radiant, cool, diathermanous plastic matter, creative in its physical nature, correlative in its grossest aspects and portions, immutable in its higher principles. In the former condition it is called the Sub-Root; and in conjunction with radiant heat, it recalls 'dead worlds to life'. In its higher aspect it is the Soul of the World; in its lower – the DESTROYER." (S.D.I.p.13 fn)

From *The Secret Doctrine*'s viewpoint, the real *ākāśa* is the sub-root of *mūlaprakṛti*, or root-matter, which is here called the one "element" as it is the substratum of all the 7 elements which unfold from it, two of which have not yet unfolded. These distinctions should be kept in mind as there is often confusion between *ākāśa* and the fifth element as manifested on earth, *ether*, as known to the Ancients, which is but an ultimate differentiation of *ākāśa* on this our plane of matter, and not even fully unfolded and so denied existence by modern science. So once again H.P.B. endeavours to clarify the subject:

"... once *ākāśa*, an almost homogeneous and certainly universal principle, is translated ether, then *ākāśa* is dwarfed and limited to our visible universe, for assuredly it is not the ether of space. Ether, whatever modern science makes of it, is differentiated substance: *ākāśa*, having no attributes save one – SOUND, of which *it is the substratum* – is no substance even exoterically and in the minds of some Orientalists, but rather chaos, or the great spatial void. Esoterically *ākāśa* alone is Divine Space, and becomes ether only on the lowest and last plane, or our visible universe and earth. In this case the blind is in the word 'attribute' which is said to be sound. But sound is no attribute of *ākāśa*, but its primary correlation, its primordial manifestation, the LOGOS, or divine ideation made Word, and that 'WORD' made 'flesh'. Sound may be considered an 'attribute' of *ākāśa* only on the condition of anthropomorphizing the latter. It is not a characteristic of, though it is certainly as innate in it as the idea 'I am I' is innate in our thoughts." (E.W.p.395-6 = C.W. 12, p.611)

This *sound*, as a correlation of *ākāśa* rather than an attribute, refers to statements made in the Hindu *śruti*:

"In the beginning (all) this was *ākāśa*: and this is so even now.

What this *ākāśa* is, that is the word. Therefore the word speaks from *ākāśa*.

This same word the Lord of beings pressed and from it when pressed out streamed forth the sap. That became these worlds." (J.U.B.1.23.1-2)

The *Anugītā*, part of the *Aśvamedha Parvan* of the *Mahābhārata*, put it simply thus:

"Now *ākāśa* has one quality and that is stated to be sound only." (ch.35)

This aspect of *ākāśa*, as *logos*, the creative vibration, the voice, or *Vāc* of the *Ṛgveda*, will be studied in chapter 5 on *Logos*.

*Ākāśa* as a philosophical term of importance first appears in one of the oldest of the *Upaniṣads* as quoted above, and seems to be equivalent to the later term *mūlaprakṛti*, but its meaning varies in the *Upaniṣads* themselves where consistency is often lacking, perhaps because a metaphysical vocabulary had not yet been settled. Its verbal root being *kaś*, it is evident that the basic sense of the word is to glow, or shine. This brings out the idea of luminosity, so peculiar to *Aditi* as we shall see in the next section. It is that which appears first and is luminous by its very nature, the luminous essence of the inwardness of space, if one can put it thus. A similarity may be seen in the root of the Greek word *aither* (*aitho* I make light) which is related to the gleaming or brilliancy of fire. *Ākāśa* is thus akin to fire in its essential nature, or could one say that it is the noumenon of fire? 16) One thing is certain: whether the *Ṛgveda* uses the word "water" or the *Upaniṣads* the word *ākāśa*, the vision is one of the radiant, luminous or fiery depths of space, something similar to the vision of the Stanzas of *Dzyan* – "the shoreless sea of fire" of the "upper space" (3:7), which H.P.B. describes as "the super-astral (i.e. noumenal) Light, the first radiation from the Root, the *mūlaprakṛti*, the undifferentiated Cosmic Substance which becomes Astral matter. It is also called the 'Fiery serpent' ..." (S.D.I. p.75)

This *ākāśa* which is both space as matrix and the substance of space, is thus further described by H.P.B.:

"*Ākāśa*, the astral Light- can be defined in a few words; it is the Universal Soul, the Matrix of the Universe, the '*Mysterium Magnum*' from which all that exists is born by separation or *differentiation*. It is the cause of existence; it fills all the infinite Space, is *Space itself*, in one sense, or both its *Sixth* and *Seventh* principles. But as the finite in the Infinite, as regards manifestation this light must have its shadowy side ... And as the Infinite can never be manifested, hence the finite world has to be satisfied with the *shadow alone*, which its actions draw upon humanity and which men attract *and force to activity*. Hence, while it is the *universal Cause* in its unmanifested unity and infinity, the Astral Light becomes, with regard to Mankind, simply the effects of the causes produced by men in their sinful lives. It is not its bright denizens – whether they are called *Spirits of Light* or *Darkness* – that produce Good or Evil, but mankind itself that determines the unavoidable action and reaction in the great magic agent. It is mankind which has become the "Serpent of *Genesis*", and thus causes daily and hourly the Fall and sin of the 'Celestial Virgin' – which thus becomes the Mother of gods and devils at one and the same time; for she is the ever-loving, beneficent deity to all those who stir her *Soul and Heart*, instead of attracting to themselves her shadowy manifested essence, ... which kills and destroys. Humanity, in its units, can overpower and master its effects; but only by the holiness of their lives and by producing good causes. It has power only on the manifested *lower* principles." (S.D.II.p.511-12)

The *Ṛgvedic* hymn of creation (X.129) hints at a clear division in very succinct terms:

"Their vision's rays stretched afar. There was indeed a below, there was indeed an above. Seed-bearers there were, mighty powers there were. Energy below, will above." (X.129.5)

In his commentary on *Taittirīya Up.* II.1.1 Śaṅkara makes it clear that *ākāśa* has been identified with that state that pervades in the highest heaven (*parame vyoman*) and with that space which is the hidden spot of the heart, the *ākāśa* of the heart where *puruṣa* is said to lie (cf. *Kaṭha Up.*II.20 and *Bṛhad Up.*II.1.17). Śaṅkara comments:

"*Ākāśa* here means the supreme Self, which is identical with its own self. It [*puruṣa*] lies in that Supreme Self, which is its own nature and transcendent; not in the ordinary ether... " 17)

One of the Commentators, Ānanda Giri, perceptibly notes that "the element *ākāśa* cannot be called *parama* (supreme), it being an effect of unmanifest *ākāśa*"; thus admitting to the two levels of meaning which he qualifies as unmanifest-manifest. As he points out, in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, it is the unmanifest *ākāśa*

which is bound to the "immutable Brahman" (*akṣara*, the eternal-word) and not the element *ākāśa*. This shows clearly that *ākāśa* in its primordial sense was still known as different from *ākāśa* as the fifth element, at that time, and was not yet confused with the fifth element. With the loss of the original meaning of *ākāśa*, 18) came misunderstanding of these primeval teachings, and then garbled explanations.

#### SPACE AS ADITI IN THE ṚGVEDA

Space, which is the only poor translation of *ākāśa* that we have, is an ocean of energies; hence of activity centred around focal points all inter-related, all vibrating to particular frequencies in sympathetic resonance or rejection, in a vast network of magnetic interplay; some shaping forms from nebulae to starry galaxies, to solar systems, to planets, to atoms and their infinitesimal subdivisions; forms within forms; other shaping pathways through the vast spaces, others transformed into the medium in which all moves and pulsates. For the *esoteric tradition*, as for its Hindu expression, space is a vibrant entity, the living abode of high intelligences, each with its unique quality, each an integrating centre, in all of which we move and breathe and think; hence the constant interaction of intelligence-consciousness-awareness-reaction-contact and substance which itself is fully impregnated with quality, and made more responsive, constantly transformed as a result of this perennial interplay. Says the Chāndogya Upaniṣad:

"What is considered space (*ākāśa*) is the accomplisher of name and form."

(Chānd.Up.VIII.14.1),

the translator reminding us that name and form are equivalent to the modern term "individuality". It is thus through and because of *ākāśa* that all things have a form enshrining a life or vital core. *Ākāśa* has thus a vital function to perform, it accomplishes creation, it is the womb of life and its multi-variegated expressions. H.P.B. describes it as the Universal Soul, the *mysterium magnum*, for it is the vehicle of life. It thus becomes somewhat more comprehensible why the poetic mind of visionary sages could envisage this celestial "veil", *ākāśa*, behind which looms the majesty of the ever Unknowable Absolute, as the "Universal Mother", the Celestial Virgin as H.P.B. calls her, fashioning the galaxies and bearing all seeds of life.

"Upper Aether, or *ākāśa*, is the celestial virgin and mother of every existing form and being from whose bosom, as soon as 'incubated' by the Divine Spirit, are called into existence Matter and Life, Force and Action. Aether is the Aditi of the Hindus and it is *ākāśa* ... Who knows where ends the power of this protean giant – Aether; or whence its mysterious origin? Who, we mean, that denies the spirit that works in it, and evolves out of it all visible forms?" (S.D.I.p.332)

"'Ideal Nature', the abstract Space in which everything in the Universe is mysteriously and invisibly generated, is the same female side of the procreative power in Nature in the Vedic as in every other Cosmogony. Aditi is Sēphirāh, and the Sophia-Akhamōth of the Gnostics, and Isis, the Virgin Mother of Horus." (S.D.II.p.43)

Who is Aditi? What does she represent in the Vedas? Can she in any way be equivalent to *ākāśa*, a philosophical concept? Aditi is so little known except to a handful of Vedic specialists that she does not appear in such books as *The Great Mother* or *The Myth of the Goddess*,<sup>19</sup> although she should have her place of honour in such well researched studies, her place as the Aryan Great Mother, a figure of lofty ideal which our 19th century sceptical scholars found difficult to admit. 20) One may ask, how did H.P.B. know of her meaning and place in Vedic cosmogony when hardly any real study had been written about her? She described her as

"... very properly called the 'Mother of the Gods', *deva-mātṛ*, as it is from her Cosmic matrix that all the heavenly bodies of our system were born - Sun and Planets." (S.D.I. p.99)

Described in the Nirukta (IV.22) as the divine Mother of noble-minded gods, Aditi appears in the Ṛgveda as the Mother of the luminous deities, "the lords of truth", who are "vast, profound, mighty through the law" (II.27.2, etc.), who wax strong by means of the *ṛta*, which is truth, who are born of that Order as the very embodiment of the Law which they serve; for they are the "herdsmen of the Supreme-Law whose decrees are truth" (V.63.1ab). Dawn is the "face" or "splendour" of the boundless (I.113.19 *aditer anīkam*), the word *aditi* being generally derived from *a* (negative) + *dā* to bind, = the unbound or boundless.

A peculiarity of Aditi emerges from the fact of her motherhood of the luminous deities of truth and order: she is the matrix of that order, its very light, "queen of the Cosmic Order", "spouse of the Law". Therein she

"upholds the races of men" (I.136.3) and "grants them protection". Hence hers are inviolable statutes (VII.66.6), even like her son, Varuṇa, Ruler of the ṛta whose statutes are fixed as on a mountain (VIII.47.9b). She is in the Vedas the Great Mother whose most frequent epithets are *luminous*, *celestial*, *sun-possessing* or *solar-powered* (*svarvatī* from *svar*, the solar glory), and true (*ṛtāvarī*). These are far from meaningless epithets, but each gives us far more than a glimpse into her stature as envisaged by the ṛṣis. Her three main attributes, those of *motherhood*, *spaciousness* or *boundlessness* and *light*, make of her the all embracing divine Mother in whose light men find life, the very personification of space. Note that a) *hiranyagarbha*, the "golden egg" which is space, the effulgent matrix; b) *svar*, the solar splendour of illumination; and c) *aditi*, the infinite which, personified as the Mother, becomes the Giver of light, luminosity, protection and nurture; the truth; all this implies that human beings, according to the Vedas, live and move and have their being in light, in the effulgence of infinite divinity, a conception which joins, as the next chapter will show, that of the Universal Mind of the Stanzas of Dzyan. As St Paul also remarked ages later, we live in the divine, however little we may realise or are capable of grasping this. A verse from the Atharvaveda stresses the idea of freedom which is "bound up" with the "boundless":

"Open yourself, create free space; release the bound one from his bonds!  
Like a new born child, freed from the womb,  
Be free to move on every path." (Athv.VI.121.4) (R. Panikkar's translation)

As shown in my book on Cosmic Order,

"Freedom is a recurring theme in Vedic prayers, freedom from all limitations, from all that which hampers the free flow of life, that freedom that removes all obstacles, physical, moral, mental, all transgressions against the law, all diseases, poverty or oppression, and darkness; that freedom whose basis is purity, harmony, well-being ...  
'May we be free, (may we be) sons of freedom, (may we be) a stronghold midst gods and mortals, ye luminous gods.' (VII.52.1ab)" 21)

A refrain asking for the boon of freedom and completeness in Ṛgv.X.100 could be rendered thus: "We choose freedom and wholeness", a request implying the wish for the total integration of the human being in the cosmic harmony. So Aditi is asked for protection, for shelter:

"May Aditi protect us, may Aditi grant us shelter." (VIII.47.9ab)  
"O gods, O sons of freedom, O ye that transcend all evil, from distress  
there is freedom, for the sinless a treasure." (VIII.67.7)  
"The enemy has no hold over those to whom Aditi's sons give their eternal  
light to live." (J. Gonda's rendering of X.185.2&3)

In the Yajurveda, Aditi is

"The Great Mother on whom the universe of life has settled." (Yjv.v.s.18.30);  
"The Queen of Order, strong ruler, far-extending, ne'er decaying,  
Aditi, gracious guide and good protectress." (Yjv.v.s.21.5)

She is in the Atharvaveda

"The Queen of righteousness, of powerful authority, immovable,  
wide extending, of good protection and safe guidance." (Athv.VII.6.2)

Her *light*, one of her most important gifts, being the light of solar splendour *svar*, is indestructible, dazzling, free from danger; mystically this means illumination.

"I call upon Aditi's incomparable portion, unlimited, solar-splendoured,  
worthy of worship." (Ṛgv.I.185.3ab)

"May divine, irresistible (*anarvā*) Aditi help us." (Ṛgv.II.40.6; cf. VII.40.4)

"With Aditi, the luminous, celestial upholder of the people", the Ādityas, those sleepless watchers whose dominion is light, are called upon to come to the altar each day (Ṛgv.I.136.3). As she is the Queen of Cosmic Order, she represents truth, *ṛta*, a little word of many faceted meanings: ultimate truth, Cosmic Order, law and righteousness in so far as humans are concerned. In her protection are freedom and harmlessness. As Aditi and the Ādityas stand for moral order, a human being who dwells in the light of Aditi, cannot transgress against the Law, he is "true", "righteous" and cannot be harmed, he is "inviolable" (*ariṣṭa*).

"Light and righteousness are, in this inner sense, one. The gods of light are not to be deceived, they

are truthful, righteous and can read the human heart. This is the essence of Ṛgvedic ethics and the secret of the light of Aditi and its safeguard and protection against all transgressions ... Truth and light in both their ethical and cosmogonical sense combine in her in a masterly way to outline one of the grandest of goddesses that the human mind has ever projected, one in whom the demarcation lines between the ethical and the cosmogonical are not as sharp as with us, perhaps to our greater loss for such sharp separations veil the vision of wholeness." 22)

Thus Aditi holds in herself the significance of "wholeness". Plenitude and undividedness do imply wholeness, without flaws, hence holiness, even innocence. In herself, she meets that enunciation of a profound truth given out in a much later century by one of the greatest of wise ones: "the truth will make you free". In this wholeness, free from fear, from separateness, is freedom, the plenitude of life, the gift of Aditi. The whole vision of Aditi, as luminous Mother of truth, queen of Cosmic Order, has never been surpassed. This is another of the ṛṣis' far visioned conception hardly acknowledged.

Moreover, Aditi in the Ṛgveda is the womb of all beings, of all things, of the past and the future. This is stated unequivocally in one verse of far reaching implications :

"Aditi is heaven, Aditi is the mid-region, Aditi is mother and father and son.

Aditi is all the gods, Aditi is the five human races. Aditi is all that has been

born

and all that is to be born." (Ṛgv.I.89.10; cf. Athv.VII.6.1)

Obviously Aditi as space would be, as implied here, the matrix or container wherein emerge the universes, the past and the future, all seeds of life, and the threefold main divisions of Vedic cosmogony, the spiritual, or heaven, the mid-region *antarikṣa*, that which is seen from within, or the psycho-mental world, and the physical. She contains all aspects of manifestation, everything is present in her *in potentia* to bear fruit in the future, in due time. All aspects: creation, dissolution, life and death, growth and decay, the great cycles of time and dissolution, are implied in the words "Aditi is all that has been born and all that is to be born", even though the aspect of decay and dissolution is not spelled out in her as a goddess. Note the five human races; according to *The Secret Doctrine* there have been so far 5 root-races developing on earth, two are yet to come. Aditi is thus the personification of infinite space which is the womb of the *ṛta* woven throughout space.

There is one aspect to the word *aditi* seldom taken note of in most writings. On the authority of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad itself, the word can be derived from *ad* to devour, engulf, a derivation in keeping with the idea of Bṛhad.Up.I.2.5 where all is said to be covered by death or hunger, the great engulfing abyss of space that brings all things to birth and engulfs them back into its womb. This is indeed at the very basis of the "Great Mother" of ancient cosmogonies. For the Bṛhad.Upaniṣad, whatever the Lord of Beings,

Prajāpati "projected, he resolved to devour. Because he devours everything, therefore *aditi* is so called." (Bṛhad Up. I. 2.5)

This perpetual engulfing process spells the "devouring" concept of the Upaniṣads which Śrī Aurobindo summed up as "the eater eating is eaten" is the "truth, pregnant and terrible" that the ṛṣis faced. In Aditi, infinite space, Mother of Gods and men and regent of Cosmos, this generally dark aspect has disappeared. Her absence of hostility (*anarvan*), her unequivocal beneficence, innocence and luminosity, make her the "friend of all men" (VII.10.4), and the most outstanding of the Mother Goddesses. The darker side of cosmos is relegated to Nirṛti, goddess of dissolution, sometimes to Pṛthivī, sometimes to Uṣas who, from showing the beautiful countenance of Aditi, and inspiring hymns and lavishing good fortune on the poets, suddenly assumes, on just a few occasions, a darker face, a strange conduct. The *ghorā tanū* or awful mien of later expressions of the Indian World Mother as is portrayed in Kālī or Durgā, does not belong to Aditi. Her purity and lofty truth mark her out as of spiritual greatness, a grandeur far removed from our world of violence, lust, aggression, bloodshed and incomprehension of spirituality. Yet, she was realistic enough to the ṛṣis.

The Ṛgvedic ṛṣis envisaged space according to two ideas: that of the somewhat personified Mother-Queen of all, matrix or cradle from whom all is born, and that of the "essence", later called *ākāśa*; but in the Ṛgveda described as the "waters", those waters that unfurled at the beginning of creation, slightly personified as goddesses. There is a definite differentiation between Aditi and the Waters of space, the latter possessing treasures of milk, the honey-sweet- yielding waters, bright, purifying and healing, but having nothing to do with the Cosmic Order as such and human alignment with the *ṛta* in order to reach out to higher spheres. The

"Waters" of space could be taken as Aditi's "depths", her "billows", her "garment", that out of which she is thought to have woven the framework of all things in manifestation, if the Vedic poets went so far in their personification. The Waters' gift is nourishment, physical and spiritual, they bring health and invigoration, they have that healing quality that drives away disease, washes away sin, that balm that brings men back to wholeness (X.137.6). They possess the solar power, they carry and convey its light and life. Aditi restores to wholeness through forgiveness, through declaring innocence, after due repentance and changing of ways. The contrast between both is there, even though they overlap somewhat. In fact they complement and contrast each other; they are both solar-powered, helpful, protective and demand righteousness, though in the case of the "Waters" only indirectly. But the word *aditi* is never juxtaposed to *hiranyagarbha*, golden matrix or egg, although effulgent light is Aditi's gift, she being the luminous matrix whence emerge the universes.

It is in the domain of ethics that Aditi towers above the Waters for she embodies in herself *ṛta* and her sons, the *Ādityas*, are "herdsmen of the Supreme-Law" whose ordinances are secure (II.29.1 *dhṛtavratā ādityā*). She is the "Spouse of the Law" (*ṛtasya patnīm* Athv.VII.6.2 = Yjv.VS.21.5). Among such contrasting and complementary ideas, what strikes most in Aditi is her all enfolding cradle of life, nurturing, healing and orderly, implying Law, from which derive all fruitfulness, joy, righteousness, which none may infringe without harming himself.

When all this is considered, compare the quotation already given concerning Aditi in the Ṛgveda:

"Aditi is heaven, Aditi is the mid-region, Aditi is mother and father and son.

Aditi is all the gods, Aditi is the five human races. Aditi is all that has been born and all that is to be born." (Ṛgv.I.89.10)

with the following three quotations from the Upaniṣads:

"That which is above the heaven ... and that which is beneath the earth, and that which is

the heaven and the earth, and what is between them, and that which they say was, is and shall be, that is woven within and throughout in *ākāśa*." (Bṛhad.Up.III.8.4)

*Ākāśa* is here the philosophical term taken to mean the ultimate source of all things, the *prima materia*, that through and by means of which all things are fashioned, or "woven warp and woof" by the supreme *akṣara*, the word or Logos.

"All these beings verily arise out of *ākāśa* and are finally absorbed in *ākāśa*.

*Ākāśa* is verily greater than any of these. *Ākāśa* is the final resort." (Chānd.Up.I. 9.1)

"In *ākāśa* are both the sun and the moon, the lightning and the stars and fire.

Through *ākāśa* one calls out; through *ākāśa* one hears; through *ākāśa* one answers

...

in *ākāśa* one is born." (Chānd.Up.VII.12.1)

Change the word *ākāśa* to *aditi* and the same idea comes out from the Upaniṣads as from the Ṛgveda.

H.P.B.'s identification of "Aditi, or Cosmic Space" (S.D.I.p.53 fn) with *ākāśa* (S.D.I.p.332), at a time when few studies had been written on Aditi, is in itself quite remarkable and perfectly correct.

For H.P.B. Aditi is space and space is *ākāśa* in the Vedas.

"In the ṚgVeda, Aditi 'the Boundless' or infinite Space ... is the equivalent of 'Mother-

Space', co-eval with 'Darkness'. (S.D.I.p.99)

"In the *Vedas* Aditi is the primitive light, the *ākāśa* of the phenomenal world."

(S.D.II.p.42 fn)

For H.P.B. Aditi, "the Mother of the Gods" is

"Shekhinah, eternal light – in the world of Spirit, the 'Great Deep' and CHAOS; or primordial Substance in its first remove from the UNKNOWN, in the manifested Kosmos." (S.D.II.p.527)

The main difference between the presentation of Aditi and *ākāśa* is obviously that *ākāśa* is an abstract philosophical term whereas Aditi stands, as we have seen, for the grandest of archetypes of Motherhood, the living Great Mother, Queen and Guardian of Cosmic Order to whom men turn in their need or distress, whose



great Son, Varuṇa is also Lord of ṛta to whom men turn in their despair. Note that this ṛta, "born of blazing *tapas*", born of the contemplative exertion of the ONE, which to the ṛṣis was the "toiling" of the Lord of Creation (X.190 and X.129), this Order thanks to which all unfolds in accordance with the Law, has its very basis, support and reflection in Aditi, not only the "boundless", but also the "mother", the "spouse" of *ṛta*. In this Order, both abstract and personalised, there is room for the Infinite and for compassion, forgiveness, love, which our logic and divisive mind have separated. Aditi was identified with the Vedic symbol of cosmos and nature, the Cosmic Cow from whose udders streams the nurturing milk of life and in whose "abode was born the mighty eternal-word" (Ṛgv.III.55.1), which, whether as *Vāc* or *akṣara*, came to be realised as one with *ākāśa*; hence Aditi's identification with *Vāc*, i.e. with the *Word* that shapes all forms within space, the *word* that fashions the universes as the "waters flow along", and finally with Pṛthivī, identified with the Earth.

Aditi's grand figure, expressive of that vision that looked up to the infinite cosmos, Aditi, the living embodiment of wholeness, of truth and light in both their ethical and cosmogonical sense, whose final and innermost gift is that freedom which is herself, is that inwardness of truth whose outer garb is "innocence", the transparency of truth; Aditi, queen of cosmos, regent of the human heart and safeguard against evil, slowly dwindled away from man's cosmic perception – like the vision of Cosmic Order that the ṛṣis intuited and of which they chanted in their hymns which, in coming down to the human level, split into two aspects, *karma* and *dharma*, and thereby lost that touch of *cosmic majesty* which had belonged to it. Aditi became identified with Pṛthivī the broad, in its sense of Mother Earth who herself becomes the Great Mother (Śat.Br.13.1.6.1 23)

But enough hints remain in many verses of the three Vedas, Ṛg, Yajur and Atharva Vedas, to show us the grandeur of the ṛṣis' conception of Space: matrix and cradle of life's transformations, nurturing substance on which feed the intangible and luminous denizens of what we call the "beyond" who really are "within" rather than "beyond"space; Mother and Queen of all to whose merciful heart turns the sinner, Aditi whose ultimate "descendent", completely anthropomorphised and personalised, emerges in the figure of the blessed Virgin Mary of Catholics, Mother of the Lord of Christianity, "Star of the Sea" and also *Mater dolorosa*.

Underneath it all looms a supreme archetype constellated throughout the ages from which the human mind cannot escape but from which it draws sustenance and comfort.

#### FROM ADITI TO THE CHRISTIAN MADONNA

The great realities of the spiritual world to which we, for the most part, have lost the key, are reflected as archetypes in the depth of the human psyche. Because these can never be seen by physical eyes, they have been likened to points of luminous energies scintillating brightly or dimly, overbearingly and all engulfingly or just fleetingly. How to read them or understand them correctly? When brought into contact with the light of the conscious mind they immediately assume contours taken from the environment which the form-making faculty of the mind endows them with. This partially explains why the language of the scriptures relies upon natural objects for expression, which become symbols of something quite beyond them. The archetypes have that peculiar characteristic that they hold all opposites together, the good and bad, the terrible and the gracious, the high and the low, as obvious in the Mother goddesses of the Ancients, or the many Creator Gods. This very inclusiveness makes them ambiguous, strange, unaccountable. The two opposite poles, birth and death, creation and destruction, spirit and matter, are seen as two inseparable aspects of the One, like the yin and yang that form the circle of wholeness in Chinese philosophy.

The Cosmic Matrix or ocean of Space is experienced in vision as the infinitude of fiery mists or the indistinguishable vastness of billowy space, but archetypally as the Dragon of wisdom, that knows the past and foresees the future, for all is "written" in its folds; or as the coils of the serpent of eternity, of that all containing but undifferentiated, divine substance, as with the Hindus or the Ancient Egyptians; and finally as the Universal Mother, later Father 24) the All Encompasser, bringing forth her offspring, devouring them back into herself but to bring them forth again – the wheel of life and death, of eternal recurrence. Of this, the serpent with its repeated sloughing off of its skin in perpetual rejuvenation is the supreme symbol. In the *Book of Sarparājñī* this Cosmic Ocean is thus described:

"In the beginning before Mother became Father-Mother, the Fiery  
Dragon  
moved in the infinitudes alone." (Quoted in S.D.I.p.74)

In the Egyptian *Pyramid Texts* a similar configuration finds expression thus:

"I am the outflow of the Primeval Flood, he who emerged from the waters.

I am the Provider of attributes' serpent with its many coils.  
I am the Scribe of the Divine Book which says what has been and effects

what is yet to be." (Pyramid Text.1146)

From *The Secret Doctrine* one gathers that the Dragon of Wisdom found a mirror in the heavenly vault as the "seven headed Draco" each of whose head was a star in a particular constellation and represented as well the 7 principles, the 7 planes of the cosmos, the 7 zones of post-mortem ascent. In the substance of space, in *ākāśa*, is inscribed the whole history of our planet and of cosmos as each unfolds its panorama woven of the very essence of life – hence the line:

"I am the scribe of the Divine Book which says what has been and effects

what is yet to be."

Among these ancient archetypal images that go far back into the dimness of time, looms large on the screen of cosmos the Mother Goddesses in whose vast mantle was seen to throb the heavenly constellations rising on the horizon, revolving across the heavens and disappearing in endless succession, but to rise again. This vast cosmic order spelled out the transformations occurring within the body of the Great Mother, Space, and these were mirrored on earth as eternal becoming. As E. Neumann put it

"... that is why ... the Great Mother, adorned with the moon and the starry cloak of night, is the goddess of destiny, weaving life as she weaves fate ... The primordial mystery of weaving and spinning has also been experienced in projection upon the Great Mother who weaves the web of life and spins the threads of fate, regardless whether she appears as one Great Spinstress or, as so frequently, in a lunar triad." 25)

So Aditi, as all encompassing Mother, as Cosmic Cow from whose udders stream the milk of life; identified with Vāc, the vibrating word fashioning the universe; identified with the Vedic altar to which converge all universal forces, godly and human; identified with Pṛthivī, the Earth; plainly shows us the evolution of our *human reading* of a vast luminous archetype whose constellations ramify to all the world's Mother goddesses, the all nurturing and the all engulfing, and whose root digs deep into our very psyche.

Pṛthivī, the earthly mirror of Cosmic Aditi, thereby bringing down to earth the cosmic vision, still kept something of the latter's grandeur. As beneficent Mother, wise, patient, kind and gracious, to whom a superb hymn is dedicated in the Atharvaveda (XII.1), she bears power, bounteousness, and is the fulfiller of wishes. But she too has her shadowy side, as expressed in the Yajurveda:

Pṛthivī "to whom people give praise as earth (*bhūmi*)

I know thee everywhere as *nirṛti*" (dissolution. Yjv.vs.12.64)

Pṛthivī's variegated aspects and cycles of recurrence make of her an embodiment of the Law that to human beings appears as unremitting, powerful and terrible (*ugra*). Thus in the darkness of the soil germinate those seeds that will bring forth their fruit and feed millions of creatures born of the soil and going back to that very soil of Earth. In the vast depths of space appear, intensify and disappear the myriads of starry constellations and universes. In the darkness of the human psyche is born and brought to maturity the great conceptions of philosophy or masterpieces of poetry and art that rejoice human beings or enlighten them, but to be cast away into the dust of bygone ages, just as in the darkness of the maternal womb is conceived, nourished and brought to birth the miracle of life, an infant, to grow, live and be killed or die and go back to the darkness of Earth. In this constant parallelism between the higher and the lower, between the abstract and the concrete, the illusive and the perennial, the self-assertion and the self-oblivion, the circuit of the offering and the taking, the eternal sacrifice, the ancient seers read the wisdom of the ages:

"Vast truth, unremitting order (*ṛtam ugram*), consecration, contemplative-exertion (*tapas*), prayer, sacrificial offering, these uphold the earth" (Athv.XII.1.1)

is the supreme vision of the interlocking of cosmic order and human aspiring activity in one vast offering which makes of the earth the central altar and mirror of the celestial Harmony, the holy ground wherein is voiced the

call of the Divine to the human and the human response to the Divine.

This vision born of all embracing space and emerging out of space to take root on earth is not alone that of Vedic India, but Egypt had it in full in its supreme sense of Cosmic Order and righteousness whose effigy, as Maat, Pharaoh offered to the gods as token of his rule in accordance with *Truth* and *Order*, and Greece inherited it, though perhaps not so fully.

One of the oldest of Egyptian goddesses, Neith had the following inscription in her temple at Sais: "I am all that has been and is and shall be, and my robe no mortal has yet uncovered," 26) a worthy parallel to Aditi's claim to be everything that is and that will be. Self-sustaining and self-existent, unknown, secret, all pervading Neith personified the primeval Waters, the great abyss, in short the all fruitful matrix of space in which all is born and to which all returns, the infinite "veil" of Deity. She was to be identified with Nut, the sky goddess and with Isis. Nut, with her elongated body arched like the sky vault over the earth, represented the whole creation which she contained in herself. As starry heaven she swallowed the sun at dusk, marking the 12 hours of the night as the 12 suns in her body but to give them birth again at dawn. She too is the great encompasser who takes back into herself her children as depicted on the inside lids of sarcophagi wherein the dead were laid thus embraced to repose by the heavenly Nut.

Supreme among the Egyptian mother goddesses, Isis emerges not only as Mother-wife-sister, not only as the rich slime deposits from which new life could spring, but as the very embodiment of Nature with all its mysteries and uncanny powers; and, adding another dimension to herself, supremely as the symbol of the human psyche. As her hieroglyph of the throne implies, she is the basis, hence the vehicle, just as the horse is the support and vehicle of the horseman; in other words, she is the vehicle of that spiritual spark which cannot manifest at this lower level except through such a support. Osiris' hieroglyph is also that of the throne, but on it sits the eye, sign of insight, or the sun disc, sign of illumination. He thus represents the Heavenly Man, the *puruṣa* of Sāṅkhya philosophy, the divine flame creating through the soul, his vehicle, his "son" Horus. Through Isis, that spiritual spark can manifest here and light the way. So the initiated candidate became first Isis through his knowledge and mastery of nature, then Osiris through having crossed the gates of death to finally conquer death, to become Horus and enter into his heritage of the splendour of the solar light.

We have come a long way from Space, impersonal matrix, yet Celestial Virgin, in whom manifest and disappear all galaxies and universes. Yet Isis, in her supreme nature, reflects that highest mystery of life born in the very depths of space, as in earth, symbol of virginity and fecundity, of that impersonal power that brings all things to fruition, of that immensity wherein nature's generous fruitfulness finds a personal, human mirror in the ineradicable archetypal image of the mother and her child. But on the way, the original celestial virgin and the livingness of space completely disappeared from human consciousness.

Isis lives on, for her archetypal image of mother and child is now transformed into that of the Blessed Virgin Mary and her child Jesus, crowned Queen of Heaven and Star of the Sea, Mother of mercy and compassion, or *Mater dolorosa*, thereby adding to herself that aspect of the human plight and human suffering which her predecessors had not emphasised, and finally called "Mother of God" among Catholics.

Statues of Black Virgins appeared in southern France, Spain, Switzerland and Poland, probably brought over by the Crusaders around the 10th century from the Orient as the Virgin Mary, but were they? with the regal, serene or far off look, some of whom with open chests revealing the face of God??? or of Christ??? or the world??? are mute yet eloquent witnesses to the ancient archetype that may change its garb, yet remains the same fundamentally, the all enfolding Mother Space, Queen of the heavens and Star of the Sea. The seated black virgin, with her son on her lap or in her arms, like Isis herself, emerges from the night of time as queen of that silent darkness wherein the miracle of birth and resurrection, and transformation and unfoldment is slowly being accomplished. Why black, the colour of mourning and renunciation? Its broader and fundamental meaning goes back to the dark soil that receives and holds the seed to bring it forth, and to the inner silence the daring pilgrim has to cross and master to find the pearl of great prize hidden behind. It points also to carbon, progenitor of the many faceted diamond, carbon the basis of organic substance, hence of living matter.

"Mother of God"? No average Roman Catholic seems ever to query such an absurdity! How can the causeless Cause of all Causes, the ONLY ONE have a mother? Does it not degrade the very conception of Deity to our human level? Or is there a mystery behind this title? We glimpse here the expression of a very ancient revelation which only *The Secret Doctrine* has somewhat elucidated for us. Thus one of the Stanzas of

Dzyan cryptically tells us:

"Darkness radiates light, and light drops one solitary Ray into the Waters, into the Mother-deep. The Ray shoots through the virgin egg, the Ray causes the eternal egg to thrill, and drop the non-eternal germ, which condenses into the world-egg." (3:3)

Darkness here symbolises the Absolute on whom no human speculation is possible. At a lower level, darkness is the matrix of all conceptions, at a higher, it represents the Absolute; the "egg", as already mentioned, is the archetype of the matrix of space, also expressed as the "Waters" and the "Mother-Deep". The Divine Ray dropped by the Light which is periodically irradiated from the DARKNESS shoots through these "Waters" or Celestial Virgin, and the starry universes emerge out of the substance of the Mother Deep through the vibration or word of the Ray now become the Logos, God in manifestation. Thus is the Mother-Deep, the Celestial Virgin called the Mother of God, behind whom looms the Ineffable, Causeless Cause of all causes, untouched by human speculation, "unthinkable" and "unspeakable", (Muṇḍaka Up. III.1.7,8) "whence words return together with the mind, not attaining it" (Tait.Up.II.4.1). Thus is the majesty of the Absolute preserved in the immaculate shrine of the Celestial Virgin reflected on earth as the mother goddesses; reflected as Mary, the madonna in the cradle of the human heart. Deep into the darkness of humanity's past and deep into the dark root of our psyche, the mystic senses the luminous archetype, ineradicable root of the Great enfolding Mother whose mantle is infinite Space with its starry galaxies, Lady of Wisdom, Sophia, Star of the Sea, Queen of Heaven, through whom we are born, nourished, reared, uplifted and resurrected into another dimension: for in our very depth the luminous spark, the *flame-divine*, the *word incarnate*, casts its light and calls on every one to "be free to walk on every path" for *every path of return* converges on the ONE WITHOUT A SECOND.

### CHAPTER 3 SPACE, THE COSMIC MATRIX, THE WATERS, ĀKĀŚĀ, ADITI, etc.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. H.P.B. refers us in a note to Manu's account of Brahmā separating his body into male and female, the latter, Vāc, in whom he creates Virāj; and to compare this with the esotericism of chapters 2, 3 and 4 of *Genesis* (S.D. I. p.9 fn) - that is, if one can read *Genesis* with the esoteric key.
2. Ṛgv.X.104.8. Cf.III.1.4&6; VIII.96.1.
3. The difficulties about this word *svabhāvat* have been outlined in ch.1. For all the research done on this term see D. Reigle's *Book of Dzyan Research Report: technical terms in Stanza II*. 1997. p.1-8.
4. See Śāṅkara's commentary on Brahma-sūtra 1.1.5ff; 1.4.28; 2.1.1ff. etc. where he refutes the idea of substance principle. Compare H.P.B.'s explanation in S.D. I. p.62.
5. Cf. Śat. Br. XII.5.2.14; VIII.2.3-4.
6. Cf. Ṛgv. IX.86.25cd *apām upasthe ... ṛtasya yonā*.
7. Of the Western scholars, Bergaigne was aware of the difference between the Unborn and the first born. See *Religion Védique*. III. p.21.
8. The "six regions", or elsewhere the "six directions" of space are shown in *The Secret Doctrine* as symbolised in the "Double Triangle", "the junction and blending together of pure spirit and matter, of the *arūpa* and the *rūpa*, of which the Triangles are a Symbol. This double Triangle is a sign of Viṣṇu; it is Solomon's seal, and the Śrī-yantra of the Brahmans." (S.D. I.p.118)
9. Cf. Śat. Br. VI.1.3; X.6.5.2. Cf. Manu 1.8. See also F.D.K. Bosch, *The Golden Germ*. 1960. Ch.II, for an appraisal of the waters.
10. Quoted in Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*, p.74. See also his comments on these "primordial images expressing the evolution of the divine life before it became fully conscious and began to move."
11. A whole chapter of *The Secret Doctrine* treats of the "Mundane Egg" and its meaning in the various world cosmogonies. (S.D. I. p359ff.)
12. Cf. Tait. Br. III.7.14.2; Tait. S. I.8.11.1; Tait. Ā. I. 24.2; Bṛhad Up. I.2.2: *āpo vā arkaḥ*; Athv.I.33.1; Ṛgv.I.10.7&8: *svarvatīr āpaḥ*.
13. Cf. S.D. II. p.502: "Space in its abstract sense was called the 'realm of divine knowledge', and by the

*Chaldees* or Initiates *Ab Soo* [=Apsu], the habitat (or father i.e. the source) of knowledge, because it is in space that dwell the intelligent Powers which *invisibly* rule the Universe".

14. Cf. *R̥gv.* VII.49.4; 47; X.9.1&6.

15. " ... Occult science recognizes Seven Cosmical Elements - four entirely physical, and the fifth (Ether) semi-material, as it will become visible in the air towards the end of our Fourth Round, to reign supreme over the others during the whole of the fifth." (S.D. I.p.12)

16. It may be of interest to students of the *esoteric tradition* that in the *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (A. Bailey) *ākāśa* is thus described:

"*Ākāśa*, in manifestation, expresses itself as Fohat, or divine Energy, and Fohat on the different planes is known as aether, air, fire, water, electricity, ether, *prāṇa* and similar terms. *Ākāśa* is called 'the first differentiation of pregenetic matter' (op.cit. p.43) or the "sea of fire" of the Stanzas of Dzyan, the equivalent of the "radiant waters" of the *Bṛhad Upaniṣad*.

17. See *Eight Upaniṣads* p.311-12, fn2. Note also that the *Ākāśādhikaraṇa* of the *Brahmasūtra* (1.1.22) identifies *ākāśa* with *brahman*. In the *Yogavāsiṣṭha* the Absolute is designated as *cid* and its first manifestation is *cidākāśa*, all of which substantiate H.P.B.'s comments on Cosmic Ideation and Cosmic Substance (S.D. I. 325ff).

18. A succinct history of the identification of *brahman* with *ākāśa* in its original sense and its subsequent modification of sense is found in Rao Bahadur Divanji's "Brahma-Ākāśa equation"; summary of a paper read in the Indian Philosophy Section of the XIXth session of the Indian Philosophical Congress, Lucknow, 1944. (*Poona Orientalist*. X. nos.1&2, 1945).

19. *The Great Mother: an analysis of the archetype*, by Erich Neumann, 1974; and *The Myth of the Goddess*, by Anne Baring and Jules Cashford, 1993.

20. Hints as to Aditi's character are few and scattered throughout the three Vedas and this accounts for the early scholars' lack of appreciation of her grandeur, integrity and wholeness, as conceived by the ṛṣis, to the point of referring to her "low profile" (Keith), as though the most striking feature about her, or to her name having been invented to account for the Ādityas! However, Ph. Colinet noted her "rather complex character" but kept to a more or less etymological analysis of Aditi (*Le Muséon*. XII.1.1893). R. Roth observed in her "the eternal, the imperishable principle which supports the Ādityas and is supported by them" as *light*, the light of the empyrean (ZDMG. VI) - a remarkable insight. But A.A. Macdonell (*Vedic Mythology*. 1897) did not seem to find this important. Since then appreciation has grown.

Before H.P.B.'s death, there were some studies on Aditi, but no scholar seems to have realised the metaphysical implications of Aditi and her link with *ākāśa* and the Waters of space. Among the older studies are:

D'Anselme, H. "Diti et Aditi des Hindous". *Annales. Philosophie Chrétienne*. 1877.

Hillebrandt, A. *Über die Göttin Aditi (vorwiegend im Rigveda)*. Bresl. 1876.

Macdonell, A.A. *Vedic Mythology*. 1897.

Among the more recent ones:

Przyluski, J. "The Great Goddess in India and Iran". *Indian Historical Quarterly*. 10 (3) 1934; 14. 1938.

For this author Aditi's unlimited sovereignty means that "she is superior to the gods", a doubtful surmise as her son Varuṇa seems to have the hegemony.

Werner, K. "Symbolism in the Vedas and its conceptualisation". In *Numen*. Fasc.3. 1977. Werner perceptibly observed that "the Motherhood of Aditi symbolises the mystery of creation and also the experience of the mystic of being an offspring of the infinite..."

Brereton, J.P. *The R̥gvedic Ādityas*. New Haven. 1981.

21. *Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*. 1985. p.179.

22. *Cosmic Waters in the Vedas*. p.93-4 (manuscript)

23. In *R̥gv.* I.72.9 ambiguity is seen in a reference to the broad mother Aditi, or to the infinite Mother Earth. In the *Atharvaveda* XIII.1.38 and elsewhere *pr̥thivī* means the broad world, the world of expansion, hence matter, rather than our earth which is *bhūmi*. In the *Nighaṇṭuka* - the vocabulary prefixed to the *Nirukta*, Aditi is shown as a synonym of *pr̥thivī*, *vāc*, *go* (cow). In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* "Aditi is this earth, she is this supporter" (*Śat.Br.* II.2.1.19) and "Pr̥thivī is the word or vāc". Pr̥thivī becomes the Great Mother (*mahī mātā*

*pr̥thivī* Śat. Br. XIII.1.6.1) to whom humans look up and Aditi slowly fades out of the Vedic cosmic vision just as that cosmic vision also disappears. H.P.B. points out: "Venus is the later mythological variant of Gaea, Gaia, the Earth, which in its higher aspect is Prakṛti, Nature and metaphysically Aditi, and even *mūlaprakṛti*, the root of *prakṛti*, or its noumenon." (S.D.II.p.65). All these goddesses, and indeed philosophical conceptions, have one common source, that archetypal image of Space, the Cosmic Matrix in which appear and disappear the endless chains of universes.

24. Note how Uranus destroys his children by Gaea; Kronos, Time, mutilates Uranus, produces Titans by Rhea but to devour them; allegorical tales pointing to Nature's various attempts at producing offsprings and races, and their inexorable end.

25. *The Great Mother*. p.226, 227.

26. Quoted in Plutarch. *De Iside et Osiride*. This was later ascribed to Isis who superceded all the goddesses.

CHAPTER 4: 'THE BLAZING DRAGON OF WISDOM': MAHAT, THE UNIVERSAL MIND, or ANIMA MUNDI

PART I

INTRODUCTION: UNIVERSAL INTELLIGENCE

We come now to specific aspects of the process of manifestation which involve the Universal Mind and substand all cosmic activities. This chapter and the next one exemplify the crux of the cosmogonic doctrine as it may be worked out from the R̥gvedic verses and the outlines given in *The Secret Doctrine*. Several points of great importance will be examined: Mahat in the R̥gveda as Universal Order, *rta*, but also somewhat personified in the regent devas; Mahat as manifesting through two polarities as well as seven definite channels of power variously named; and Mahat as activating all things by means of its two specific instruments, the Flame-divine or Agni and sound/vibration or Vāc (the latter explained in ch. 5). Sloka 6 of stanza 3 outlines a cosmic vision:

"The root of life was in every drop of the ocean of immortality, and the ocean was radiant light, which was fire, and heat, and motion. Darkness vanished and was no more; it disappeared in its own essence, the body of fire and water, of Father and Mother (STANZA OF DZYAN 3 : 6)

That ocean of immortality which is *radiant light* recalls the *solar-empowered waters* of the R̥gveda and the *ākāśa* of the Upaniṣads, both of which, like the radiant light, bear the seeds of life. Fire and heat and motion are, as explained in *The Secret Doctrine*, the *objective* manifestation of the *subjective* life: *fire*, the essence of "fire" H.P.B. calls electricity, represents *puruṣa*, *the divine spirit*; *heat* or "solar fire", because of its sun illumination connection, esoterically expresses consciousness (as will be discussed in chapter 6) and thereby relationship, hence duality; *motion* refers to the activity of matter seen as rotary, spiralling-cyclic and onward.<sup>1</sup>

In her comments H.P.B. immediately shows that these terms have a metaphysical meaning not to be taken literally:

"The Essence of darkness being absolute light, Darkness is taken as the appropriate allegorical representation of the condition of the Universe during Pralaya, or the term of absolute rest, or non-being, as it appears to our finite minds. The 'fire', 'heat', and 'motion' here spoken of, are, of course, not the fire, heat, and motion of physical science, but the underlying abstractions, the noumena ... the 'things in themselves' ... Fire and Water, or Father and Mother, may be taken here to mean the divine Ray and Chaos." (S.D.I.p.69)

The Stanza of Dzyan goes on:

"Behold, O Lanoo [disciple], the radiant Child of the two, the unparalleled refulgent glory : Bright Space, Son of Dark Space, who emerges from the depths of the great Dark Waters. It is Oeaoohoo, the Younger ... He shines forth as the Sun, he is the BLAZING DIVINE DRAGON OF WISDOM ... Behold him lifting the Veil, and unfurling it from East to West. He shuts out the above, and leaves the below to be seen as the great Illusion. He marks the places for the shining ones (*stars*) and turns the upper (*space*) into a shoreless Sea of Fire, and the One manifested (*element*) into the Great Waters." (Stanza 3:7)<sup>2</sup>

The "radiant child of the Two" - of those ultimate Poles of manifestation, the *Ray* falling into the essence of *ākāśa*, the Waters of space of the R̥gveda, those Parents merging back in the One Dark Space of which nothing can be known save through the "son" - the radiant child. This *child* could here indeed be thought to be AGNI, the Flame Divine, "charioteer of the Transcendent", charioteer of the *rta*, through whose glorious activity all things become manifest and all cosmic processes are possible. In the R̥gveda, Agni the all-knower (*viśvavid*), Agni the seer-will (*kavi-kratu*), Agni the ordainer (*vedhās*), Agni the "seven-rayed" "ruler of thought" heralds manifestation through the *tapas*, or blazing, cosmic creative fire of the UNBORN. The Cosmic Order, *rta*, stated to be "born of blazing tapas" (X.190.1) and Agni "first born of rta" (X.5.7) show how *rta*, *fire* and *orderly manifestation* implied by *rta* and implying mind, are so closely interlocked that the

hidden significance has hardly been noted; the *flame quality esoterically ascribed to mind* - give a man an ideal and he will set the world ablaze! The subject of Agni is so important that although relevant aspects will be brought out here, he will have to have a whole section for himself.

However, in the above stanza of Dzyan, this Blazing Dragon of Wisdom is referred to as Bright Space in contrast to the Dark Space from which it emerges, and is called by H.P.B. in her comments, not by the name of Agni, but by the Sanskrit word MAHAT. This means the Great One, the Universal Mind present everywhere in space. Elsewhere H.P.B. describes IT as "the first product of *Pradhāna*, or *Ākāśa*; and Mahat - Universal Intelligence, 'whose *characteristic property* is *Buddhi*' - is no other than the *Logos*, for he is called 'Īśvara', *Brahmā*, *Bhāva*, etc.",<sup>3</sup> in other words, the manifested Deity. Mahat is the only deity that can be somewhat conceived by the human mind.

In her commentary H.P.B. explains:

" 'Bright Space, son of dark Space', corresponds to the Ray dropped at the first thrill of the new 'Dawn' into the great Cosmic depths, from which it re-emerges differentiated as 'Oeahoo, the younger' (the 'new LIFE'), to become, to the end of the life-cycle, the germ of all things." (S.D.I.p.71)

Issuing out of the Cosmic Waters the Divine Ray is viewed in its full glory: Mahat, Universal Intelligence, first efflorescence of primordial matter (*ākāśa*) when the latter awakens to life at the touch of the brooding power of the Spirit: Mahat is universal cognition, wisdom and omniscience, twofold on the one hand, and sevenfold on the other hand, in its active expression, according to *The Secret Doctrine*. As manifested Logos, it is the "Son" of the Unmanifest, called the *Blazing Divine Dragon of Wisdom* as he is the very expression of the *divine ideation* which gave the primal impetus. (In the *Ṛgveda Kāma* in the beginning arose in THAT). The Logos or universal intelligence refers to that which objectifies the hidden reality on the screen of the cosmos and represents the "synthesis or the aggregate of Universal Wisdom" (S.D.I.p.72). Mahat is the effulgent, yet limited, image of the Dark Unlimited Absolute Oneness. One might recall it as that dazzling image or reflection which the *Isa Upaniṣad* refers to as the "golden vessel" with which the Face of the Real is veiled (verse 15).

Full manifestation can only result from the interaction of two principles stepped down to polar opposites. To clarify the matter further, the two Ultimate Principles of the One in manifestation, as visioned in ancient cosmogonies, are

- 1) the FATHER principle or positive aspect, the dynamic INTELLIGENCE at work throughout the depth and breadth of Space, interacting with Space in its expression as substance and cradle of all life. When stepped down to the level of our understanding He is, in the *Ṛgveda*, the creative god, *Dakṣa*, or *Viśvakarman*, or *Indra*, or Lord of Cosmic Order, *Varuṇa*; later called variously, *Prajapati*, *Brahma*, etc.
- 2) the MOTHER aspect or receptive matrix, the content aspect, the all encompassing receptacle of potential seeds to develop, called variously the Waters of Space, *ākāśa*, *mūlaprakṛti*, *pradhāna*, *alayā*, all expressive of root-substance which the *Father* re-awakens at the dawn of a new phase of activity.

The interaction between these two poles of manifestation results in the "Son", "Universal Cognition or *Thought Divine*" (S.D.I.p.75), MAHAT, in turn responsible for the universe. Hence in one particular sense, one may think of the *son* as being the universe, the fruit of the original Parents. No world can come into being, whether macrocosmically or microcosmically except through the interplay of the positive and the negative, simply called Father and Mother. So the *Ṛgvedic ṛṣis* stated very simply:

"Between the Father and the Mother revolves this whole universe." (*Ṛgv.X.88.15d*)

Such a significant statement is easily passed by, but it succinctly summarises the above. These two immediate parents of all creatures stepped down as Heaven and Earth in most cosmogonies, have their original counterpart, in the *Rgvedic hymns*, in *Aditi* and *Dakṣa* whose names also reveal something of their meaning. Beyond these, the *Ṛgveda* allows us a glimpse into the level of pure abstraction, the interaction between *asat* and *sat*, non-being and being, *sat* emerging from *asat* - that which contains the *be* potentially. A purely esoteric gradation becomes outlined, going back beyond abstract thought to the root of all, to "That", *tat*, the Unborn, *aja*, of the great *Rgvedic cosmogonic hymns* - this is *secret doctrine* indeed. (In S.D. II. pp.449-50 H.P.B. gives her version of the meaning of *sat* and *asat*.)

The two principles *aditi* and *Dakṣa* which can be viewed both abstractly as infinitude, the boundless or



space and creative energy or intelligence, and more concretely as mother and father are in verse X.72.4 shown to be on a par with each other. Their interaction which gives the impetus to the differentiating process is expressed as reciprocal birth:

"From Aditi Dakṣa was born; again from Dakṣa Aditi." (Ṛgv.X.72.4)<sup>4</sup>.

In the Rgvedic cosmogonic hymns Dakṣa seems to represent that primeval impulse of creative intelligence that acts in and through the infinitude of space, as a result of which manifests the differentiating principle, Universal Intelligence, Mahat, a word not yet used in this specific sense in the Ṛgveda which presents *rta* the Cosmic Order and Varuṇa its Lord, as expressive of this Universal Mind.

Thus *Intelligence* which is the manifestation of the Logos or *word* in activity, the universal Mind, the Eternal Root of all subjectivity and all activity, the ordering Principle which is *ratio* and at the human level *reason* and *word*, infuses the whole of Nature and the whole of space. *The Secret Doctrine* describes this thus:

"There is but one indivisible and absolute Omniscience and Intelligence in the Universe - and this thrills throughout every atom and infinitesimal point of the whole finite Kosmos - which has no bounds, and which people call SPACE, considered independently of anything contained in it. But the first differentiation of its *reflection* in the manifested World is purely Spiritual, and the Beings generated in it are not endowed with a consciousness that has any relation to the one we conceive of. They can have no human consciousness or intelligence before they have acquired such, personally and individually ..." (S.D.I.p.277)

This implies one of the great esoteric laws: every evolution necessitates an involution, for everything comes from the One and everything, in due course of time, returns to the One.

"The whole order of nature evinces a progressive march towards a *higher life* ... *The very fact* that adaptations *do* occur, that the fittest *do* survive in the struggle for existence, shows that what is called 'unconscious Nature' is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals) guided by High Planetary Spirits (Dhyāni Chohans), whose collective aggregate forms the manifested *verbum* of the Unmanifested LOGOS, and constitutes at one and the same time the *MIND* of the universe and its immutable LAW." (S.D.I.p.277-78)

The last few words should be noted specifically -"whose aggregate forms the manifested VERBUM " etc. for they contain the essence of the esoteric cosmogony and explain many an enigma in the universe and in the scriptures of the world. What underlies this mighty purpose, what makes its final accomplishment possible is thus stated in the Atharvaveda:

"Vast truth, mighty order, consecration, contemplative-exertion (*tapas*), prayer (*brahman* the evocative power of prayer), sacrificial-offering, these uphold the earth." (Athv.XII.1.1)

The Yajurveda adds:

"Where spiritual and ruling powers move together in unity, that world will I know as holy where dwell the Shining- ones together with the Flame-divine." (Yjv.vs.20.25)

### **MAHAT IN THE R̥GVEDA AS RTA, AS ORDERLY AND DIVISIVE ACTION**

This "Son" or Blazing Divine Dragon of Wisdom, as he is called in the Stanza of Dzyan, the intelligence that pervades the cosmos and drives all things towards an unknown goal, (unknown to humans) corresponds in the Ṛgveda in one peculiar sense to *rta*, the Cosmic Order, first born of the blazing contemplation of Deity:

"Cosmic Order (*rta*) and truth (*satya*) were born of blazing *tapas*." (Ṛgv.X.190.1)

Out of *tapas*, that blazing contemplative exertion, emerges the prime mover whereby *order* and *truth* manifest as a blueprint, as we would describe it, or as Divine ideation, as H.P.B. chose to call it; hence order is the very foundation of the universe, the very core of manifestation. There is here no question of a haphazard collocation of atoms as posited by some modern thinkers, but rather an ordering principle underlying all things and bringing all unfolding orders to fruition. From this all-kindling *tapas* the process of unfoldment is set in motion, the course of existence starts.

This conception, centred around a Universal Intelligence that manipulates energies for the manifestation of universes, finds its counterpart in the Vedic vision of Cosmic Order, *rta*, the Law of laws,

which the Sons of Aditi, the Ādityas "vision and establish" in our space-time world (Ṛgv.IV.55.2cd). The divine "statutes" and "ordinances" express a transcendental Law which is at the core of Life and which the devas discover and aim at establishing, at bringing into manifested activity. For *rta*, in the Ṛgveda, demonstrates as the world order which is not merely static as the settled order but also dynamic as the constant becoming in accordance with "statutes" or laws inherent to *rta*, such as the rhythm to which all manifested things are subjected - birth, growth, death, decay, breathing in and out, the seasons, the majestic circling of the stars, etc., this rhythm itself exemplifying the perpetual movement of the universe. Nothing can alter the order of life, the recurrence of day and night, of the seasons, etc., it is established, fixed, static; at the same time it is dynamic as that constant transformation that occurs in accordance with the law inherent to *being*, to manifestation. That *rta* is both static and dynamic is too often not even perceived. There is a vast rhythm to all things, a breathing in and out, a taking and a giving, an eternal exchange which exemplifies the law of transformation, one aspect of the world order. *rta*, the supreme law from which all other laws stem, *rta* the blueprint of what eventually becomes a manifestation of the Transcendental through the cooperation of humans and spiritual entities, is in the Ṛgveda, the first conceived at the origin of the universe, a blueprint indeed. The verse quoted above (X.190.1) is pregnant with profound significance: *tapas, the fiery contemplative exertion of the Divine* bears fruit as *rta*. But Cosmic Order implies a universal ordering principle, in other words *mind* which in the Ṛgveda is not called by the rather abstract word *Mahat* (which is used as an adjective, mighty, qualifying *rta*) but is exemplified in the conception of *rta* and its "statutes" as laid down and guarded by several of the gods, especially VARUṆA, the Encompasser (from the root *vr*, to cover, encompass). Thus in Varuṇa we have the all-container who sees and knows all; in Indra, another aspect of mind, we find the divisive fighter, the warrior god, yet the establisher of heaven and earth by propping them *asunder*, of cosmos as against chaos. Each may have, in the thought of the ṛṣis, belonged to a different order in space and time, but each accomplishes his task in accordance with the Law. The Universal Mind is viewed through the aspects of Varuṇa, Indra, Agni, etc. and the actions of the gods in general, hardly as an abstract principle of intelligence, the abstract principle being the Law of laws to whom all are subservient.

Of *rta*, the supreme Law, the gods are the "charioteers" who each faithfully (*rtāvan*) follows its statutes (*vrata*). They enforce these, "harness" the power of *rta*, are its guardians, "law-abiding", "born in law", "sublime fosterers of law, haters of falsehood" (VII.66.13ab), who "revel in the sacred-song" (*sāma*) of *rta* (I.147.1d). Its commandments (*pradiśaḥ*) make Indra mighty (cf. VIII.89.4), so Indra "harnesses" or "steers" the *rta*, Viṣṇu gives the worshipper his "share of *rta*", he maps out for man what befits him.

"In accordance with *rta* Mitra and Varuṇa rule over the whole World." (V.63.7).

These are all indirect expressions of mind's ordering principle. Viewing *rta* as the "operating law", we can see how this is an aspect of universal mind as "ordering", "measuring" and "delimiting" all things. Such a principle whereby the world unfolds in mathematical order, proportion, rhythm, cycles (cf. I.164.41cd; X.190; 72.3; 97.1; 149.2cd) declares that underlying it all is a universal intelligence, a Mind, expressed through the activities of the various devas.

But there is just a suspicion that *rta*, in some instances where the deities are invoked together with Mighty *rta* (*rtam mahat*) may have been considered a deity.<sup>5</sup> As the underlying regulator of all phenomena, as the supreme Law which is the *truth*, the ṛṣi invokes this Law which is an impersonal power:

"I solicit the *rta* controlled by the *rta*." (IV.3.9).

The verse implies the fusion of two conceptions, the vast *Cosmic Order* as reflected in the *human ritual*, so the ṛṣi invokes *rta* as the Supreme Power/Law by means of the ritual. This vast Cosmic Order, of which the devas are the custodians, is thus equivalent in one very important sense to MAHAT, the Universal Mind, the regulator of all things, abstract and concrete, phenomenal and noumenal in which we live and move and have our being. What can human beings change in this mighty regulator of stars and planets, of seasons and days and nights, of aeonic sequences, geological periods, of birth and death? Mahat, "the operating will of the Supreme" is rendered by Esoteric philosophy as "operating LAW" (S.D.I.p.451), an epithet which suits exactly the meaning of *rta*. As I wrote in my *Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*:

"Whether personified or not, *rta* remains that transcendental harmony, that Cosmic Order to which man aspires and in so doing endeavours to regulate his life in accordance with principles which he reads in it, establishing the norms of social and ethical harmony which the ritual is meant to

mirror ...

Homage could be paid to it, during the sacrificial rite, as the very reflection in the cosmos of the impersonal Absolute, *tat*. Hence the praise:

‘Firmly based are the foundations of *ṛta*, shining in beauty,  
manifold are its beauteous forms.’ (IV.23.9ab)

That in the final analysis, all creation pays homage to the *ṛta* is stated in bold imagery;

‘To Law wide Earth and deep (Heaven) - supreme milk cows - render their milk.’ (IV.23.10d)<sup>6</sup>

The Ṛgveda, in its varied presentations of *ṛta*, reveals how human insight and imagination have tried to express various shades of that mighty Power, Principle and Establisher of law and order, by means of which the manifested universe evolves, or rather unfolds certain aspects of itself in orderly ways.

Before passing on to a survey of Varuṇa, the Lord of Cosmic Order in the Ṛgveda, hence the Ṛgvedic Universal Mind, it might be appropriate to look at this Universal Mind from *The Secret Doctrine* viewpoint and its reflection in the Vedas. The first step in its action, as quoted in the Stanza of Dzyan at the beginning of this chapter, is to "demarcate", "separate", "shut out", an action which in the Ṛgveda is undertaken by the gods who demarcate, measure out, separate. That separative action expressed in Stanza 3:7 as "He shuts out the above, and leaves the below" etc. is already visioned in the fifth verse of the Ṛgvedic hymn of creation:

"Their vision's rays stretched afar.  
There was indeed a below; there was indeed an above.  
Seed bearers there were, mighty powers there were.  
Energy below, will above." (X.129.5)

The "shoreless sea of fire" of Stanza 3:7, or "fire-mist" (the radiant *ākāśa* of the Upaniṣads), will now "disappear" into the innermost realms, or what is called the "upper space", or noumenal light; at the higher level the pure essence, *ākāśa*, at the lower level, the so-called "astral light" more and more contaminated by the floods of human thoughts and deeds, a differentiated, limited and therefore partial and distorted aspect of the higher; now become the great illusion, a distorted "measure" of the original (the word *māyā* being derived from the root *mā*, to measure). Creation in the Ṛgveda is a deed of mighty *māyā* which, in Ṛgvedic times, was considered *magic*, i.e. *wondrous*, (not *illusion*), for it cannot be explained in fully rational terms.

#### MAHAT-MANAS-AHAMKARA

That Intelligence, that tremendous power that projected everything into manifested existence, that drives all onwards, divides and delimits in order to make out of chaos a cosmos of well-defined contrasts; of directions, up and down, right and left, light and dark, good and evil, positive and negative, objective and subjective; in order to shape and individualize all things within limits; that Intelligence aroused as a result of desire for sentient existence, *kāma* - "Desire, primordial seed of mind, in the beginning, arose in That" (X.129.4) - is itself dual in its application, good and bad. For Mahat, the separative, self-assertive power that makes cosmos out of chaos is at the root of *self-consciousness* in human beings, the latter being itself the root of ego-ism which, when developed to its utmost in an unevolved human being becomes cut off from its divine root and assumes that utter selfishness and self-centredness that can lead humans to barbarism, cruelty and sheer degradation. *Manas* corresponds on the human plane to Mahat on the cosmic plane, and becomes *aham*, the I-making faculty, or ego-ism. We glimpse here how one side of the dual power, if allowed to grow all powerful, without any check coming from its divine source, can become evil as it is reflected into more and more limited vehicles of expression. Hence the Janus<sup>7</sup> like quality of mind, looking outwardly towards more self-aggrandisement, or looking inwardly towards its very source, slowly discarding all superficial accretions. This is touched upon by H.P.B. who quotes the *Anugītā*. Mahat when called the Lord is

"Universal cognition or *Thought Divine*; but 'That Mahat which was first produced, is (afterwards) called *Egoism* when it is born as ... 'I', that is said to be the *second* creation'. (*Anugītā*) And the translator ... explains in a footnote, 'i.e. when the Mahat develops into the feeling of self-consciousness - I- then it assumes the name of egoism' which, translated into our esoteric phraseology, means when Mahat is transformed into the human *Manas* (or even that of the finite gods), and becomes *aham*-ship."

(S.D.I.p.75)

H.P.B. has several comments on this subject, one of which reads thus:

"... LUCIFER - the spirit of Intellectual Enlightenment and Freedom of Thought - is metaphorically the guiding beacon, which helps man to find his way through the rocks and sand-banks of life, for Lucifer is the LOGOS in his highest, and the 'Adversary' in his lowest aspect - both of which are reflected in our *Ego*." (S.D.II.p.162)

This most important assertion gives quite a clue to the origin of evil, so debated by theologians who cannot find for it an altogether acceptable origin. The dual aspect of mind is shown to a certain extent in Indra who, according to the Śatapatha Brāhmana, "assuredly is mind" ( at.Br.XII.9.1.13) - mind in its loftier aspect as portrayed in some Rgvedic verses, and mind in its lower aspect as appears in the Indra of the *Purānas*.

It has been said that "when mind becomes unduly developed and ceases to unite the higher and the lower, it forms a sphere of its own. This is the greatest disaster that can overtake the human unit".<sup>8</sup> No soul quality, no spiritual light or compassion can then break through into the separated "fortress".

Mahat in its active, cosmic expression, manifests in both a *twofold* and a *sevenfold* way, according to the secret tradition exemplified in the R̥gveda. As Logos Mahat is seen as dual, for *fire*, or all kindling and all shattering power, and *word*, or sound-vibration fashioning forms, are its *means of action* or "tools" whereby all things are shaped, fostered, brought to maturity and shattered. But these two tools, viz., *sound* and *fire*, two aspects of the one power, as *essence of life* are the *very core* of Seven Creative Hosts of intelligences which themselves could be likened to the seven far pervading rays of the One Universal Intelligence. Hence the many gods of ancient religions who derive from the original seven and who, in more modern terms, could be called the differentiated principles of the One Universal Mind. Thus as "Son of the Son", Mahat "contains in himself the Seven Creative Hosts" (S.D.I.p.72) and H.P.B. summarises the sequence from the Concealed or Unknown Deity, passed over in silence out of reverence, or expressed as the unqualified That, *tat*, in the R̥gveda, to the Seven manifestations of creative Powers thus:

"In every (ancient) religion we find the concealed deity forming the ground work; then the ray therefrom, that falls into primordial Cosmic matter, (first manifestation); then the androgyne result, the dual Male and Female abstract Force, personified (*second* stage); this separates itself finally, in the *third*, into seven Forces, called the creative Powers by all the ancient Religions and the 'Virtues of God' by the Christians." (S.D.I.p.437-38)

The Universal Mind will be examined first in Rgvedic Varuṇa, that "hidden ocean" "in whom is all wisdom" (VIII.41.8,6); then in Indra the active Demiurge; then in Part II in its seven creative powers or potencies, expressed in the R̥gveda as the "seven embryos", as the "Seven ṛṣis", and as the "Seven Rivers"; and finally in its twofold expression of *fire* and *sound*, the latter, in ch.5.

#### MAHAT IN THE R̥GVEDA AS VARUṆA

It has become evident that Mahat as an abstract principle does not appear in the R̥gveda, the word *mahat*, like *Siva*, being used as an adjective, thus mighty Order, *rtam mahat*. This does not detract from the ṛṣis' capacity to think in abstract terms (as was originally denied to them) as witness their grand conception of *ṛta*, *satya*, *sat* and *asat*, *aditi*, etc. *ṛta* being the orderly aspect of Mahat, but what Mahat expresses by way of activity was viewed through the lens of the gods. Thus, though Agni, the Flame Divine and Vāc, the Vibrating Shaper of all forms, are the tools of Divine Intelligence, and though the hosts of devas, asuras, Ādityas, etc. are the active agents of the Divine Mind, the Supreme Centre through which and in which Universal Intelligence was deemed to act upon all things, in line with the great law, *ṛta*, was Varuṇa, the Lord of Cosmic Order.

The word Varuṇa is usually derived from the verbal root *vr*, to encompass, cover but also obstruct, thereby showing the two opposing principles at work in cosmos. As all Encompasser Varuṇa embraces the vast vault of the heavens with their million stars through which he gazes upon humans and knows their deeds and misdeeds, a perfect representative of the all knowing God. But this verbal root also yields *Vṛtra*, the "obstructor" which, as a proper name, is applied to the mythical serpent that also encompasses, but obstructs, checks and fetters, and is slain by Indra, another aspect of mind. Varuṇa and Vṛtra both encompass and fetter; the former restrains in the sense of putting a halt to human transgressions against the *law*, of which the gods

and Varuṇa are the guardians, in order to restore harmony in the Cosmic Order; the latter, Vṛtra, obstructs the free flow of the waters of life, is the embodiment of constriction that causes friction, conflict, fighting, lack of freedom and finally suffering, evil. One liberates through the application of the broad sweep of the law, the other obstructs through the very opposite. Interestingly, the poets repeatedly ask Indra to help them conquer Vṛtra, although Vṛtra was vanquished by Indra long ago, but he has to be vanquished by each human being as well.<sup>9</sup> Such is the Rgvedic mythological reflection of the mind's dual activity: it can liberate through its opening out to vaster vistas, to letting in the light of the higher levels, to preventing the crystallisation of ideas, opinions, habits which all lead to the shoals of fanaticism and subsequently mental death; or it can obstruct by putting shutters on what should be kept open and thereby imprisons more and more to ultimate crystallisation from which there can be no escape. Hardly recognised has been the all encompassing Universal Intelligence as reflected or embodied in Varuṇa. The literal meaning of the waters took over so that Varuṇa's lofty stature dwindled to a mere God of the waters in the literal sense.

That Mahat or mind was represented in early Vedic times by the image of "ocean" is borne out in the following quote from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa - remembering that the Brāhmaṇas are the ritual commentary and reflections on the rites practised by the priests of the original revelation or *śruti*, the four Vedas or hymn collections:

"In the ocean, the seat, I settle thee. The *sea is the mind*; from the mind ocean with speech for a shovel, the gods dug out the triple science. Thereto this verse applies - 'May the true god know this day where the gods placed that offering, they who dug it out from the ocean with sharp shovels'; the *ocean is the mind*, the sharp shovel is speech, the offering is the triple science ...

In

mind he settles this brick." (Sat.Br.VII.5.2.52)

As explained in my *The Cosmic Waters*

"... from the 'mind ocean', with the help of the power of the word or sound vibration the gods 'dug the triple science', the science of the sacred-word *rk*, of the ritual formula *yajus* and of the song, *sāma*, the essence of which finds its great symbol in Sarasvatī, Mother of the Vedas. The Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad refers to 'heaven' as the 'body of mind', i.e. our human mind." (Brhad Up.XV.11)<sup>10</sup>

A complete esoteric doctrine is here alluded to, concerned with the science of sound of which the ṛṣis were masters, to this day unfathomed. The triple science of the sacred word is linked to the vibrating rhythms of *ākāśa* which, when known, can be used as connections between one level of cosmos and another. Noteworthy is the fact that Varuṇa is called a "hidden ocean" (*samudro apīcyas* VIII.41.8) in whom "all wisdom [*kāvya*] is centered" (VIII.41.6) and that he rules over the Waters of space. These are no mean figures of speech, especially in the light of the Śatapatha Br. quotation. The later Hindu tradition totally overlooks this essential meaning, debasing Varuṇa's original significance and character, but even as Lord of Cosmic Order, Western scholars have emphasised his domain of "waters" as literal waters and nothing "other". Varuṇa is God of all the "waters", a multi-levelled word: a) of the spatial or cosmic "waters" - that primeval state which the Greeks called chaos, which includes both the hither and the nether worlds as well as the transcendent-. He seems to have "measured" out a previous cosmos, a foreshadowing of, or a prior manifestation of our cosmos (*sa dhāma pūrvyam mame* VIII.41.10) but scholars deny the idea of cycles to the ṛṣis, quite erroneously; b) of mental and terrestrial waters - the waters of that ocean of the mind (at least recognised by Renou) which include the waters of the unconscious and of psychic dimensions, and finally, only, the waters as we know them in our terrestrial world. These last which represent but the tip of an immense iceberg have completely overshadowed the supreme grandeur of Varuṇa. Importantly, *Waters* and Cosmic Order or *ṛta* are indissolubly linked in the Vedas, the Naighaṇṭuka itself equating *water* with *ṛtasya yoniḥ*, the womb of order or law (1.12). The link, however strange to us, lies in the original meaning of the "waters" in their cosmic sense, forgotten even by Hindu orthodoxy, which the R̥gveda called the solar-blaze empowered waters, which the Upaniṣads later called *ākāśa* the ultimate essence that constitutes space, shaped by the power wielded by the Cosmic Divine Intelligence through its instruments, *flame* and *word*: hence "the ocean is mind" (Śat.Br.VII.5.2.52); hence the waters of space are the womb of *ṛta*. There is nothing senseless here. Universal Intelligence works through the

order it creates. Varuṇa presides in and over that ocean whose location is nowhere and everywhere for it is in the transcendent as well as in the temporal, but which the human mind structures into directions, up and down, east and west, right and left etc. ; from the *centre* of which the 7 mysterious rivers take their source, in whose midst he dwells, for they are his (VIII.69.12) and over these he rules supreme. (VIII.41.9).<sup>11</sup>

Varuṇa's creative activity, in the Ṛgveda, is one of establishing, measuring out, demarcating, typical of mind's activity. This idea will be taken up in chapter 7. Here suffices to consider that Varuṇa unfolds the world in three levels of manifestation and firmly establishes heaven in the "seat of Order":

"In accordance with the law, Aditi's son, observer of the law  
has spread out the world in threefold order." (IV.42.4cd)

"I made to swell the moistening waters and fixed the heavens in the seat of Order." (IV.42.4ab)<sup>12</sup>  
As heaven and earth were originally one, the whole of our manifested world is thus rooted in Cosmic Order.

"Born of old, the Parents spreading around,  
co-dwell in one mansion in the womb of ṛta." (X.65.8ab)<sup>13</sup>

The one mansion may be interpreted as space, the womb of ṛta itself being symbolised in the Vedic altar to which the Parents are invited to come. To take these waters literally as clouds etc. fails to render the spirit of the meaning as explained above. According to the Upaniṣads (Bṛhad. and Chānd.) as well as some Brāhmaṇas the "waters" substand all forms, shape them and are their nurturing principle. On these thrive the gods, (Ṛgv.VII.49.4). As "radiant" or "flame" waters, or *ākāśa*, their later name, they are the "fire-mist" space of *The Secret Doctrine*, out of which Agni the flame differentiated, as the vibrant word thrilled throughout space. The Ṛgveda tells us that Varuṇa "set fire in the waters", as he did set Sūrya in the sky (V.63.7), Soma in the mountain, as well as *kratu* intelligence in the human heart (V.85.2). The waters we know as the oceans, the rivers, the rain, are the terrestrial, ultimate, differentiation of these waters of space. Along the fluidic expanses of the heavens Varuṇa cut open a path for the sun where before was no path (I. 24.8).<sup>14</sup>

Amidst these spatial "waters" Varuṇa moves, "watching over the thoughts of men as one watches over cows" (VIII.41.1), viewing "what has been and what will be" (I. 25.11), in the hidden seat of ṛta, at the confluence of the "rivers". This centre is that point of dissolution where

"they unharness the horses of Sūrya" (V.62.1a),

beyond the horizon, in the *invisible* realm, source of the Cosmic Order. This is the inner world of all possibilities, the point of dissolution and re-solution, the matrix wherein seethe the blueprints of all things to come, whence all emerges to existence and to which all sinks back in need of recharging. In Egyptian wisdom the same idea is found, the non-existent as against the existent, the deep waters of the primeval ocean wherein lies the potential for renewal, for another turn of existence!<sup>15</sup> From this *laya* centre beyond our space-time world the sun re-appears every day, the gods are activated to perform their tasks, and Varuṇa, from "amidst the waters moves" "observing men's truth and untruth" (VII.49.3). The rhythm of life, of activity, goes on.

It is in this unfathomable space (*abudhne*) that king Varuṇa, pure-minded, sustains the trunk of the tree of life, its root high in heaven, its branches, called rays, trailing downwards. The prayer goes "may they be placed within us" (I. 24.7); hence may each of us be a living expression of this tree. The tree as symbol of life, indeed a multi-levelled archetypal image, figures in most ancient scriptures, but the inverted tree whose root takes its life in heaven, or the spiritual realm, is peculiar to the Vedas and thereby aligns the Vedas unequivocally with the *secret wisdom* of the ages. The further fact that Varuṇa sustains it shows him as the supreme Lord of Cosmic Order, indeed the Universal Mind. He is the God of the "luminous dominion" (*jyotiṣmat kṣatra m* I.136.3), of the beyond inclusive of the world of psyche. He knows the hidden, mysterious names of the rays of light, literally of cows; are these rays connected with the solar rays, the sun having been set in the sky by Varuṇa, and the solar rays' mystic properties being known to the ṛṣis who used them in their invocation, contemplation, in their *tapas* (I.109.7).

It is Varuṇa who illumines at will (*kratvā*) the two hemispheres of heaven and earth, the divine and the terrestrial and makes "the white and dark mantles" (VIII.41.10) of day and night, the law of cycles, part of the ordering principle of mind. It is the inner light of intelligence and will-power, *kratu*, which he places in the "heart" (*cakra*), in the central core of human beings, that is the human psyche. His dominion is luminous (I. 23.5) for he is the son of Aditi the luminous, infinite cradle of life. His dwelling is thousand-gated (VII.88.5d), his seat thousand-pillared (II.41.5) - as many as he has spies or eyes in the heavens so many are the

openings to his domain; this being the Rgvedic way of expressing the omnipresence of Deity, what Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad Gītā (4:11):

"However men approach Me, even so do I welcome them,  
for the path men take from every side is Mine"

or as the Sufi saying goes, there are as many roads to God as human hearts. Each generation, each race, each nation, expressed this one fundamental idea, this recognition of the *Vast Ecompasser, the Universal Mind*, in different ways. What struck the imagination of the earlier Sanskrit scholars was Varuṇa's lofty ethical quality. He was "the ethical equivalent of the Zoroastrian Ahura Mazda, of the Babylonian Nannar-Sin, and of the Hebrew Yahweh", as H.D. Griswold<sup>16</sup> in his beautiful study of Varuṇa expressed it.

H.P.B. sums Varuṇa up from the scholarly viewpoint, but adds a further note:

"... Varuṇa, the 'Universal encompasser', the all-embracer, and one of the oldest of the Vedic deities - SPACE, the maker of Heaven and Earth, since both are manifested out of his (or its) seed. It is only later that Varuṇa became the chief of the Ādityas and a kind of Neptune riding on the *Leviathan Makara*, now the most sacred and mysterious of the signs of the Zodiac. Varuṇa, without whom 'no creature can even wink' was degraded like Ouranos, and, like him, he *fell into generation*; his functions, 'the grandest cosmical functions', as Muir calls them, having been lowered down from heaven to earth by exoteric anthropomorphism. As the same Orientalist says: 'The attributes ascribed to Varuṇa impart to his character a moral elevation and sanctity far surpassing that attributed to any other Vedic Deity'. But to understand correctly the reason of his fall, like that of Ouranos, one has to see in every exoteric religion the imperfect and sinful work of man's fancy, and also to study the mysteries which Varuṇa is said to have imparted to Vasiṣṭha. Only ... 'his secrets and those of Mitra *are not to be revealed to the foolish*'." (S.D.II.p.268-69 fn)

For these secrets are connected with the Cosmic Order and the human heart whose depth he knows since he placed *kratu there*; he knows the 12 moons and their progeny and their additional product; he knows the paths of wind (I.25.7-11) which is his breath (VII.87.2), of birds, ships, etc., he is behind the inter-relationship between the Cosmic Order, the ritual, the words of power (cf.IX.73.9) and the sacrificer; he is their bond, binding man to the ṛta in the freedom of harmony, or binding the sinner with his dreaded noose (*pāśa*) in the prison house of bondage to *māyā*. Varuṇa listens to the repentant sinner and forgives him. He alone can free the latter from his own noose, sin being a fetter which man binds upon himself. It is he, finally, who takes in his bark the initiated ṛṣi, the *kavi*, past the dark rock of the unconscious; he who guides and protects him through that mysterious, still uncharted inner ocean, to that inaccessible spot where he can gaze upon that miracle: the *svar* or solar blaze in the rock (VII.88.2). The hints at the end of the above quotation from H.P.B. are far from empty hints, far from devoid of substance. Indeed the *veda* stands as testimony to their perceptiveness.

### VARUṆA AND INDRA

The "Universal Cognition" or "Thought Divine" to which H.P.B. referred (S.D. I.p.75 quoted earlier) qualifies Varuṇa remarkably well for he is aware of all, and like the overarching sky, broods over all, and is called the mighty Watcher (*brhan ... adhistāta*, Athv.IV.161.1). Mention made by H.P.B. of a "*primary creation*" of which "Mahat is called the Lord" (S.D.I. p.75) reminds one of Varuṇa measuring out his ancient seat (VIII.41.10). Is this a first formation of the universe, at a more subtle level, or a previous manifestation of it? His dominion seems certainly to unfold prior to that of Indra's and seemingly to overlap with Indra's for some time. One cannot agree with F.B.J. Kuiper for whom Varuṇa's hegemony represents the age of chaos, of the *asat*, "which denotes the world of unformed matter, the undifferentiated state",<sup>17</sup> since too many descriptions of Varuṇa's "measuring out" are given (I.24.8; V.63.7; 85.2; VII.87.1, etc) pointing to the formation of a three dimensional world like Indra's own world. He is specifically stated to rule over seven realms, three earths, three heavens and his own seat (VIII.41.9). F.B.J. Kuiper's view that the asuras' "world is one of unformed, potential life" is totally unfounded.<sup>18</sup> True, the asuras are the elder gods, and possibly those that first gave chaos a shape to outline it into a cosmos, but in the R̥gveda they are the great rulers of cosmos and its creators, and only later do the asuras lose their hegemony.<sup>19</sup> If Varuṇa's world belongs to a previous manvantara as his measuring out the ancient abode might imply,<sup>20</sup> its description belongs to ours and its overlapping with Indra's

ascent would point to a *re-embodiment* of it in the present manvantara, -cycles being unacceptable to scholar in the early times of the Ṛgveda!

Are Varuṇa's and Indra's creative actions two different ways of viewing the workings of Mahat: one, underlying the stately majesty of the Cosmic, settled order and over-ruling Law of balance, the other with its overlapping, exhibiting further division, a rending asunder of what is, signalling violence, friction as the order of the new day? Our world of struggle, conflict, opposition and misery could be thought of as the result of this final separation from the original blueprint of Cosmic Order, inaugurated by Indra's hegemony.

Varuṇa is not an aggressive god or violent, as is Indra. He is *samrāj*, the universal monarch; Indra is *svarāj*, the self-made king. Varuṇa's creative power is *māyā*, that occult power whereby "he encompasses the nights and settles the light rays" (VIII.41.3ab); Indra's power is in the striking thunderbolt which may kill as well as illumine. The aggressive side of cosmic activity, assigned to Indra, also belongs to the lower aspect of our human mind, prompt to ruthlessness, separativeness, pitiless criticism, etc. rather than to its much higher counterpart, capable of reflecting the Universal Mind, of conceiving the whole, the lofty, the infinite.

A curious verse, yet one which clearly shows up Indra (I. 54.3) enjoins the poet to "sing" or "shine" "a high sounding utterance to lofty Dyaus" now merging with Indra, "the bold, whose bold mind is self-empowered". Perhaps just forgotten by Orthodox Hindus, Indra represents Mind, (Sat.Br.XII .9.1.13) and in the Ṛgveda is described as the "thought-bestirrer" (VIII.46.19) and "the first to possess mind" (*prathamō manasvan* II.12.1) - the first among the devas to manifest the separative quality of mind in its aggressive and ruthless aspect. Thus he rends the darkness with his thunderbolt, he kills Vṛtra (and thousands of demons), thereby modifying the *status-quo* into marked, distinctive realms: contrasts, light and dark, past and present, etc. The "waters" of space become the sevenfold foundation (VIII.40.5) of the universe, hence the seven levels or gradations of *ākāśa*; the ocean of space becomes *charted*. A new "edition" so to speak, of cosmos comes into being. But note that the uncharted ocean of outer space has its counterpart in the human psyche, in the uncharted *unconscious* where all opposites meet. Here too, the conscious mind lays foundations, directions, landmarks from the data glimpsed. Thus do the waters of outer and inner space become accessible to human understanding.

Indra's foundation deed is presented as his wrestling with and slaying of the Obstructor Vṛtra covering and preventing the Seven Rivers of life from flowing forth. The state of tranquillity or *status-quo* is now changed to one of dynamic activity. Indra "*repeatedly (muhur)* makes the *asat* into the *sat*" (VI.24.5b). Does this mean that chaos becomes cosmos? The 3 earths and the 3 luminous spheres over which rules Varuṇa may become in the poet's mind the threefold counterpart of Indra's mightiness (I.102.8). Is it that the poets unconsciously want to give Indra the status of Varuṇa and so emphasise his cosmic deeds which, apart from the Vṛtra killing, the rending asunder of Vala and the release of the Seven Rivers, are rather similar to Varuṇa's? A new version where exaggerations of his greatness abound? In I.101.3 Varuṇa and Sūrya are shown as subordinate to Indra (cf.II.38.9) who is the hundred-powered god, the lord of might (*śacīpati*). One easily loses sight of his inner significance. Like Varuṇa, he props up heaven and establishes earth, and while Varuṇa makes a path for the sun and places it in the sky, so does Indra who makes pathways in the darkness and raises the sun in the sky for all to see (I.51.4). A complete change in human mentality is perceptible in Indra.

One particular aspect of the Universal Mind, viz. that which weaves the fabric of what we call space-time-continuum through events it creates by means of constant transformations, is reflected in Indra; but that very mind creates the key to the lock of events which, unravelled in the *Now* are seen as the many facets influencing past, present and future, since the *Now* is the only real time in existence, all other times, whether linear or cyclic, being but the moving images of eternity, all related to the *Now*. Without mind there is no space-time-continuum. Indra thus becomes the lens through which the *Law*, comprising *orderly unfoldment, cyclic time and transformation*, is concentrated, rayed out and revealed. In Indra are mirrored all the experiences that mind will meet, the high and the low, the aggressive and divisive, the creative and attractive.

So while scholars were referring to Indra as "The god of the firmament, the personified atmosphere ... a deity of the atmosphere, he governs the weather and dispenses the rain" (*Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, p.123,124) and busily trying to explain meteorologically the medley of images concerning waters, rivers, clouds and mountains and forts and cows, thunder and lightning, rays of light, extracting cows from mountain caves at the sound of chants or rays of light from darkness, conquering in the waters (*apsujit*), dragon



smiting and slaying, winning sun and soma, with little success, H.P.B. perceptibly wrote in *The Secret Doctrine*:

"Indra, now characterized as 'the god of the firmament, the personified atmosphere' - is in reality the cosmic principle of *Mahat*, and the fifth human - *Manas* in its dual aspect, as connected with *Buddhi*; and as allowing itself to be dragged down by his *Kāma*-principle (the body of passions and desires). This is demonstrated by Brahmā telling the conquered god that his frequent defeats were due to *Karma*, and were a punishment for his licentiousness, and the seduction of various nymphs ..."  
(S.D.II.p.614)

all this depicted in the *Purāṇas* where Indra is completely degraded from his high estate.

But on the scene of the Rgvedic altar Indra comes as a favourite god in a chariot pulled by two horses, or he brings down eight horses from heaven (I.121.8), even far more, sun-eyed steeds yoked by thought, or by prayer, sometimes as the horses of the sun Sūrya, or of the wind, Vāta. In the famed Upaniṣadic image of the chariot and the horses that take the pilgrim traveller onwards on his journey, the horses are the senses to be held in check by the charioteer or mind directing their activity for the sake of *pilgrim psyche* seated in the chariot. These horses may be viewed from a slightly different perspective, as events with which we interact by means of our senses and mind's interpretative direction. Similarly, Indra's horses could be regarded as past and future events, influencing each other, interacting and creating further events. For mind is the creator of time. These ancient images, and the gods that embody cosmic functions and psychological insights, reflect the psyche's struggle and its attempts to get to grips with its own inroads and those of the cosmos.

Indra thus reveals himself as the space-time maker, the immediate, active, organising factor in Nature and in Man; Varuṇa is more the personified power of Cosmic Mind, Indra of the lower or more concrete aspect of mind still in touch with his higher aspect (in the Rgveda). For man, he is the light-bringer, but only in the Rgveda. His conflicts, his rending the darkness with his lightning flash, his slaying the dragon of obstruction and releasing the Seven Rivers of life, make of him the personification of mind's struggle for freedom and its eternal quest for light, for truth, in fact the *Lucifer* in the true sense of the word. For the devas he is "the space-maker", *varivas, equivalent to freedom* (III.34.7). "Through conflict (*yudhā*) Indra found for man the way to fulfilment" (*iṣṭaye* X.49.9). This verse gives the key to the meaning of Indra and of *mind* for it is fundamentally through mental efforts, through struggle, conflict, ceaseless drive, etc. that one can finally achieve whatever we have the potentiality to achieve; and through soul impulse and illumination that one can bring about harmony, place one's self in complete accord with the Cosmic Harmony; this being the achievement of the Rgvedic gods.

The Intelligence of Nature, so closely observed by the Ancients, is on the other hand found personified in Tvaṣṭṛ, craftsman and artisan, among the ṛṣis; in Hephaestus among the Greeks, Vulcan among the Romans, Ptah the craftsman-deity among the ancient Egyptians, who in Memphis assumed supremacy as the Creator God. All work with the mineral kingdom, the foundation of our planet. Thus in Tvaṣṭṛ, the vivifying, omniform god, we discover other aspects of the creative mind. As father of Indra (who also has Dyaus as father) he forges Indra's metallic thunderbolt, the double-edged weapon that fosters life and light and brings destruction and death in its wake; he frames the one chalice as drinking vessel for the gods, later to be divided into four cups by human artisans who thereby won their immortality; he sharpens the axe of the Lord of Prayer, Brahmaṇaspati; he lays the germ in the womb and fosters life in the whole of Nature. Described as "divine artist and carpenter" and "father of the sacred fire" in *The Secret Doctrine*, he is in the *Purāṇas* identified with Viśvakarman, the Universal Architect who in the Rgveda is the "Father of the Eye" or Lord of Vision who "whirled forth with his arms, with his wings, Heaven and Earth" (X.81.3). This whole more or less imaginative vision full of insights into the workings of Nature and the human mind, contrasts sharply with our empty view of living nature and universe.

Many are the ways of apprehending the workings of the Universal Mind as its many facets find themselves mirrored in our own mind. Nothing here is deliberately worked out or imagined, but discovered in the deepest recesses of the human mind, there where psyche reflects and projects its knowledge. But one has to admit the richness of the ṛṣis' vision and probing, capable of mirroring in their great gods the vast compass of their psychological insight - which we in our lack of vision, are more and more ignoring.

**MAHAT, THE UNIVERSAL MIND, or ANIMA MUNDI.PART I**

FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* A. Bailey. p.96.
- <sup>2</sup> Certain phrases of the Stanzas are left out, as since they cannot be examined in connection with the Ṛgveda they would complicate matters uselessly. For Oeaoahoo a note says that among the Eastern occultists of the North, the literal meaning is "a circular wind, whirlwind; but in this instance, it is a term to denote the ceaseless and eternal Cosmic Motion; or rather the Force that moves it... It is the eternal *Kāraṇa*, the ever-acting Cause". (S.D.I.p.93.fn) See also Chānd.Up.I.xiii.1-3. These three verses give in cryptic language the complete outline of all that is here summarised in the first paragraph.
- <sup>3</sup> S.D.I.p.256. A note to this S.D. quotation tells us: "See *Liṅga Purāṇa*, Prior Section, lxx,12 *et seq.*; and *Vāyu Purāṇa*, [ch.iv] but especially the former *Purāṇa*, Prior Section, viii,67-74". But what is this *buddhi* referred to here? This *buddhi* is explained in *The Voice of the Silence* as *Kuṇḍalinī* when *buddhi* is "considered as an active instead of a passive principle (which it is generally, when regarded only as the vehicle, or casket of the Supreme Spirit (*Ātmā*). It is an electro spiritual force, a creative power which when aroused into action can as easily kill as it can create." (Note 38 (24) to Fragment 1.)
- <sup>4</sup> Gonda's analysis of the word bears upon that "effective power" that realises in space-time what has been thought, or as H.P.B. put it, what has been ideated at a subtler level. Dakṣa is an example of those cases "... in which a definite 'power' is conceived as an 'impersonal potency' and sometimes as a 'divine person'." (*Gods and Powers*. 1957.p.5) A.B. Keith dismisses Dakṣa as: "the word means no more than 'clever' and there can be no doubt that he is the product of priestly ingenuity". (*Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas ...*1925.p.100). For H.W. Wallis Dakṣa is "an unimportant deity whose only characteristic in the Ṛgveda is his fatherhood of the gods". (*Cosmology of the Rigveda*. 1887.p.45). See also Renou (E.V.P.IV.1955.p.31).  
 Dakṣa in the Ṛgveda is hardly anthropomorphised; he represents a quality which is part of that universal intelligence at work throughout nature and has little in common with the Dakṣa of the *Purāṇas* where he becomes the progenitor of physically procreated humanity.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Ṛgv.I.75.5; I.137.2; IV.23.8-10.
- <sup>6</sup> Cf. Ṛgv.IV.57 addressed to the Lord of the field, to the plough and the furrow; I.188.1; 31.11; VII.44.2.
- <sup>7</sup> op.cit. p.280. The Ancient Egyptians had a similar conception of Cosmic Order which they personified in the goddess Maat who could be viewed as that on whom gods and men, the whole world, lived. "... *Maat* is the order, the just measure of things, that underlies the world; it is the perfect state of things toward which one should strive and which is in harmony with the creator god's intentions."  
 "The 'offering of *Maat*'" to the gods by pharaoh "constitutes a sign that the world of mankind, and all the constantly endangered and fragile relationships and connections on which it depends, are in order, just as they were at the time of creation." (E. Hornung. *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*. p. 213, 214)
- <sup>8</sup> Janus, the Roman god of doorways and passages, is depicted with the two heads looking in opposite directions.
- <sup>9</sup> *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. A. Bailey. p.261.

**MAHAT IN THE ṚGVEDA AS VARUĀ**

- <sup>10</sup> Such verses as VI.18.9: "Indra ascend thy car to smite down Vṛtra"; X.124.6: "let us both slay Vṛtra"; I.80.3: "go forward ... slay Vṛtra"; VI.44.15, etc. show the myth not only referring to a past action, but to a present necessity, important to deal with and going on indefinitely.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Cosmic Waters*. op.cit. p.117.
- <sup>12</sup> These seven rivers and the mystery of the 3 earths and 3 heavens will be examined in chapter 7.
- <sup>13</sup> The word *ukṣmāṇā* is derived from *uks* to sprinkle, moisten, scatter, emit. Obviously these waters are the "waters of life" in both a physical and spiritual sense. Cf. V.31.6 where Indra wins for man these same waters.

- <sup>14</sup> Cf. Ṛgv.VI.17.7. Most references to Heaven and Earth show them as twins from which one may deduce that they differentiated together and, because of their root meaning - *div* to shine and *prath* to expand - that they signify fundamentally spirit and matter, *puruṣa-prakṛti*, the basis of Sāṅkhya philosophy. Cf. IX.68.3; X.31.7; VI.31.6; III.54.7. Cf. VII.61.4 where the might of Mitra-Varuṇa presses apart the two worlds. Cf. Tait.Sam.V.2.3.3: "Heaven and Earth were together; going apart they said: 'Let us share together what is worthy of sacrifice'."
- <sup>15</sup> The same is said of Indra; cf. VI.21.3; II.15.2&3. This inevitably shows both gods as being expressions of mental activity, or Mahat.
- <sup>16</sup> See E. Hornung, *Conceptions of God in Ancient Egypt*. p.181ff.
- <sup>17</sup> *The God Varuṇa in the ṚgVeda*. 1910. p.29. The one great difference is that Varuṇa never orders anyone to murder even babes and maidens as Jehovah does in the Old Testament!
- <sup>18</sup> See F.B.J. Kuiper. *Ancient Indian Cosmogony*. 1983.
- <sup>19</sup> op.cit. p.16. It is equally difficult to agree with Kuiper's view that the asuras' world is one of "unformed potential life" (op.cit. p.16). Further, his statement that "the Asuras are not fallen angels but potential gods" in the face of the Ṛgvedic evidence where the asuras are the highest spiritual entities, is extraordinary to say the least. Thus Agni as "Apām Napāt created by the greatness of his asuraship (*asuryasya mahnā*) all worlds" (Ṛgv.II.35.2). Through Brahmaṇaspati, the "spiritual" (*asurya*) lord of invocation, an aspect of Agni, the gods receive their share in the ritual (II.23.2); Agni in III.3.4 is invoked as the *asura* of the inspired ones, their measure and wisdom, and is in VII.30.3 described as "Agni the asura". Agni certainly belongs to this our world of space-time-continuum with its well marked demarcations which made him claim "I am the triple radiance" (III.26.7c) etc.; Savitṛ, called the asura of deep inspiration and good guidance in I.35.7&10 (*gambhīravepā asuraḥ surīthaḥ*) is in IV.53.1 given both titles of *deva* and *asura*. To Indra *asura* power, like that of Dyaus, was granted by the devas, for his conquest of Vṛtra, etc.
- The primordial gods, or asuras, may have been born in the *asat* but in the Ṛgveda they made of it a world, a cosmos. On their so-called fall *The Secret Doctrine* has a great deal to discuss, and some of it will be examined in ch.7 and ch.8. But the following confirms the stand seen in the Ṛgveda:
- "Esoterically, the *Asuras*, transformed subsequently into evil Spirits and lower gods, who are eternally at war with the *great* Deities - are the gods of the Secret Wisdom. In the oldest portions of the *Ṛg-Veda*, they are the spiritual and the *divine*, the term *Asura* being used for the Supreme Spirit and being the same as the great Ahura of the Zoroastrians. There was a time when the gods Indra, Agni, and Varuṇa themselves belonged to the *Asuras*." (S.D.II.p.500). Only twice, and in the last book of the Ṛgveda, are they mentioned as enemies of the devas (X.53.4, 157.4) and a passing away of their rule is indicated in X.124. Indra himself receives the status of *asura* from the devas (VI.20.2).
- <sup>20</sup> Ṛgv. IV.42 is a panegyric of both Varuṇa and Indra where each claims his own sovereignty.
- <sup>21</sup> This would also imply that the Ṛgvedic ṛṣis were well aware of the cycles such as manvantaras, an awareness denied them by Western scholars in spite of several verses which do point to it. Thus among others, X.190.3 "As before (or as of old *yathā pūrvam*) the Creator imaged forth the sun and moon" etc. and X.97.1 which states that "Plants came into being three ages before the gods".

## PART II

### THE SEVEN CREATIVE POWERS OF MAHAT; THE SEVEN EMBRYOS,

### THE SEVEN ṚṢIS, THE SEVEN RIVERS

#### INTRODUCTION

The Universal Mind is said in *The Secret Doctrine* to be sevenfold; that is, it manifests through seven cosmic powers, the seven creative spirits called the Dhyan Chohans or Lords of Meditation, who multiply in numbers as they descend the ladder of involution to fashion the worlds, at the head of which Seven Hosts are the seven Great Logoi of Life, or Seven Rays. These are found in most ancient scriptures: they are called the

Seven Ṛṣis by the Hindus, the Seven Amshāspends by the Zoroastrians, the "Seven Sages of the Apsu"<sup>21</sup> by the Babylonians, the Seven Archangels before the throne by the Christians, etc. A very old tradition concerning a sevenfold power that rules manifestation is evident, representing the divine wisdom in action as it interacts upon the seven levels or planes of Cosmic Matter. These differentiate under the impact of the seven cosmic powers and their multiple hosts, all derived from the One fundamental Power. Indeed this One is never lost sight of, either in *The Secret Doctrine* or in the Ṛgveda, however much it may be obscured by the many energies in manifestation. Thus, in the Ṛgveda:

"One whole governs the moving and the stable,  
that which walks and flies, this variegated creation." (III.54.8cd)  
"That which is one has developed into the all." (VIII.58.2d)  
"One is the mighty divinity of the shining ones." (III.55.1).

These verses are clearly expressing the ṛṣis' profound inkling of the One fundamental Source. *The Secret Doctrine* describes these intermediate powers thus:

"These beings are the 'Sons of Light', because they emanate from, and are self-generated in, that infinite Ocean of Light, whose one pole is pure *Spirit* lost in the absoluteness of Non-Being, and the other, the *matter* in which it condenses, crystallizing into a more and more gross type as it descends into manifestation. Therefore matter, though it is, in one sense, but the illusive dregs of that Light whose limbs [Rays] are the Creative Forces, yet has in it the full presence of the Soul thereof, of that Principle which none - not even the 'Sons of Light' evolved from its ABSOLUTE DARKNESS - will ever know ..." (S.D.I. p.481)

Something of this self-generating, in the depths of space, is found in some Rgvedic verses. Thus the *devas* are addressed as

"Ye who were born of the waters and of Aditi and of the earth." (X.63.2)  
"In yon billowy deeps ye gods stood closely-clasped; then from ye,  
as though from dancers, hot dust was whirled away." (X.72.6)

Here, as shown in chapter 3, the "waters" are the source of all those forms that took shape in the depths of space, in the infinite *aditi*, to manifest finally through the more and more dense element of *earth*, *pṛthivi* which means expansion, the broad, concreteness, form. "Closely-clasped" implies that gods emerged together, although there are references to the older gods and the younger gods, obviously groups of *devas* in different cycles of manifestation.

According to *The Secret Doctrine*, these Seven Creative Spirits and their hosts are the souls of the seven Elements of which only four are fully manifested so far on our earth. The fifth element being known to the Ancients as ether,<sup>22</sup> is not yet fully manifest and so remains invisible to most people, and the other two will not come into their own for aeons yet. These seven elements are

"... simply conditional *modifications* and aspects of the ONE and only Element. This latter is not

*Ether*, not even *ākāśa*, but the Source of these." (S.D.I.p.13)

This takes us back to primordial matter, the essence of all manifestations, showing how all things are differentiated expressions of one primeval Source, in which is for ever intertwined, as the yin and the yang of Chinese philosophy, mind or intelligence, the active pole, and essence of matter or substance, the passive pole, Dakṣa and Aditi of the Ṛgveda X.72.4.

### **NUMBER SEVEN**

So Mahat is called the SEVEN-HEADED DRAGON, and is referred to in Kabbalistic books as "the seven headed serpent called the Great Sea", a very esoteric title which recalls the Śatapatha Brāhmana's own statement - "the sea is the mind" (VII.5.2.52) pointing to a similarity of imagery. The Great Sea is the inextricable fusion of the intelligence principle and its substance or *more objective aspect*. As H.P.B. explained, before the Mother becomes Father-Mother she is also called the fiery Dragon of Wisdom. Among the Gnostics the Serpent with the seven (Greek) vowels over its head also appears, (equivalent to the seven fires of *The Secret Doctrine* and the "seven flames" of Agni).

Says the *Pistis-Sophia*, as quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*:

"Nothing ... is more excellent than the mysteries which ye seek after, saving only *the mystery of the*

*Seven Vowels and their FORTY and NINE Powers*, and the numbers thereof." (S.D.I.p.411.)

In India this mystery was that of "*the Seven FIRES*"<sup>23</sup> and their forty-nine fires or aspects" (ibid.)

"The 'Dragon' was also the symbol of the Logos with the Egyptians,<sup>24</sup> as with the Gnostics. In the *Book of Hermes*, Poimandres [= Pymander], the oldest and the most spiritual of the Logoi of the Western continent, appears to Hermes in the shape of a Fiery Dragon of 'Light, Fire and Flame' ..."

(S.D.I.p.74)

The serpent represents matter, but also wisdom, both are fused in the ancient imagery. Among many other meanings, the *Seven Heads* of the *Serpent of Eternity* are given out as

"the Seven zones of *post-mortem* ascent", in the Hermetic writings, in each of which zone the "mortal" leaves one of his "souls", or "principles"; "until arrived on the plane above all zones, he remains as the great Formless Serpent of absolute wisdom - or the Deity Itself. The seven-headed serpent has more than one signification in the Arcane teachings ..." (S.D.I.p.411)

This "Great formless Serpent of Absolute Wisdom" echoes down the ages in various presentations, whose innermost meaning was kept silent, who appears as Sesa Ananta of the *Purāṇas* and in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. There in chapter 175, as rendered by R.T. Rundle Clark, the creator God ATUM says to Osiris:

"You will live more than millions of years, an era of millions,  
but in the end I will destroy everything that I have created,  
the earth will become again part of the Primeval Ocean,  
like the Abyss of waters in their original state.  
Then I will be what will remain, just I and Osiris,  
when I will have changed myself back into the Old Serpent  
who knew no man and saw no god ..."

Rundle Clark in his comment noted

"... the final fate, then, is to return to the primordial unity. Here we see Egyptian thought reaching out to a concept very like that of the Upaniṣads"<sup>25</sup>

- indeed a concept which is completely esoteric and can be found even in the *Koran* where it is poetically expressed as "all is perishing except his Face". In the Egyptian quote Osiris, the perfected or "Heavenly Man" remains with Atum; so also in the Upaniṣadic teaching of the eternal *ātman* as one with Brahman.

Number SEVEN plays quite a part in the Ṛgveda as in other esoteric texts, indeed like certain numbers such as THREE and FOUR and the dualities. SEVEN is the number of Nature, not the perfect number which is TEN. The greater part of Nature is ruled by the phases of the moon which progress from seven to four times seven. Note the seven colours of the spectrum, the seven notes of the scale, the seven layers of the human skin, the seven cavities of the brain, etc. Seven underlies the levels of the manifested universe and is a sign of the orderly expression of the Intelligence that rules cosmos and microcosmos.

Aside from Agni's seven heads or horses or sons or flames, the "seven headed ancestral vision" (X.67.1) born anew each morn (III.39.2), the "sevenfold mouth" of the Lord of Prayer, Brahmanaspati (IV.50.4), the seven regions of the earth (I.22.16), the seven wheeled chariot of the sun, his seven rays or horses, the sevenfold foundation of the ocean of space, the seven Water goddesses, the seven races of humanity, all of which are mentioned in the Ṛgveda, one encounters the mysterious *Seven Embryos*, the *Seven Ṛṣis* and the *Seven Rivers* which form the subject of this Part II.

The Sun is drawn by seven horses, or by one horse with seven heads; "the former" writes H.P.B., "referring to his seven planets, the latter to their common origin from the One Cosmic Element. This 'One Element' is called figuratively 'FIRE'. The *Vedas* teach that 'the fire is verily all the deities'. (See *Anugītā*, Telang.ix.9; and *Aitareya Brāhmana*, Haug.p.1.)" (S.D.I.p.101.)

H.P.B. refers to "Fohat or the Seven Sons", meaning the *seven manifestations of Fohat*, of that Flame hidden in all things as in all creatures, as in the vastness of space. In this Fohat we shall discover AGNI. Through Fohat's activity are produced the seven *zero points* wherein occur the *modifications* of the Great Breath, the Eternal Pulse, which modifications result in the *differentiation* of that ultimate substance that is

space into the seven gradations of cosmic space (S.D.I.p.147-8) during the manvantara or cycle of activity. Those seven *laya centres* or zero points produced by Fohat (Stanza of Dzyan 6:2), at the very origin of manifestation, represent the points of differentiation, and ultimately of dissolution and resolution of "the elements which enter into the constitution of our solar system", the ultimate zero points or "neutral centres". Beyond these "Esoteric philosophy allows us to perceive the dim metaphysical outlines of the 'Seven Sons' of Life and Light, and Seven Logoi of the Hermetic and all other philosophers" (S.D.I.p.138), that cannot and must not be anthropomorphised - what Sri Krishna Prem calls the Seven ultimate Archetypes. The Seven Sons of Life and Light can be glimpsed only beyond the seven "neutral centres" of dissolution and resolution.

Various may be the ways of apprehending the meaning of the Seven ultimate Logoi, or Dhyān Chohans, the Seven irradiating Rays of MAHAT. Sri Krishna Prem's interpretation in *Man, the Measure of all Things*, throws some light on this difficult subject, quite in keeping with the spirit of *The Secret Doctrine*:

"... the Primordial or Inner Seven, those ultimate Archetypes of the universe ... form, as it were, the Norm or plan of the whole cosmos. Nowhere and at no time can anything take place except as a manifestation of some facet of those Inner Seven. Their transcendental harmony is at once the source and master of all that happens in the outer universe." (op.cit.p.207)

This is a perfect commentary on two purely esoteric verses of the Ṛgveda; one, IV.55.2 wherein the "Wise apportioners" who "praise the ancient statutes" with their songs and "vision the Cosmic Order" *shine it forth*, as it were, as wonder-workers; and the other VI.9.2cd referring to all the devas as "one-minded, one-intentioned, unerringly proceeding to the one purposeful accomplishment". Sri KrishnaPrem goes on:

"The Inner Seven are ... projected outwards upon the heaven of the Universal Mind, there to become the shining Sons of Fire, the windows of the palace of the cosmos through which alone can come all light that is within it ... " (ibid.p.207)

"These Sons of Fire, sprung from the Light that lights all worlds, share in the wisdom of their Fathers (the Inner Seven) which is incorporate within that Light ... Seen as powers of the forthgoing creation, they are the seven ṛṣis of India, progenitors of the race, Lords of Being, Lords of the levels, those path they appear as the forms of those great and liberated beings who dwell in the upper boundary of the manifested cosmos. To these latter, their fathers are those who preceded them on the path and have now gone Beyond ..." (ibid.p.208-9)

### **THE SEVEN EMBRYOS**

Is there any trace of these Seven, as archetypes, or dim outlines, upon the screen of the Ṛgvedic cosmos that might point to the origin of the tradition of a sevenfold primordial power as viewed by the ṛṣis? A certain enigmatic verse does appear in Ṛgveda I.164.36 which, according to Ludwig, as quoted by the translator, Griffith, is "one of the most unintelligible in the whole Veda", unintelligible when taken literally, but not so when grasped in its figurative and esoteric sense, for here certainly a physical explanation makes complete nonsense. Griffith translates the verse thus:

"Seven germs unripened yet are heaven's prolific seed;  
their functions they maintain by Viṣṇu's ordinance.  
Endued with wisdom through intelligence and thought,  
they compass us about, present on every side."

O'Flaherty translates:

"The seven half embryos portion out the semen of the world at Viṣṇu's command.  
Wise in their thoughts and hearts, themselves surrounded, they surround it on all sides."

So literally, the seven "half-embryos", seed of the universe, uphold their functions by Viṣṇu's command or direction. These, versed-in-wisdom (*vipascitah*) with insights and mind all containing, surround us on all sides. Obviously half embryos taken literally make nonsense of the verse, all the more since they are *wise*. The stumbling block here is the compound *saptārdhagarbha* which, as a *karmadhāraya* compound reads as seven half embryos, and obscures what is otherwise more or less understandable. Yet one explanation has been offered which is very plausible and in keeping with the gist of the Ṛgveda. H. Aguilar writes in his *Sacrifice in the Ṛgveda*:

"The expression 'ardha-garbha' ... has been definitely chosen to indicate a double nature or state of the seven beings who are busy distributing the primordial seed of the world according to Viṣṇu's instructions. Their semi embryonic character means that they are half-formed and half-unformed, half in the womb, half out of the womb, and by implication half-active and half-inactive ..." (op.cit.p.162)

The inactive part is that which remains at the spiritual level, overlooking but not acting in the lower levels, much like the Two birds of I.164.20 that shelter in the same tree (of life) of which one eats the fruit thereof and the other merely looks on; and much like the Primordial or Inner Seven of Sri Krishna Prem whose "projections" as the Seven Shining Sons of Fire share in the wisdom of the Seven ultimate Archetypes, but are the active powers.

However, *saptārdhagarba*, as a *tatpuruṣa* compound, can be read as "the 7 embryos (or seeds) of the half", as suggested by V.S. Agrawala, in his article "Gauri" and in his analysis of Ṛgv.I.164.36 in *The Thousand-syllabled Speech*,<sup>26</sup> on the basis of the doctrine of the half as manifested world and the other half as the unmanifested. He refers us to verses from the Atharvaveda of which the most important two read thus:

Prajāpati "goes about (*car*) within the womb; not being seen, he is manifoldly born (*vi-jā*); with a half he has generated all existence, what his (other) half is - which sign is that?" (Athv.X.8.13)

"One-wheeled it rolls, one rimmed, a thousand syllabled, forth in front, down, behind; with a half it has generated all existence; what its (other) half is - what has become of that?" (Athv.X.8.7)

A division between two halves, one of which seems to have disappeared or to remain unseen is clear enough here as in some of the other verses not quoted here. One could also note a similar idea in Ṛgv.X.82.7ab which does imply that the unmanifest is transformed into something quite different through the means inherent to itself:

"That which generated these things you will not find:

Something else has emerged to being from amongst you." (Ṛgv.X.82.7ab)

"Thus", writes Agrawala, "the manifested cosmos is one Half and the unmanifest *Brahman* or the transcendent source of which there is no sign and no address is the other Half." (*Thousand-syllabled Speech*. p.129)

Such a theory is plausible enough in view of the fundamental twofold notion in the cosmic vision of the ṛṣis for which Dyaus and Pṛthivī are the basis - quite apart from the threefold division! But also, for instance, the fission manifested in the hymn of creation:

"Their vision's rays stretched afar. There was indeed a below; there was indeed an above.

Seed-bearers there were, mighty powers there were; energy below, will above." (Ṛgv.X.129.5)

To Indra is said:

"From thy body thou hast generated at the same time the mother and the father." (Ṛgv.X.54.3cd)

"Mother" and "Father" or Dyaus, heaven or spirit, and Pṛthivī or earth, being twins, but two polar opposites who protect all beings (III.38.8), support all (I.185.4), yet separate, each having his/her specific part to play: thus in VII.84.2a Dyaus invigorates or quickens the wide dominion of Mitra-Varuṇa; Pṛthivī, "the patient Earth, growing strong through spiritual insight" (Athv.XII.1.29) "germinates the seed with quickening power" (Ṛgv.V.84.1). The interaction of these two, like that of *puruṣa* and *prakṛti* in the Sāṅkhya philosophy, is necessary for the evolution of the world.<sup>27</sup> Their coordination is in line with that of Dakṣa and Aditi, both couples representing poles of manifestation inherent to the separation that produced the first adumbration of the cosmos, reflecting the original fission from the unmanifest or non-being to the manifest or being, going back to *asat* and *sat* of the Ṛgvedic creation hymn (X.129).

Agrawala's theory of the half of the whole, one half of which being the spiritual pole equivalent to the transcendent and the other, the material equivalent to the terrestrial, is vindicated in the Ṛgveda itself, and is quite in line with *The Secret Doctrine*.

As explained in Part I the interaction between the two polar opposites produces the "Son", Mahat, or the manifested universe, since that universe is the result of the activity of Divine Intelligence and Divine Substance eternally at work in inter-relationship.

But this manifesting half expresses its activity through a *sevenfold power*, described variously, but named in Ṛgv.I.164.36 the *seven embryos* or seeds - the forerunners of the ṛṣis. Thus from this "half"

fashioned in the image of the Unborn (Ṛgv.I.164.6) emerge the seven embryos or "sons" as Agrawala calls them, who "encompass us on all sides". Or the seven may be interpreted as emerging from the transcendent half. Agrawala seems to hesitate between the two interpretations. Thus

"These seven form the germinative seed of the universe, and in themselves they are the children of *ardha*, i.e. the manifested cosmos (*rodasī or dyāvāpṛthivī*)." ("Gaurī". p.5)

whereas in *The Thousand-syllabled Speech* he translates the verse thus:

"The seed of the universe consists of the Seven Sons of the Transcendent Half (*Ardha*). They maintain their functions by Viṣṇu's Ordinance. Endowed with wisdom, through intelligence and thought, they, the omnipresent ones, encompass us on all sides." (I.164.36) (p.129)

Whether these seven sons are thought to emerge from one half or from the other half, fundamentally does not matter since the manifested half is the expression of the unmanifest half and therefore rooted in it as in the "Unborn". It is evident that we have in this verse an outline of *The Secret Doctrine's* statement concerning the Universal Mind:

"... in esoteric philosophy this first manifestation, being the synthesis or the aggregate of Universal Wisdom, Oeaoohoo, the 'Son of the Son', contains in himself the Seven Creative Hosts (the Sēphīrōth), and is thus the essence of manifested Wisdom." (S.D.I.p.72)

Ṛgvedic verse I.164.36 even substantiates the wisdom aspect emphasised in the above quote, for these seven embryos or sons are *vipaścitaḥ* which Agrawala explains as "endowed with mind and intelligence" - differentiating between mind and intelligence! The Sanskrit word meaning *inspired with wisdom*. He even identifies the seven embryos with "the seven Angirasa ṛṣis who are the sons of Agni (X.62.5)", Angiras being one of the seven primeval ṛṣis with whom Agni is identified in the very first hymn of the Ṛgveda. Here we come round to the idea of the seven primordial flames or creative hosts mentioned in *The Secret Doctrine*, especially as these seven Angirasa sages are "known as the sons of Heaven (*Divasputrāsaḥ*), Heroes born from an Asura who is Agni himself (*Asurasya vīraḥ* X.67.2) ..." (op. cit. p.130) - truly the "Sons of Fire" of *The Secret Doctrine*.

Agrawala explains further: "The seven differentiated forms of *Ardha* together are known as the Cosmic Seed, (*Bhuvanasya Retah*). In its hidden source the Seed was undifferentiated as *Ekam* but for the sake of creation it became modified as seven." (p.130)

These seven, according to him, "are not different from Mind, Life and the five elements of matter" (ibid.p.130); in other words, the 7 "elements" of *The Secret Doctrine*. For, however different in its nomenclature, this statement joins the idea of the "Seven Creative Spirits" as the *souls* or *noumena* of the seven Elements (of which two have not yet manifested). (S.D.I.p.13)

"METAPHYSICALLY and esoterically", explains H.P.B., "there is but ONE ELEMENT in nature, and at the root of it is the Deity; and the so-called *seven* elements, of which *five* have already manifested and asserted their existence, are the garment, *the veil, of that Deity*; direct from the essence whereof comes MAN, whether physically, psychically, mentally or spiritually considered. Four elements only are generally spoken of in later antiquity, five admitted only in philosophy. For the body of ether is not fully manifested yet, and its noumenon is still the 'Omnipotent Father AETHER', the synthesis of the rest ... .."

The four Elements were fully characterized by Plato when he said that they were *that* 'which *composes* and *decomposes* the *compound bodies*' (*Timaeus*, 32,56) ... Fire, Air, Water, Earth, were but the visible

garb, the symbols of the informing, invisible Souls or Spirits, - the Cosmic gods to whom worship was offered by the ignorant, and simple, but respectful, recognition by the wiser." (S.D.I.p.460-61)

To whichever of the two interpretations offered for examination we turn, it becomes evident that the Ṛgvedic verse (I.164.36) belongs to a secret lore to which the ṛṣis had access, a lore that concerned seven primordial powers called variously but here not explained, beyond the fact that they are the seed of the universe that divides sevenfold; that they, being wise and intelligent, performed their allotted task in accordance with the decrees of Viṣṇu, the solar deity linked in his inner meaning to Sūrya/Savitṛ who, in accordance with ṛta, extends far and wide the peak of ṛta (VIII.86.5ab; IV.53.5). This lore tallies with *The Secret Doctrine's* sevenfold primordial focus of creative power, the synthesis of universal wisdom manifesting as the Seven Sons



of the Flame, or Seven Dhyānis, to be assimilated, in the Ṛgveda, to the original Seven Ṛṣis and the Seven Sons of Agni.

H.P.B. tells us that

"Every nation has either the *seven* and *ten* Ṛṣis-Manus and Prajāpatis; the seven and *ten* Chi-yi; or ten and seven Amshāspends (six exoterically), (the Amshāspends are six - if Ormazd, their chief and Logos, is excluded) ... ten and seven Chaldean Anedots, [Annedoti]; ten and seven Sephīrōth, etc., etc. One and all have been derived from the primitive Dhyāni Chohans of the Esoteric doctrine, or the 'Builders' of the Stanzas ..." (S.D.II.p.365-66)

The Amesha Spentas or Amshāspends of whom Ahura Mazda, or Ormazd is the synthesis, are called "Immortal Benefactors" and described in *Zamyād Yasht* (III.15-18) as:

"The Amesha Spentas, the shining, having efficacious eyes, great, helpful ... imperishable and pure .... who are all seven of like mind, like speech, all seven doing alike ... who are *the creators and destroyers of the creatures* of Ahura Mazda, their creators and overseers, their protectors and rulers."

(Quoted in S.D.II.p.358)

"These few lines" writes H.P.B. "alone indicate the dual and even the triple character of the Amshāspends, our Dhyāni Chohans or the 'Serpents of Wisdom'. They are identical with, and yet separate from Ormazd (Ahura-Mazdāh). They are also the Angels of the Stars of the Christians - the Star-Yazatas of the Zoroastrians - or again the Seven Planets (including the Sun) of every religion." (ibid.II.p.358)

### **THE SEVEN ṚSIS IN THE VEDAS**

#### *Introduction*

The tradition of the Seven Ṛṣis also reveals how rich and complex is the lore that surrounds the original Seven ṛṣis or Sages and how it develops, or perhaps how unknown facets are revealed little by little when there occurs a relaxing in the imparting of the secret teachings. A few references to them may be found in the Ṛgveda, but one has to go beyond the Ṛgveda to assess the great influence they had on Indian spiritual life and on the development of the ideas clustered around the ṛṣis. Therefore texts which are considered later than the Ṛgveda have to be taken into account. For countless generations this tradition has moulded the lore, ideals and framework of Hindu religious and social life. Vedic and Hindu texts give lists of the names of the Seven Ṛṣis, differing as one passes from the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Sūtras to the Epics and the Purāṇas. Even in the Ṛgveda the Seven Ṛṣis are differentiated into the celestial (*daivya*) and the human (*manuṣya*) ṛṣis, "our forefathers of old". Going through the various texts, one finds that they are called the Seven Ṛṣis, then the Seven Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, the Seven Prajāpatis and even identified with the seven *prāṇas* of the human constitution, and they pass into the constellation of the Great Bear, previously called *ṛkṣas*:

"They call these the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā, who have Dakṣa as their seventh, great Meru is their auspicious and sound abode. There too the Seven godly Ṛṣis, with Vasiṣṭha at their head, constantly rise and set."<sup>28</sup>

H.P.B. explains that the Saptarṣis,<sup>29</sup> the Mind-born Sons of Brahmā are referred to under one set of names in one scripture and under another set in another; but that the secret teaching "gives a long genealogy of Ṛṣis, but separates them into many classes". (S.D.I.p.436). The Bhagavad Gītā puts it very succinctly:

"The seven great Ṛṣis, the four preceding Manus, partaking of my essence, were born from my mind; from them sprang the human race and the world." (Bh.G.X.6)<sup>30</sup>

Elsewhere H.P.B. explains:

"The Creators are the Ṛṣis; most of whom are credited with the authorship of the mantras, or hymns of the Ṛgveda. They are sometimes seven, sometimes ten, when they become Prajāpatis, 'the Lords of Beings'; then they rebecome the *seven* and the *fourteen* Manus, as the representatives of the seven and fourteen *cycles* of Existence, "Days of Brahmā"; thus answering to the seven *Aeōns*, when at the end of the first stage of Evolution they are transformed into the seven stellar ṛṣis, the Saptarṣis; while their *human* doubles appear as heroes, kings and sages on this earth." (S.D.I.p.442)

This apparent permutation of the ṛṣis first as ṛṣis, divine and human, then as *prajāpatis* or creators, then as *Prāṇas* or the seven expressions of the very life breath in humans (which ultimately manifest as the senses turned outwards), and finally as stars in a most important constellation, Ursa Major, has an underlying

esoteric meaning. This bears upon the inner interlinkedness of all, whether stellar systems, beings, faculties and powers developed or embryonic in creatures, a network of energies that interlace and influence one another, moulding all things to different appearances through constant transformations. Transformation, as the keynote of evolution, is thus expressed in the ancient writings.

### THE SEVEN R̥SIS AND THE GREAT BEAR

For the Ancients, be it repeated, whether of India, or China, or Egypt, or Chaldea, or Greece, etc. the universe was a tapestry of mighty forces of all kinds, at the source of which moved spiritual entities of every grade of tenuous or denser matter, - the stars, the solar systems, the planets being their various habitats, hence centres of great energies whose radiation extended far and wide, and varied in its transforming influence in accordance with the grade of its spiritual intelligences. Starry worlds were seen as abodes of intelligences whose light beams - differentiations of *ākāśa* - formed the basic fabric of the universe. Hence the interlinkedness of all, and the basic oneness of cosmos. In the Ṛgveda it is stated that the devas' lower

"habitations are seen, but themselves abide in remoter, hidden dominions" (III.54.5)

these lower dwellings being visible to physical eyes, because made of coarser matter, the devas themselves being of far more tenuous, hence invisible matter, except to the inner eye. When, in the later scripture, one finds such statements as the following from the *Mahābhārata*

"Those who have attained virtue shine there (in the sky) through their own radiance, and are seen here (on earth) in the form of shining stars. Arjuna saw hundreds of Royal Ṛṣis, *siddhas*, and heroes killed

in battle, who had conquered Svarga through *tapas*, and who were illumined by their own powers and lustre..." (*Mahābhārata*.3.43.29-)<sup>31</sup>

this is the poets' way of saying that the perfected beings had joined other worlds more suitable to their state of achievement, hence the far spreading radiance of these starry worlds. A similar notion concerning those who have passed beyond, as circling round the circumpolar stars, absorbed in the great rhythm of the universe, is found among the ancient Egyptians. But the Ṛṣis being transferred to a particular constellation, viz., Ursa Major or the Great Bear, is of particular interest, for both the Ṛṣis and the constellation have that common link concerned with vast cycles of time and their recurrence; the constellation (together with others) appears to be orbiting around a central point of the heavens, the northern pole star, thereby marking particular portions of *time* in the celestial clock, returning regularly in due course of time to any point we care to choose, and the ṛṣis coming back to earth regularly in specific cycles or periods of the manvantara. Furthermore, as John Mitchiner points out in his excellent study *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*:

"... the Seven Ṛṣis - as Ursa Major - are consistently associated with the northern region and with the symbolic 'centre' of the sky or northern celestial pole. In one Ṛgveda hymn they are also called Oxen (*ukṣan*) who take their enjoyment in the east" (Ṛgv.III.7.7) (op.cit. p.265)

this being thought to apply to the Kṛttikas or Pleiades. The archaic word for the northern regions or north is *septentrion*, from Latin *septentriones*, *septem* = seven, *triones* = ploughing oxen, the seven ploughing oxen being an ancient reference to the constellation of the Great Bear.

H.P.B. remarks

"As to the mysterious constellation of the Seven Ṛṣis in the Great Bear; ... India has connected all these symbols ages ago with time or *Yuga* revolutions, and the Saptarṣis are ultimately connected with our present age - the dark *Kali-Yuga* ... it is they, the Seven Ṛṣis, who mark the time and the duration of events in our septenary Life-cycle. They are as mysterious as their supposed wives, the Pleiades, of whom only one - she who hides - has proven virtuous ..." (S.D.II.p.549)

"Where these Seven Ṛṣis are, there is the centre of the sky" says the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (IV.26.12) and John Mitchiner comments:

"The northern celestial Pole, - which at the present day is represented by the star Polaris - was some two to three millennia ago (namely around the time when this passage was written) represented by the star Thuban or alpha Draconis, midway between Polaris and Ursa Major. At that time, therefore, Ursa Major would without doubt have been the constellation closest to the symbolic 'centre' of the sky - while in still earlier times, the northern celestial pole would have been located within the constellation

itself." (p.275)

How long ago?

The computation of the Era of the Seven Ṛṣis does vary but it is interesting to note that, according to J. Mitchiner, the Indian astronomers

"... reckon the start of the Era from the dawn of the Kalpa, since which time the Seven Ṛṣis are said to have completed almost 730,720 complete cycles down to the start of the Kali Yuga. (See e.g. *Mahā-siddhānta* 1.11, 1.15-16, 1.19, 2.9-10)" (op.cit. p.151)

According to *The Secret Doctrine*:

"... there must have been a good reason why an Asiatic nation [India] should locate its great progenitors and saints in the *Ursa Major*, a northern constellation. It is 70,000 YEARS, HOWEVER, SINCE THE POLE OF THE EARTH POINTED TO THE FURTHER END OF URSA MINOR'S TAIL; and many more thousand years since the seven ṛṣis could have been identified with the constellation of *Ursa Major*." (S.D.II.p.768)

As to the source of origin of the names - oxen and bears - oxen could be Indian, as *bull* is a term applied to Indra and Agni with the meaning of powerful; *bears* could be of Central Asian origin, but were known in the Indus Valley civilisation. J. Mitchiner, as indeed most scholars, claims that the latter culture exhibits "many non-Indo-European features". However, the "seven figures with ritual head-dress", etc. depicted on seals, who

"may well be interpreted as sacred seers or wise men ... may in turn be compared with the Seven Sages or *apkallus* of the Sumerians, Babylonians and Assyrians, who ensured the correct functioning of heaven and earth, taught civilisation to mankind, survived the great flood, and ascended to heaven ... The idea of the constellation as Seven Sages or Seers may well have been current among the peoples of the Indus Valley Civilisation - elaborated from the Mesopotamian idea of the Seven *apkallus* ..." <sup>32</sup>

Here we find in a 20th century writer exactly what the author of *The Secret Doctrine* had admitted more than a century ago, namely the recognition that the *tradition* of the "Seven Sages" as *seminal* spiritual beings appearing at the beginning of human *time* to give the impetus to human beings by teaching them the basics of civilisation, *is common to many ancient peoples*, however differently presented (cf. the Fish God Oannes of Babylon and Quetzalcoatl of Mexico). Such *convergence* of the various records of Sages - from those of Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, the Vedic Ṛṣis, Ancient Egypt's Osiris and Isis teaching their people the arts of civilization etc., - on the one central theme of *civilizing humanity*, on "ensuring the correct functioning of heaven and earth"; on giving the greatest gift, the gnosis or *veda*, and then leaving human beings to their own device to make or mar their own destiny - cannot be dismissed any longer. It does confirm one of the fundamental teachings of *The Secret Doctrine*, namely that early humanity was taught by far more evolved, hence divine beings come back, from previous ages of evolution, to earth as teachers, rulers, progenitors, in different ages. They are not presented as *extra-terrestrials* in ancient India but as great sages coming from previous *kalpas* when evolution had gone on, and spheres of experience for human beings existed.

The change of the name of the Great Bear (constellation) to that of the Seven Ṛṣis might have come, as suggested by J. Mitchiner, as a result of that inner connection between shamanistic and ṛṣi practices whereby both shaman and ṛṣi are recipients of divine powers, and both are connected with the *centre*, whether of the sky, or as the world axis or pole, the great difference being that the shaman receives his power through an animal, the bear, the ṛṣi direct from the divine source. As to the centre of the sky to which the shaman makes his ascent or from which he descends to the nether world, it is the world-pillar which one also meets in the Vedas as the *skambha*, to which a magnificent hymn is dedicated in the Atharvaveda (X.7), the *skambha* being the support of the universe, the very core of it, identified with the universal principle, "the loftiest Brahman, the Lord of Life" (Athv.X.7.17). In the *skambha* the ṛṣis are established; they emerge from the very centre of life. They are indeed the sons of Brahmā.

As to the calculations of cycles: the moon, when viewed from the earth, was deemed to transit through 27 or 28 asterisms (according to the two versions in use) or clusters of stars, called *nakṣatras* in Sanskrit, of which the Pleiades were listed as the first one. The moon's celestial path was thus provided with e.g. 28 mansions, as listed in the Taittirīya Samhitā IV.4.10, the Taittirīya Br.I.5.1, the Atharvaveda XIX.7, etc.

which number is 27 in other works. This allowed specific time calculations to be made. So the *Purāṇas* state that each of the ṛṣis of the Ursa Major remains within each *nakṣatra* for 100 years, hence the cycle of 2.700 years indicating one revolution. This system was called the Saptarṣi Era. It is mentioned in the Śātapatha Br. where each of the 2.700 year cycles is called a *cakra* or wheel, implying one revolution round the heavens. This computation of the Era of the Seven Ṛṣis was explained and commented upon by historians such as Kalhaṇa and Albīrūnī. Cunningham, in his *Book of Indian eras* mentions how such a time reckoning was used in Kashmir up to the 19th century AD and how the beginning of each 100 year cycle of the Seven Ṛṣis era corresponds to the year 25 AD of each Christian century. This is mentioned in *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis* where the following quote is given from G. Buhler's *A detailed report of a tour in search of Sanskrit manuscripts*:

"When the years of the Kali marked by the 'arrows and eyes' (i.e. 5 and 2, or 25) had elapsed, the most excellent Seven Ṛṣis ascended to heaven. For in the calendar used in the world (namely the Laukika), the virtuous declare the computation of the Seven Ṛṣis (years to begin from that point)".<sup>33</sup>

Behind the Seven Ṛṣis as known to tradition stand the Seven Principles or Octave of frequency that rule the macrocosm and the microcosm, manifesting as the *vaiśvānara* fire sevenfold, or Agni's seven flames; manifesting as the seven *prāṇas* or "seven great officiating priests" in the human being (see Pt.III) that rule the outwardly turned seven senses (the higher two being mind, *manas* and spiritual understanding or *buddhi*), and embodied in the Seven original Ṛṣis; these celestial beings uphold the cycles of time in which events unfold at regular intervals in accordance with the cosmic frequencies outlined on the dial of the heavens.

The Seven Ṛṣis are said to be born on earth in each *manvantara* in order to teach the *dharma* to humanity. But they only appear during the first 3 *yugas* or ages of the *manvantara*, namely the *kṛta* or *satya*, which corresponds to the golden age of righteousness, and the *trētā* and *dvāpara*, but not in the fourth or *kali*, the black age, our own, during which corruption rules supreme and desecration falls like a blight on all principles and sacred lore. The ṛṣis usher in an age of enlightenment as though they uncovered a fountain of crystalline waters from which humanity could quench its spiritual thirst by drinking therefrom and growing in wisdom; whereas in the *kali yuga*, upon the withdrawal of the sages, the lower forces of ignorance take over, and because of the greater immersion of humanity in denser matter, and the steady loss of moral principles, end by having full sway. This is obviously in complete contradiction with what our superiority complex has dictated was the *fact*, though the latter cannot account for the *universal legend* of spiritual beings having taught humanity in the early stages of its evolution, and for the present degradation of values and principles.

As different cycles were noted in concordance with aspects of the celestial clock, one may well wonder whether the Ṛṣis' return to earth in each age was deemed to synchronise with specific portions of the sidereal or great age of 25.920 years. For the present, it seems that there does not appear to be any exact mathematical correlation between the return of the Ṛṣis and the greater cycle. Some may of course doubt that the sidereal year was known to the early astronomers. However, in line with their vast computations, one is at liberty to believe the contrary.

A whole investigation remains to be done in this field, but many difficulties are in the way, not the least through the *manvantara* time divisions of the *Purāṇas* and the *kalpa* divisions of the Epics being at variance. We are told in *The Secret Doctrine* that the major and minor cycles are purposely mixed up, and so is the meaning of *kalpa* as cycle at times mixed up with that of *race*, etc. H.P.B. gives a warning:

"... The scholar who studies the Hindu religion from the *Purāṇas* ... must not take literally, and in one sense only, the statements therein found; since those which especially concern the Manvantaras, or kalpas have to be understood in their several references. So, for instance these periods relate in the same language to both the great and the small periods, to Mahā Kalpas and to minor cycles." (S.D.I.p.369)<sup>34</sup>

The figures for the 4 *yugas*, the 71 *mahā yugas*, the reign of 14 *manus*, the intervals between these, the duration of a Day and a Night of Brahmā,<sup>35</sup> etc. are given in S.D.II.p.68-70, ending with the figure for the whole period of Brahmā's age, i.e. a *mahā kalpa*, viz. 311.040.000.000.000 and the following explanation:

"These are the exoteric figures accepted throughout India, and they dovetail pretty nearly with those of the Secret works. The latter, moreover, amplify them by a division into a number of esoteric cycles, never mentioned in Brahmanical popular writings - one of which, the division of the Yugas into racial cycles, is given elsewhere as an instance. The rest, in their details, have of course never been made public ..."

(S.D.II.p.70)

These remarks can be compared with John Mitchiner's analysis and evident difficulties in finding a common basis to the computations of the Epics and the Purāṇas,<sup>36</sup> their contradictions and discrepancies, and his conclusion that "a quite different time-perspective is adopted between the Epics and the Purāṇas". This vast cyclic time computation which frightened off our puny minds in the 19th and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was first written off as "fabulous", does, however, show how the ancient mind could face and indeed absorb vast time cycles as natural to cosmos and to our planet and its humanity. One is reminded of Plato's *Timaeus* where one of the priests of Sais (in the Egyptian Delta) exclaimed to Solon how young were the Greeks in mind for whom there was no ancient tradition nor science hoary with age as with the Egyptians, whose priests had kept their records for thousands of years; one is reminded of Herodotus being told by the Egyptian priests that "the sun had twice risen where he now sets and twice set where he now rises" which implies that the poles of our earth had completely changed their position bringing about massive changes in land and climate, which geology admits occurred in the distant past; one is reminded of the Zodiac of Denderah, surely a copy of a copy of an ancient Zodiac marking on its dial 3 sidereal or Great Years. In the wake of the TAUTAVEL MAN recently discovered and dated 400,000 years old, and even more recent discoveries, why do we shirk from those ancient computations and from admitting that the Ancients had a great knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, etc.?

#### THE SEVEN ṚSIS AND THE GNOSIS

In the Vedas the ṛsis are viewed primarily as seers, composers, and performers of the sacrifice or ritual worship. In this word *sacrifice*, which has practically lost all significance for us, if we do not rebel altogether against it, is contained the very key to the Vedic vision of Cosmic Order; that which is sown has to disappear as such in its primal form, in order to *become* something else, hence the whole of creation, which is a vast becoming, is *sacrifice*. This was the ancient view echoed in the Christian "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die" (1.Cor.15.36). Without *dying* there can be no becoming, no renewal, therefore Prajāpati, the Lord of creatures, sacrificed himself to himself that the world might be. This is the fundamental thought behind all sacrificial rituals. As H. Aguilar has remarked:

"One fails to animate what one has created unless transmitting to it one's own life."

This implies

"... the fundamental capacity of everything to immolate itself, to sacrifice its own separateness in order to regain the original unity or ... in order to reconstruct the body of Prajāpati"<sup>37</sup>

The root of the word *yajña*, from *yaj*, to worship, reveals the sacrifice as that which relates the worshipper to the object of worship, which becomes the self-naughting of the worshipper in his deity. *Tapas* itself as the great discipline of the ṛsis (X.154) holds the clue to the meaning of sacrifice. At the human level it meant that intense spiritual focusing which occurs in deep meditation, bringing about inner incandescence as a result of self-imposed purification and one-pointed concentration of the mind; thereby implying limitation for further expansion. Such action is both self-limiting and self-expanding - an offering of self towards a greater Self which is the basis of the true creative act of *tapas*, at all levels, the highest or godly, and human.

"The Rgvedic seers conceived the sacrifice as a universal process to which all things are subservient, an eternal give and take. This, at the lowest level, manifests as what appears as a constant 'preying'; at the highest as a constant 'self-gift'. Hence the universal application of the Rgvedic riddle:

'This sacrifice, the hub of the universe' (I.164.35b) ...

'O Self-sustaining One, offer up thyself to thyself for exaltation'. (X.81.5cd)<sup>38</sup>

Hence the great emphasis on the original "sacrificers", the ṛsis who showed the way.

Specific hints concerning the ṛsis are found in the Rgveda, not only through the naming of certain ṛsis such as Angiras and his sons born of Agni (X.62.5), described as *gambhīravepasah*, profoundly stirred, or simply as *vipras* (vibrant, inspired), born of the eternal flame, knowledge of which alone can take man into spiritual realms, but also as to the ṛsis' specific tasks. Thus according to Rgv.X.130.6, our forefathers of old were raised to ṛsihood when sacrifice was first instituted during which they learnt to chant the mantras. There is a distinction between these and the *seven celestial (daivya) ṛsis* who returned to earth to give men the

knowledge of the metres and *stomas*, hence *the secret of vibration* - unless the human ṛṣis, having become *devaputraḥ* or *devaputrarṣayas* (cf.X.62.4&5), are meant as returning here below to teach their descendants. That ultimate sound or Vāc, the original vibration, the ṛṣis tracked down as abiding in themselves (X.71.3). This pertains to the efficacy of certain forms of *tapas* as a means of worship and of entrance into the spiritual domains. It is revealed that by such knowledge of the very pulse of the metres the ṛṣis achieved godhood. This is where we touch one of the most deeply hidden secrets of the *veda*. (See Ch.5)

Thus by means of their *tapas*, a form of self sacrifice towards a greater purpose, the ṛṣis entered the domain of Vāc, hence their knowledge of their link and harmonious working with a vast sphere of the universal creative movement; hence their being viewed as the seven creative aspects of Mahat, as the seven Sons of Mind or Fire, or, as the Stanza of Dzyan (7:1) describes them: "The mind-born sons of the First Lord, the Shining Seven".

The ṛṣis are said to have "seen" the hymns as they "composed" them, now collected in the four Vedas and forming the basic revelation given to Aryāvarta. These hymns were, in the words of J. Mitchiner

"... revealed to them in the sense of divine or supramental revelation; in much the same way as the Bible, the Koran and other scriptures are held by some to be direct revelations of God, the Word of God brought to men through the medium of certain individuals. Thus, according to the most prevalent Hindu view, the ṛṣis were essentially the vehicles or means whereby these 'eternal revelations' of the hymns were made known to mankind". (p.172)

a *revelation* which most 19th and early 20th century scholars could not even recognise, so hidden is it amidst praises to the various gods, and so specifically "technical" are its *key* words. This *gnosis* of the value, power and influence of sound and its ramifications subsequently went so completely underground that it seems to have been lost, though not completely.

The knowledge of the secret of sound and its counterpart, the arousal of the flame divine, is just one of the well guarded secrets of which *tapas* is the key.

#### *TAPAS AS THE KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE ṚṢIS*

The ṛṣis are famed for having attained *svarga*, heaven, through their practising *tapas* for purification purposes towards reaching out to the transcendent, and through their performing the rites of sacrifice, an obvious, but undetected, reference to the activating of the *inner fire* as a counterpart to the *outer fire*. This however is kept secret in the Ṛgveda. Hints, especially in connection with Agni, the heavenly high-priest and illuminator, whom the ṛṣis established among human beings, however, give clues to such an inner practice. As well observed by H. Aguilar:

"... Without first conceiving the sacrificial fire within, it would be of little avail to kindle the external fire and pour in it the libations. In this connection the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (VII.4.1.1) says:

‘Being about to build Agni, he takes him up into his own self ... Now were he to build up Agni without taking him up into his own self, he would beget man from man, mortal from mortal ... ’

Having the sacrifice first of all within, one is able to beget it without, and being the father of the sacrifice, the sacrificer identifies himself by nature with it ..."<sup>39</sup>

Here is a clear indication of the *interiorisation* of the sacrifice, a fact denied by scholars to the Ṛgveda.

Literal-minded approach has more or less ignored the psychological significance of this aspect of the ṛṣis, the force of their concentration-meditation and achievement, and also the real significance of the ritual; but a deeper appraisal is in the process of being developed, as can be seen in the above quote, as well as from John Mitchiner's study, *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*, whose approach helps us to understand better what lies behind the sacred Fire, the ṛṣis' *sacrifice*, in its several layers of meaning, their *tapas*, their creativity and their "serving" humanity.

This *service* of and to humanity and this *tapas* activity are more elaborated in the *Epics* and the *Purāṇas* where the Seven Ṛṣis appear as teachers, those that pass on the revelation and the *dharma* they had received, teaching these in each of the 14 *manvantaras*, thus implying the periodical return of the *ṛṣis* to awaken humanity to the great truths of the *veda*, the secret *gnosis*. This is a *secret doctrine* tenet developed in the Third Fundamental Proposition concerning the

"obligatory pilgrimage for every Soul ... through the Cycle of Incarnation (or 'Necessity') in

accordance with Cyclic and Karmic law, during the whole term" (S.D.I.p.17) those having achieved the higher stages of evolution in a previous cycle coming back as sages or teachers and leaders to guide the new humanity. Hence the *King Lists* of ancient Egypt headed by the "gods" as rulers of Egypt, the King Lists of Sumer, the Mexican legend of Quetzalcoatl, etc. Most prehistoric societies have "reminiscences" of having originally been taught by great beings they called gods.

Here, Agni - the legends that concern his activity, his use by the ṛṣis and his gift to humanity, his impact and mastery, inner and outer, and his link with Soma - is the crucial catalyst, the pivot around which move the ṛṣis as well as our own understanding of their role in the early history of Āryāvarta and its civilization. J. Mitchiner mentions the

"increasing 'ritual interiorisation' of the sacrificial cult, whereby the external generation of heat in sacrifice comes to be replaced by the internal generation of heat through ascetic austerities ..." (p.181)

The inner significance of Agni in the Ṛgveda is here disregarded, as usual, as well as the Śatapatha Brāhmana (VII.4.1.1) explanation. The ṛṣis practised *tapas*, the secret of which was passed on by the great ṛṣis of yore, never openly expressed, for therein lay the fundamental power, creative and destructive, hence dangerous and therefore revealed only to the initiated few. This has not been understood.

The role of *tapas* is thus at issue here and that too has been misunderstood. That *tapas* was already practised to perfection in Rgvedic days and quite a long time before is evidenced in Ṛgv.X.154.5 :

"Let him depart, Yama, to those austere ṛṣis, born of *tapas*, to those sages, skilled in a thousand sciences, who guard the sun." (X.154.5. J. Muir's trans.)

The ṛṣis became sages through their mastery of *tapas*, they are thus said to be *born of tapas (tapojān)*; these are the great seer-sages who watch over the sun (*ye gopāyanti Sūryam*). What sun is this, and what need to watch over it? This is the way to the illumination of *sva*, to that immortal flame/light or solar blaze said to be in all human beings (Yjv.vs.34.4) "without which nothing whatever can be done". Thus in the Ṛgveda:

"Having received from my Father the insight of rta, I was born like a sun." (VIII.6.10)

"Gazing upon the excellent light, the solar-splendour-finding ṛṣis, in the beginning, attended to their *tapas* and consecration; therefrom come into being power, strength, energy ...

(Athv.XIX.41.1 = TA.III.11.9)

The understanding of *tapas* has improved during the past fifty years. So J. Mitchiner was able to explain: "*Tapas* itself is a dynamically creative power, which enables the *tapasvin* or practitioner of *tapas*<sup>40</sup> to change both himself and his environment; but just as fire is both a purifying and a destructive element, so too the fire of *tapas* can be used also for destructive ends, particularly through the power of a curse. The very meaning of the word *tapas* is itself closely connected in many respects with the meaning of the term ṛṣi: for the Sanskrit ṛs denotes movement and exertion, and the ṛṣis are those who - by their motion and self exertion - brought the universe into being. (Sat.Br.VI.1.1.1-5) ...

Thus the ṛṣi is essentially one who is undergoing transformation, who vibrates (from *vīp*, hence the ṛṣis are called *vīpras*) like a power-house of energy; his powers are amassed through the building-up of inner heat, which ultimately enables him to take the place of both Fire and the sun - transforming his whole being, as it were, into pure energy - and to attain heaven and conquer the realm of the gods." (op.cit. p.187,188)

This building up of *inner heat* is the activating of the sacred, secret fire in the human being. Compare the trend of thought in the above quotation with H.P.B.'s comment:

"For it is not Brahmā who creates, in the Ṛgveda, but the Prajāpatis, the 'Lords of Being' who are the *ṛṣis*; the word ṛṣi ... being connected with the word to move, to lead on, applied to them in their terrestrial character, when as Patriarchs, they lead their hosts on the Seven Rivers." (S.D.I.p.346)

the Seven Rivers in their specific esoteric meaning of descending and ascending beings, celestial and human.

Is there behind the Purāṇic exaggerated accounts of the ṛṣis' achievements through their *tapas* a dim reminiscence of a lore concerning spiritual entities of the nature of the sun or fire (hence the *tapas* emphasis) whom the human mind clothed in form, entities which might be closer to the original creative powers called Dhyān Chohans in *The Secret Doctrine*, the Lords of Meditation, connected with the Seven Solar Rays? Such appellation is quite instructive in the face of the Vedic tradition of ṛṣis who performed great *tapas* (X.154) and reached *svarga*, heaven, and of the *devas* who achieved godhood through *tapas* (Tait.Br.3.12.3) and Indra

encompassing Vṛtra through his *tapas* and winning *svar* (X.167.1), etc. Are these Dhyān Chohans the original archetypes of, and now merged into, the ṛṣis of Vedic lore - those ṛṣis who lived among humans, re-appearing in each manvantara to teach the gnosis to those capable of "hearing" it, i.e. capable of receiving the *veda*, living according to its precepts and passing it on?

#### AGNI AND THE ṚṢIS

John Mitchiner describes how Agni not only possesses 7 tongues and 7 abodes but also the Seven Ṛṣis (Maitrāyaṇī S.1.6.2; Taitt.S.1.5.3; Vāj.S.17.79); " the Seven ṛṣis are said to constitute the very essence of Agni ..." (Sat. Br. VII.2.3.5.; IX.1.2.21) In early Vedic literature

"... Agni/Fire is seen as a constituent element within the nature of the ṛṣis." (op.cit. p.254-5)

Here is implied a *secret doctrine* where *fire* is considered the great inner activator in gods and men as well as cosmos. In the later Epics many instances are quoted of the ṛṣis as suns, as burning like the sun, as brilliant as the sun, etc.; of Viśvamitra having the sun and moon for his eyes; of Vasiṣṭha going up to the sun to obtain the Sun's daughter for a king's wife, etc. These may be human fancy at work, but behind the "fancy" lies a profound truth of the human psyche - its endeavour to reach out to the innermost sacred blaze.

The "Sons of Light", according to *The Secret Doctrine*, are not only the great teachers of early humanity, but humanity's very ancestors. This is substantiated by the Vedic tradition, since the ṛṣis, the Angirasas or Sons of the Fire, the Bhṛgu or priests of the Fire, etc. are "our forefathers". Another proof of *The Secret Doctrine's* claim that the *Vedas*, and the *Purāṇas* for all their garbled accounts, have remained closest to the original *secret gnosis*. H.P.B. explains further

"... the hosts of these Sons of Light, and 'Mind-born Sons' of the first manifested Ray of the UNKNOWN ALL, are the very root of spiritual man" (S.D.I. p.106)

a difference being made between spiritual man and animal man.

Having demonstrated how the ṛṣis' traditions are pervaded by the idea of the essence of the ṛṣis' nature as fire, J. Mitchiner concludes that it is because of their fiery nature that they radiate heat and light - even to surpassing the sun, "particularly through the internalised form of *tapas*" (p.261-2). This last statement is of the highest importance for it qualifies the "fiery nature" of the ṛṣis, which otherwise could be misinterpreted. This exhaustive survey of the traditions of the Seven ṛṣis spanning the age of the Vedas, the Sutras, the Epics and the Purāṇas, is of the greatest interest for the purpose of the present study: assessments made in *The Secret Doctrine* and allusions found in the Vedas are highlighted in this book although Mitchiner knew nothing of H.P.B.'s book. His work is one of the best examples of recent studies that attempt to get at the core of Vedic tradition and whose findings harmonise with specific claims of *The Secret Doctrine*. Thus the Seven ṛṣis are manifestations of Brahmā's own

"... creative activity... They are thus like particles of pure energy which, dispersing their power in material creativity and movement, gradually come to rest in the form of matter; and when once at rest, they yet again internally recharge themselves through the production of heat, gradually retransforming themselves into that same pure energy which first impelled them to their creativity." (op. cit. p.301)

Production of heat is not a suitable expression for a very spiritual creative activity, heat being only the external consequence, but without the key to the meaning of *tapas*, it cannot be helped. Brahmā, the creative deity, thus manifests through a sevenfold power which human visionary insight perceived as the seven ṛṣis. During the active period of *being*, or *mahā manvantara*, there is emitted, according to *The Secret Doctrine*,

"a stream of ceaseless energy, whose vibrating currents acquire more activity and potency with every rung of the hebdomadic ladder of Being which they descend. Hence it becomes comprehensible how the process of *creating*, or rather of fashioning, the organic universe, with all its units of the seven kingdoms, necessitated intelligent beings - who became collectively a Being or creative God, differentiated already from the one absolute Unity, unrelated as the latter is to conditioned 'creation' ('creation' - out of pre-existent eternal Substance, or matter, of course, which substance ... is boundless, ever-existing space)." (S.D.II. p.239 & fn)

J. Mitchiner remarks on the "emanatory" character of the ṛṣihood concept, and this

"not merely in the sense that the ṛṣis flow from the very essence of Brahmā, but more especially in their role as carrying out his will through creative activity and as ultimately returning to their source



in him. Useful parallels may consequently be drawn between these ideas and those in especially Philoan, Plotinian and Kabalistic speculation; although we must also note that in the case of the ṛṣis there is no question of them creating matter as opposed to spirit, and thus no opposition between the supreme creator and the world of matter ..." (ibid. p.301)

for the simple reason that, esoterically and according to the testimony of the greatest mystics, (e.g. Plotinus, Meister Eckhardt, etc.) there is no impassable gulf between spirit and matter; esoterically, matter is crystallised spirit, and spirit is etherialised matter, the two being the two aspects of the one Life. The transformative power of heat is, moreover, the ultimately manifested expression of that innermost driving power which is *directive will*, often referred to in the Ṛgveda as *kratu* and in Agni as *kavi-kratu*. Those late comers in the field of philosophical speculation such as the Jews, Christians and Muslims, by severing spirit from matter, Creator from creature, made an unbridgeable gap in the wholeness of the ONE.

Mitchiner compares the role of the ṛṣis to that of the Biblical and Apocryphal Archangels "who put into effect the commands of God and like the angels on Jacob's ladder, the ṛṣis too move from heaven to earth and back again, first propagating living beings and then returning through sacrifice or *tapas* to their original source - then yet again returning to earth in every age to renew the teaching of *dharma* and to continue the expansion of the universe". (ibid. p.302)

indeed a tenet of *The Secret Doctrine*, earlier briefly mentioned, - a constant sweeping down and up of the life wave of beings, a Jacob's ladder indeed, image of the interaction between the higher and the lower in the ceaseless evolution of life. Mitchiner views further similarities such as Manu entering his boat -

"like Noah and Ziusudra in the Biblical and Sumerian accounts" of the Flood, with "the Seven ṛṣis and the seeds of all living creatures; they alone survived the flood, and thereafter became the propagators of the new creation." (p.303)

"... The ṛṣis, by transforming themselves into *brahman* through the heat of their *tapas*, in turn become the embodiments of heat and light, of motion and transformative change which is the *Prāṇa* or life-force of living beings,<sup>42</sup> they become the means whereby the creator effects the work of creation, and their primary role is then to create movement and animation in the universe, to maintain and expand the harmony of the worlds." (ibid. p.304)

This is as fair an explanation of the cosmic activity and influence of the primordial Seven as one could have, whether one views them as the Seven Ṛṣis of Vedic lore who "rejoice in the fruit of offerings, beyond whom is the One" (Ṛgv.X.82.2) or as those archetypes of *The Secret Doctrine*, the Seven Primordial Dhyan Chohans from whom stem the hosts of living beings, celestial and earthly, some of whom are said to have sacrificed themselves by incarnating amongst human beings to impart to humanity the fire of mind, of knowledge, of illumination.

From *The Secret Doctrine* perspective, this tradition of the Seven Ṛṣis is a good example of how the human mind transforms and adds further to teachings going back to the very night of time; in which they seem to merge into the lore of Seven Primordial Lords of Meditation, the sevenfold power of the Universal Mind, and their seven creative hosts issued of themselves and expressive of that universal intelligence that pervades the whole cosmos; of how accretions and transformations finally mask and distort but may add colour to those ancient teachings as they step them down to our human level of understanding. John Mitchiner's grasp of the various meanings of the Seven ṛṣis and how these work within the cosmos is not only remarkable in its depicting of spiritual beings so vastly different from ourselves and as well such a major step forward in Western exegesis, but also remarkably in line with the tenets of *The Secret Doctrine* as elaborated by H.P.B. A deeper understanding of certain sacred themes (already hinted in the Vedas), and developed later, as outstandingly appraised by Mitchiner, necessarily highlights specific tenets of *The Secret Doctrine*, for the Vedas hint at the hidden wisdom, *gupta-vidyā*, again and again, the *veda* is claimed to be the ancient, the eternal wisdom.

### **THE SEVEN RIVERS**

The subject of the Seven Rivers and indeed of the waters in general is peculiarly complex and will remain one of the enigmas of the Ṛgveda so long as naive literalism prevails and so long as we fail to detect not only the different meanings in different contexts, and shades of meaning held by one word - notwithstanding scholarly controversy to the contrary - but also fail to detect the esoteric tradition appearing continuously as a

guiding thread. The language of esoteric wisdom, as noted in the introduction to the present study, plays upon the various applications of meaningful words, the basic physical sense serving as a platform understandable to all, but from which one can jump to a different level of significance which is yet somehow implied in the basic meaning, but takes one to deeper dimensions of being. The apprehension of these levels is of utmost importance to the interpretation of a scripture; and the Vedas are sacred texts with their peculiar terminology, which seems to have been completely ignored by a whole generation of Western scholars! In the case of the Seven Rivers not only do the words used for rivers vary, but in some instances their very meaning changes. A glance at the various words and examples of their use and different senses will demonstrate this:

- a) *nadīḥ* (pl. *nadyaḥ*) is the usual word for rivers; thus the Seven Rivers (*nadyaḥ sapta*) bear Indra's renown (Ṛgv.I.102.2).
- b) *sindhu* usually means river, but also ocean and floods, perhaps emphasising vastness; thus *sapta sindhavaḥ*, the Seven Rivers (I.32.12d; 35.8; II.12.3&12; IV.28.1; IX.66.6, etc.)
- c) the word *visruḥ* is also used - though seemingly it has nothing to do with rivers, meaning shoot or branch - in one instance (VI.7.6), but as explained by Sāyaṇa, meaning river and listed in the Nirukta with the sense of water.
- d) *sravat* (from *sru*) emphasises the flowing aspect, hence the seven fast flowing ones (X.49.4&9; VII.18.24; 67.8).
- e) *yahvīḥ* (from *yas* to foam) seems to emphasise swiftness, hence the 7 restless or swift ones (I.72.8; 71.7).

The first three words will be examined:

a) *Nadīḥ* concerns the rivers of earth, and an almost similar word *nāḍī* concerns the subtle or psychic channels of the human constitution, (also tube and artery). In Ṛgv.VII.34.1 Varuṇa, thousand-eyed, is said to "behold the paths of these rivers", the latter referring to the previous verse where the priest-singers are enjoined to "put on" (*abhi ... dadhidhvam*) or "clothe yourselves with" the divine *dhīḥ*, the visionary thought, and to send your "word" (*vāc*) among the gods. The rivers are here, as in other contexts, no longer watery streams but the streams of the poets' songs issued of their thoughts, visions, ecstasy, sent aloft to the realm of the gods as offerings, and beheld by Varuṇa. b) *Sindhu* causes difficulties. Indra, the fort-destroyer is said (X.104.8) to have crossed the *sindhu* - river or ocean? - and ninety-nine surging waters, by means of the rejoicing and wholesome sevenfold divine waters (*saptāpo devīḥ*), thereby finding the way for both the godly and the human hosts. This can have little meaning to the literal understanding. What kind of *sindhu* is this? Did Indra cross the river Sindhu by means of sevenfold waters? Or is this *sindhu* rather the ocean of space with its sevenfold divisions mentioned in VIII.40.5 and its seven pathways visioned as rivers, or streaming hosts of devas? Can this *sindhu* imply, among other senses, that uncharted ocean of the psyche that Indra as "first to possess mind" (*prathamō manasvān* II.12.1) started to chart by means of seven "rivers" or devic hosts, for which Indra dug pathways, through which he released "rivers" as devic influences (II.13.5) just as he made pathways through the darkness that had none (VI.21.3)? c) The verse concerning *visruḥ* runs thus:

"The ridges of heaven have been measured by the eye of Vaiśvānara (Agni), by the ensign of the Immortal. Upon his head are laid all beings; even like branches (therefrom) have sprung the Seven offshoots (*sapta visruhaḥ*)." (VI.7.6)

Apart from the incongruity of having branches or rivers issuing out of fire, we should note that the word *visruḥ*<sup>43</sup> is probably used here to fit with the idea of branches (*vayāḥ*). Thus, like branches, the seven "shoots" have sprung from Agni's head, an image closely allied to that other image found in Ṛgv.II.35.8, the whole hymn describing Apām Napāt, the Son of the Waters, Agni in his cosmic status. In verse 8, it is stated that as branches or offshoots of him, other beings and plants propagate by means of offspring. Literally, rivers and plants do not shoot forth from fire. But knowing that Agni Vaiśvānara means "common to all men", that Agni is identified in the Ṛgveda with Angiras, one of the Seven Ṛṣis and progenitors of humanity, that Sūrya is a manifestation of Agni, that Vivasvat, another name for the Sun, is the Father of *Manu*<sup>44</sup> or humanity, one may well ask whether the Seven offshoots of VI.7.6 that spring from Agni's head, do not refer either to the seven races of mankind, of which only five so far have manifested, and which are alluded to a few times in the Ṛgveda, or to the seven differentiations of the vital spark later called *Prāṇa*, itself a differentiation of Agni. These verses are quite esoteric and conceal in their words particular tenets of the wisdom tradition.

In some contexts the rivers are obviously terrestrial and refer to specific rivers whose names are given and

which are shown as playing quite a part in the life of the people generally, and in that of the poet-priests especially. In R̥gv.X.75 where the Sindhu is highly praised, many rivers are enumerated by name; in X.64.9, Sindhu, Sarasvatī, Sarayu are called upon to come with their mighty billows to bring to the poets the treasure of the waters. R̥gv.III.33 is a charming dialogue between two rivers and the ṛṣi Viśvamitra. But, as Luders saw, whatever their physical reality, the rivers certainly have a figurative meaning quite out of relation to their physical appearance and activity. Wherever the rivers appear, whether as physical rivers or not, there also appears an underlying significance bearing upon inspiration and eloquence and deva favours. Luders admitted that if one be "forced to claim the seven rivers for the earth", one had to accept that "other passages strongly indicate that the seven rivers also belong to heaven".<sup>45</sup> Thus the chariot of the matutinal twins, the Aśvins, that circles round the sky at dawn, moves around the seven rivers (VII.67.8). Again, with the "seven mother rivers", the Aśvins are said to move around the three worlds and daily and nightly protect the heavenly vault (I.34.8). Who are these seven mother rivers - can they be identified with galaxies or with deva hosts?

The seven embryos of R̥gv.I.164.36, considered earlier, refer, according to Luders, to the Seven celestial Rivers, and the seed of the universe of which these seven embryos or rivers consist, is Soma, nectar of immortality mentioned in the previous verse (I.164.35), Soma, the seed of the heavenly "stallion", the flame divine, the very heartbeat of space, *ākāśa*. If the seven embryos are deemed to be the seed of the future seven hosts of deva lives, and if the seven Rivers, in one of their meanings according to context, are also the seven streams of deva lives - in Christian terminology archangels and angels - then there is quite a point here worth further investigation.

Luders' identification, however, does not tell us what the Seven Rivers exactly represent. For him celestial rivers are mythical, vague, unrealistic counterparts of physical rivers. However, allusions to them show that they are streams of spiritual, inspirational and physical nurture, streams of divine life, on which depends all terrestrial life and for which the poet-priests long, to which they pray or offer the oblation and of which they sing. Thus amidst a cry to all Nature to give ear to him, the poet calls upon Pūṣan, Viṣṇu, Sarasvatī and the Seven Rivers to accept with favour his offering (VIII.54.4). The latter must surely refer to inspiring streams of deva hosts.

The Seven Rivers are the domain of both Indra and Varuṇa, in the sense that Indra frees them from the obstruction that held up their progress, and places himself at their head, Varuṇa sits at their source as their overlord, but Agni is called their leader (VII.5.2). As Flame divine Agni would be the driving power of deva hosts; he would also be the initiator of the prānic currents. On the other hand, with Indra's strike at that primal obstructive power, Vṛtra, an impetus is given to evolution, the Seven Rivers are released, the sun is set on high for all to see (I.51.4), the Soma ambrosia is won, all feats achieved by Indra.

There is a link between Indra's stand as solar deity and as leader of the Rivers. As "seven-reined bull" (II.12.12) (the word *raśmi* meaning also ray of light or beam); as identified with the "red bird" that has no nest wherein to rest (X.55.6); as consuming the evil-doer by means of Sūrya's rays (VIII.12.9ab.), Indra is linked to the seven-rayed sun and as Sūrya he erases by means of light the opaque darkness (X.89.2). He is the Lord of *svar*. The sun is the illuminator, so is Indra with his thunderbolt. Well may one wonder as to the exact connection between the seven solar rays and the seven rivers released by Indra.

Indra becomes "Lord of the waters" (*ise apām* X.89.10; cf.II.21.1), "lord of opulent rivers" (X.180.1); he wins the solar-powered waters (*svarvatīr apo jeṣat* VIII.40.10), the celestial waters (III.34.8). He conquers in the waters (*apsujit*), an epithet exclusive to Indra. On the other hand, he is "winner of *svar*" (*svarṣā*), "conqueror of *svar*" (*svarjit*), "svar-finder" (*svarvid*), "svar-seer" (*svarḍṛś*), epithets translated as "sun-finder", etc. Indra storming *svar* through his *tapas* (X.167.1d) does not indicate the beginning of a new year, or of the sun's conquest, as Kuiper made it out,<sup>46</sup> but what the sun represented to the ṛṣis in consciousness, as will be examined in ch. 6.

Have these Seven Rivers at the head of whom Indra places himself, of whom Agni is the leader, at whose confluence sits Varuṇa, the same meaning in each case, or various shades of significance?

According to VIII.69.12 the Seven Rivers are Varuṇa's; they flow into his mouth as in a pipe or channel. He Lord of Cosmic Order takes his seat or source at their confluence, in the very midst of his *seven sisters* (VIII.41.2). In verse 9 Varuṇa's

"brilliant far-seeing rays extend over three earths and fill three upper realms.

Immovable is the seat of Varuṇa, over the seven he rules-supreme."

Thus in verses 2 and 9 of VIII.41 we are faced with 7 rivers (v.2) which seem to become three earths and three heavens (v.9), the seventh being Varuṇa's seat. Would the seven refer to zones or localities, which imply worlds hence beings (cf. Sanskrit *bhuvana*). The three earths and the three heavens would then be the habitats of beings, the descending hosts of devas, the ascending hosts of humans. Varuṇa, with his thousand eyes, views the rivers' pathways (VII.34.10&11), whether these be streams of visionary thoughts sent forth by the seers as implied in VII.34.9 - "clothe yourselves with the divine *dhiḥ* and send your word amidst the gods" - or whether these be streams of devas whom the seers see descending to them, the two interlock: the devas inspire the seers' hymns; on the latter thrive the devas.

In like manner, those pathways which Indra marked out must be linked to the Seven Rivers, for in slaying Vṛtra he released ("let drop") the "paths" of the rivers (II.13.5), or dug a passage for them (VI.30.3). In "propping up the sky in pillarless space" (*avamśā* II.15.2), in digging the riverbeds through this region of the "waters", in piercings through the vastness of space Indra acts as Universal Mind in its general cosmic activity. So the "Seven Rivers" bear his renown (I.102.2) far and wide. But this release of the Seven Rivers is, in certain allusions, said to be performed for man (*manu*). In the same verse Indra made the waters flow together for man and opened out hidden channels (IV.28.1; see also V.31.6). Here is implied a psychological dimension, always disregarded: the fluidic domain of the devas, but also of psyche.

In this respect, one valid interpretation concerning these elusive rivers and channels is offered by A. Coomaraswamy in his article on "Ṛgveda 10.90.1." (J.A.O.S. 66 1946.) He maintains that the word *khāni* (channel) has the same meaning in the Ṛgveda as in the Kāṭha Upaniṣad and other such texts. Thus, such a breaking open of the channels of the rivers as is ascribed to Indra, usually interpreted as a mythical event, could as well, have a direct bearing upon the opening outwardly, i.e. into our physical, objective dimension, of the "streams of consciousness". In connection with the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa's recognition that Indra is mind, with his letting the rivers flow for man, such interpretation is not preposterous. The "seven openings of the powers of perception and action", implying the eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth, at the physical level, plus mind and spiritual insight at a subtler level, are for Coomaraswamy, foreshadowed in the Ṛgveda in the word *khāni*<sup>47</sup> (II.15.3). If as he views it (op.cit. p.156), Indra's opening of these channels corresponds to Athv.X.2.6 where it is asked: who bored out the seven apertures in Puruṣa's head - the ears, nostrils, eyes, mouth - the answer would be that Indra, as mind, opened these out to the physical world for man. Indra caused consciousness to flow outwardly through the outlets of the sense organs, from the subjective to the objective world, thereby coordinating their data. This indeed is the *esoteric doctrine* of mind's activity.

This interpretation gives a vastly different perspective on Indra than the usual one which so completely disregards the *śrutī*'s identification of Indra with mind, an identification also evidenced in the Ṛgveda, II.12.1 *prathamō manasvān*, first to possess mind; VIII.46.19, Indra the "thought-bestirrer" *codayanmati*; and X.32.1 the "meditating god" *dhiyasāna*. He is also the king of that invocation (*brahman*) godly fashioned (VII.97.3). In VI.44.23 Indra discovers concealed in the threefold heaven the longed for *amṛta*. His status is thus clearly shown. Such interpretation tallies with allusions to "streams of inspiration" or intuition, or visionary perception as are frequently met with, all aspects of the "stream of consciousness" which, among the ṛṣis, seem to have brought about a merging of human and deva consciousness. The devas inspire the poets who pray to them for inspiration - thus to Agni, Indra, Soma, Sarasvatī (I.3.10 -12; cf. VI.24.6, etc.)

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa VI.1.1.2 gives a further confirmation of Indra's status as mind in its presentation of the ṛṣis as *prāṇas* and Indra as their primal kindler:

"This same *prāṇa* in the midst doubtless is Indra. He by his power (*indriya*) kindled those (other) *prāṇas* from the midst; and in as much as he kindled (*indh*), he is the kindler (*indha*); the kindler indeed, - him they call 'Indra' mystically [esoterically] for the gods love the mystic. They, [the *prāṇas*] being kindled, created seven separate *puruṣas*." (Śat. Br. VI.1.1.2.2)

Scholars may laugh at the (for them) unacceptable verbal connection of *indh*, to kindle, with Indra, but as the text shows, this has far more to do with an esoteric sense than with philology, as Coomaraswamy notes:

"Indra is 'metaphysically Indha' ... a 'Kindler' for he 'kindles' (*inddha*) the Breaths or Spirations (*prāṇaḥ*)." (Śat.Br. VI.1.1.2. "Measures of Fire". 1942. p.388)

In a similar vein is the following passage from the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*:

"2. This *ākāśa* is Indra. What this Indra is, that is he who burns here. That same one is seven-rayed, virile, powerful. 3. Of him the ray consisting of speech stands firm in front (east). That speech is Agni (fire) ... " ( J.U.B. I. 28. 2ff.)

The identification of Indra with *ākāśa* is striking and his link with Agni evident. *Ākāśa*, as explained, being the very essence of fire, the correlation between Indra as mind, with *ākāśa and fire* is here demonstrated. The Western viewpoint is outwardly verbal, literal and superficial; the priestly is esoteric and testifies to an insight into the ancient gnosis which, however, is completely missing from our scholars' grasp.

### **THE WATERS, THEIR MEANING**

The Waters's role is so pervasive and subtle, so important in cosmic and human life - they have power over all (X.30.12) - that the various levels of their intrinsic meaning should be understood.

The several well defined classes or groups of devas in the Ṛgveda bear witness to the Waters as one such group. Thus 1) the *asuras*, those who possess and bestow (*ra*) the breath of life (*asu*), the highest spiritual, creative gods of the Ṛgveda - Varuṇa, Agni, Savitr, Indra, Dyaus, etc., having nothing of demons as the change of meaning occurred much later; 2) the 12 (originally 7 or 8) Ādityas or Sons of Aditi, the luminous gods under whose protection the righteous man becomes "free"; 3) the Maruts or sons of Rudra (later Śiva) and his 11 manifestations or Rudras; 4) the 8 Vasus, attendants of Indra, the bright, beneficent gods; 5) the gandharvas or denizens of the fathomless realm of space (VIII.77.5) who appear singly in the Ṛgveda, linked to Soma and Sūrya, and in later lore become the heavenly minstrels; and 6) the Water goddesses whose nurturing and healing qualities make them most maternal waters, those "flame-waters" that are inherently sweet (*madhuścutas*), whose vigour (*ūrj*) feeds the gods (VII.49.4) and whose cherished son is Agni.

These Water goddesses that come to the ritual to speed it forth, from around the sun (*upa sūrye*) (I.23.17), are lively, bright, purifying; they contain medicinal balm and *amṛta*; they are asked to shine on their devotees, to pour their milk rich in ghee and sweet in honey (X.64.9), to bring that balm that makes whole (X.137.6). The sun's brilliant energy (*varcas*) belongs to them (Athv.X.5.7), for they are solar-powered, they possess *svar* (*svarvatīḥ*). They are queens of luminous riches that throb with that life-force (*ūrj*) which the poets ask to be granted. The anthropomorphising and personalising of the waters is just nascent, so they remain fluidic, undulating, glittering energies, like water that represents them.

As *ākāśa*, admittedly a later word but handy for better comprehension, the waters are *one* and form the luminous realm of space, the matrix of life; they are "of one womb" from whose substance they weave the cosmic web; for they are "progenitors of worlds", "thriving together", etc. As the Seven Rivers - separated into Seven and always mentioned as a group - they may, in specific contexts, represent hosts of devas, streaming down in channels of living entities through space; but when human beings are concerned, those channels may bear specific meanings according to context.

Of the Seven Rivers, Sarasvatī is more clearly qualified in the sense of the river of *inspiration*. As early as the Ṛgveda, she appears as the goddess of inspiration and "hymnal expression", as "mother of the rivers" (*sindhumatā*) who shines forth unstintingly, the best beloved of these. The great hymn to Sarasvatī (VI.61) is a panegyric that shows her as a mighty, awe-inspiring river, with all pervading power, triple seated, but also as sevenfold, the promoter of the five races (VI.61.12). As truth-bearer (*ṛtāvarī* VI.61.9) she "overcomes all hostility"; she is even the dragon slayer (*vṛtrāghnī*), like Indra with whom she is allied, especially through the lightning flash or thunderbolt (*vajra*), she being called *pavīravī*, the lightning's daughter.<sup>48</sup> One liberates the obstructions of inertia and thereby creates a world; the other uplifts, clears and promotes the vision, and inspires the mind.

"As mighty flood Sarasvatī, by her illumination [*ketu*, "internal light of insight" *Vision*, p.57] reveals and rules over every visionary-hymn." (Ṛgv. I. 3.12)

Here the mighty flood of the goddess may image the flood of an overwhelming inspiration when Sarasvatī "visits" and illumines the poet's mind and takes him into the realm of the transcendent. Rich in revelation and vision (*dhiyāvasuḥ*), the spirited River goddess, the "bearer of regenerative power" is

"the inspirer of songs-of-joy, the detector of intuitions (*cetantī sumatīnam*)" (I.3.11), a verse which paves the way for her later role as Sarasvatī, goddess of knowledge and eloquence, of the *word*,

*vāc*, Mother of the Vedas.

According to Athv.XII.1.53. it is the Waters as well as Agni, Sūrya and all the gods that grant *medhā*, insight to the ṛṣis. The verses that relate the Waters to the ritual certainly show that the ritualist's web of thought woven from the altar to the heavens is pervaded by the waters, i.e. the devas. Will or mental power (*kratu*) and immortal life are said to be brought to men by the "opulent waters" (X.30.12) The inter-weaving of water, deva, wave of inspiration, prayer, request and ritual practice, comes out fully in Ṛgv. X.30:

"O priests, go to the waters, to the ocean, worship with oblation the  
Son of the Waters; may he now give you a wave. For his sake  
press out the purified Soma abounding in honey. (verse3)  
He who shines -resplendent, fuel-less amidst the waters,  
whom the inspired-ones extoll at their rituals -  
O Son of the Waters, vouchsafe (us those) honeyed waters  
whereby Indra grew in virile might." (X.30.3-4)

In verse 5 it is clearly worded that the waters beyond (*āpaḥ ... para ihi*) are in question. The priests are going to the transcendent realm, to where the noumena of deva hosts can be perceived, communed with. If this be now beyond the orbit of our understanding, it is nevertheless a fact for the seer poets of the Ṛgveda. It is in worshipping the Son of the Waters, Agni, flame-spirit and life of the "waters" (*āyur āpām* III.1.5) that that wave of inspiration may be received - for "in the waters, in the udder of heaven" Agni has been kindled. Hence the priest is to emulate Agni, "the gods' tongue", the "guardian of *amṛta*". These mystical verses give out their meaning; the "udder of heaven" is the very core of the human psyche, the seat of inspiration. The ṛṣis' mixed metaphors, seemingly incongruous connections, may throw a thick veil over their meaning, but only for naive literal-mindedness, logic and lack of poetic sensitivity!

So the "waters", those deva "queens", "listen as they flow forth; they know the origin of heaven and earth" (VII.34.2). To listen is to be mentally alert, attentive, a tuning-in process peculiar to deva activity, for it is in their nature to capture the frequencies of nature as they emit their own frequencies whilst visioning the ṛta to establish it (IV.54.2.cd). Earth and heaven as "lokas" are woven of the same substance as the devas, though of different tenuity or density, *ākāśa* substanding all; hence the devas' knowledge of heaven and earth.

Moreover, the Seven Rivers of heaven are also "mindful" (*svādhyah*) "knowers- of- the- law" (*ṛtajñāḥ*) and "have observed the openings to riches" (I.72.8). Here again such "mindfulness", such discernment can only denote intelligent entities, not literal waters, their ultimate physical garment. Those 'riches' furthermore, pertain only to those who have taken their stand on the side of ṛta, to the asuras, the Ādityas, "who have grown mighty in the abode of ṛta" (VII.60.5d). For man to live in harmony with the law which is Truth means that no harm can come to him, harm being contingent upon human action. To realise this is to open the door of 'riches'.

"Sweet blows the breeze for the righteous one, sweet flow the ocean-deeps." (I.90.6)

On admitting that this interpretation of the Waters as devas is more than probable - although so estranged from our notion of cosmos and terrestrial nature as practically emptied of life - but quite in line with the Waters' nascent personification and their far ranging influence, we might better understand the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*'s statement: "The Waters are all the deities". (Tait.S.II.6.8.3). This does clinch the problem. H.P.B., more than a century ago, without proving her point, as has here been done concerning the Waters, gave one clue when she referred to

"The seven rivers of the sky (the descending creative gods) and the seven rivers of the earth (the seven primitive mankinds)" - or ascending human races, both groups descending and ascending "are under his [Varuṇa's] control" (S.D. II. p.606) - since all the gods follow his laws. (VIII.41.7c)

Such are the Waters, inner and outer. The whole subject may be complex for it concerns the depth of the human psyche as it apprehends its confrontation with reflections of the cosmos, but it is understandable. The Seven Rivers bear different aspects and shades of meaning, converging on human rays of thought, the *divine dhiyah* and celestial beings performing their tasks in accordance with the harmonics of Nature, and radiating out their illuminating energies which the ṛṣis caught and which became their inspiration; but not just that, for as viewed by the ṛṣis, the waters form the very basis of cosmic essence which is life.

## PART II THE 7 CREATIVE POWERS OF MAHAT

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>22</sup> . See. E. Reiner. "The Etiological myth of the 'Seven Sages'". *Orientalia*. vol.30.1961.p.9ff. The "old sages from before the flood" allude "to the presence on earth ... of apkallu's who after the flood regained the Apsû". Marduk laments the absence of the sages: "where are the 7 sages of the Apsû, the pure puradu-fish, who just as their Lord Ea, have been endowed with sublime wisdom". (op.cit.p.9)

<sup>23</sup> According to *The Secret Doctrine* "ether" is the grosser manifestation of *ākāśa*, the ultimate "veil"; ether is so far semi-material and only visible to psychic people. Indian philosophy in later ages made *ākāśa* the fifth element, ignoring its pristine meaning, thereby giving rise to a certain amount of confusion. See also S.D.I.p.12; II.p.460.

<sup>24</sup> That, in the Vedic *śruti*, fire and the *word* or sound-vibration were identified through their inner constructive and destructive power, will be demonstrated in the next section and in the next chapter. See Śat.Br.X.3.3.7.

Concerning number 7 H.P.B. remarks:

"Thus, from the Seven Creations, seven Ṛṣis, Zones, Continents, Principles, etc., etc., in the Āryan Scriptures, the number has passed through Indian, Egyptian, Chaldean, Greek, Jewish, Roman, and finally Christian mystic thought, until it landed in, and remained impressed indelibly on every exoteric theology. The seven old books stolen out of Noah's Ark by Ham, and given to Cush, his son, and the seven Brazen columns of Ham and Cheiron, are a reflection and a remembrance of the Seven primordial mysteries instituted according to the 'Seven secret emanations', the 'Seven Sounds', and seven rays - the spiritual and sidereal models of the seven thousand times seven copies of them in later aeons.

The mysterious number is once more prominent in the no less mysterious Maruts. The *Vāyu Purāṇa* shows, and the *Harivaṃsa* corroborates, that the Maruts - the oldest as the most incomprehensible of all the secondary or lower gods in the *Ṛg Veda* -

'are born in every manvantara (Round), seven times seven (or forty-nine); that, in each Manvantara, four times seven (or twenty-eight) obtain emancipation, but their places are filled up by persons reborn in that character.'" (Quoted by Wilson op.cit.vol.III.p.15 fn. In S.D.II.p.612-13)

<sup>25</sup> According to *The Secret Doctrine* the crocodile was the "dragon" of the Egyptians. The departed person was "... shown emblematically transformed into a crocodile. Sebekh ... is a dragon in reality, not a crocodile. He is the 'Dragon of wisdom' or *manas*, the 'Human Soul', Mind, the Intelligent principle, called in our esoteric philosophy the 'Fifth' principle" etc. (S.D.I.p.219) . What H.P.B. calls the "human soul" is the higher aspect of the mind, *manas*, suffused by the light of *buddhi*. For Hindus, *manas* is more than our meaning of mind, it includes the feeling or sensitive quality which allies it to psyche.

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in R.T. Rundle Clark. *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. 1978. p.139-40, 141.

#### THE SEVEN EMBRYOS

<sup>27</sup> *The Thousand-syllabled Speech* (being a study in cosmic symbolism in its Vedic version).1963. p.129-30.

<sup>28</sup> See also J. Gonda. *The Dual Deities in the Religion of the Veda*. 1974.

#### THE SEVEN ṚṢIS

<sup>29</sup> *Mahābhārata*. 3.160.14-15. Quoted in J. Mitchiner's *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*. p.20.

<sup>30</sup> See also S.D.II.p.605, where "the Seven ancient Ṛṣis - the progenitors of all that lives and breathes on earth - are the 7 friends of Agni, his 7 'horses' or 7 'HEADS'."

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in the S.D.II.p.140 to which H.P.B. adds the comment:

"Here the four preceding 'Manus', out of the seven, are the four Races which have already lived, since Kṛṣṇa belongs to the Fifth Race, his death having inaugurated the Kali-Yuga." (S.D.II. p.140.)

H.P.B. explains that the Seven Ṛṣis are the Regents of the Great Bear and

" therefore, of the same nature as the angels of the planets, or the seven great Planetary Spirits. They were all reborn, all men on earth in various Kalpas and races." (S.D.II.p.318 fn)

*Manu* refers to both human races and those classes of celestial entities whose bodies are so ethereal that they are described as formless (*arūpa*). These were men in previous kalpas.

32 Quoted in J. Mitchiner's *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*. p.253.

33 op. cit. p. 269. A different point of view to the prevalent one concerning the cradle of civilization may be seen in G.Feuerstein, Subhash Kak and D.Frawley's *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization*. 1995.

34 op.cit. p.59-60. Quoted in *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*. p.150.

35 Further comments from *The Secret Doctrine* may give a few more insights:

" ... in their dead letter, the *Purāṇas*, read as an absurd tissue of fairy tales and no better. And if one reads chapters i, ii and iii from Book II of *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and accept *verbatim* its geography, geodesy, and ethnology in the matter of Priyavrata's seven sons, among whom the father divides the seven *Dvīpas* (Continental Islands) ... the reader is likely to throw the book away and pronounce it a farrago of nonsense. But the esoteric student will understand that, in the days when the *Purāṇas* were written, their true meaning was clear only to the Initiated Brahmans, who wrote those works allegorically and would not give the *whole* truth to the masses ...

... the first three chapters purposely confuse the following subjects and events:

1. The series of Kalpas, or Ages, (and also of Races) are never taken into account; e.g., events which have happened in one being allowed to stand along with those which took place in another. The chronological order is entirely ignored. This is shown by several of the Sanskrit commentators, who explain the incompatibility of events and calculations in saying:

'Whenever any contradictions in different *Purāṇas* are observed, they are ascribed ... to differences of Kalpas and the like.'

2. The several meanings of the words 'Manvantara' and 'Kalpa' or age, are withheld, the general one only given.

3. In the genealogy and geography of the Kings and their *Varṣas* (countries) and *Dvīpas*, they are all allowed to be regarded as terrestrial regions ..." etc. (S.D.II.p.320)

36 As succinctly set out in *The Secret Doctrine* :

"a total of ... 4 yugas constitutes a *Mahā-Yuga*; 71 of such *Mahā-Yugas* form the period of the reign of one *Manu* (= 1 *manvantara*). The reign of 14 *Manus* embraces the duration of 994 *Mahā-Yugas*; ... 1000 *Mahā-Yugas* ... constitute a *Kalpa* i.e. one DAY of BRAHMĀ ... " (S.D.II. p.69-70.)

37 See *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*. pp.61-78; p.75.

38 *The Sacrifice in the Ṛgveda*. p.143; 48.

39 *Vision of Cosmic Order*. p.213.

40 *The Sacrifice in the Ṛgveda*. p.47-8.

41 D.M. Knipe writes in his *In the Image of Fire*:

"Fire and heat may be found in connection with every aspect of the life of the *brāhmaṇa*, from the heat of inspiration or ecstasy in the mind to the heat of speech and sound to the liturgical act of kindling fires while himself 'enkindled'. The term for the ancient seer, *ṛṣi*, is possibly related to Lith. *arsus*, 'violent, heated', and German *rasen*, and certainly the principal means by which the Vedic *ṛṣis* are able to 'see' and 'create' is their possession of *tapas*. They are, in fact, born of *tapas* (*tapoja*), or 'made' by the inspiration provided by Agni or Soma, and are 'very hot' (*tapīṣṭha*) like a ritual vessel that Agni heats. Their visions (*dhiya*-) proceed from *manīṣā* ... from *manas*, the mind, and from *hṛd*, the heart. All three of these entities are connected with heat ('kindling', etc.) and light ('illumination', 'enlightenment', etc.). The 'life' of such inspiration and the 'life' of Agni in the ritual fires are not separated." (op.cit.p.95) In ch.IV, D.M. Knipe insightfully surveys the various uses and meanings of *tapas*.

Mircea Eliade tells us that "... it was especially in India that ascetic practices developed to a degree unknown elsewhere and that an extremely complex ideology grew up around the notion of *tapas*. In other words, it was on the soil of India that this incontrovertibly ancient and universally disseminated magical tradition reached a full flowering unparalleled anywhere else in the world." (*Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*. p.107) Further on he shows how "*tapas* was part of the religious experience of the entire Indian people". Thus "the Soma sacrifice required the sacrificer and his wife to perform the *dikṣa*, a rite of consecration comprising silent meditation, ascetic vigil, fasting, and, in addition, 'heat', *tapas*; and the



rite could continue for from one day to as long as a year." (ibid.p.107-8). Heat as a translation of *tapas* is an extremely poor rendering of what has to do with the wielding and mastery of *prāṇa*, leading to the activating of the inner flame, and above all the *mastery of concentration and meditation*, - all ignored in the word "heat" which is merely the physiological consequence. *Tapas is meditative exertion*.

<sup>42</sup> This most important aspect of *prāṇa* or the life-force will be considered in Part III.

### THE SEVEN RIVERS

<sup>43</sup> The word *visruḥ* also appears in V.44.3 where Agni, the mighty child, the ageless youth, is said to glide (*prasṛ* flow forth) along the grass and to lie among the plants. There may here be a play upon the meaning of *visruḥ* translated as plants and *visruḥ* as river or water, since Agni is child of the Waters, Apām Napāt. Cf. *visru* to flow forth or away.

<sup>44</sup> Father of Yama and Manu. cf. Vaivasvata Manu. In Taitt.S. VI.5.6.2. and Śat.Br.III.1.3.4 men are said to be the progeny of Vivasvat Āditya, the solar deity thus called in the Yajurveda and the Brāhmaṇas.

<sup>45</sup> *Varuṇa*. I. p.153ff.

<sup>46</sup> F.B.J. Kuiper makes a case of Indra's conquest of *svar*, which he translates as sun as well as all the epithets concerned with *svar*; winning the sun pointing to the emergence of cosmos out of chaos and indicative of the beginning of a new year ("The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest". *I.I.J.* 4.no.4.1960.p.220). So verbal contests and chariot races with a ritual character would be concerned with the sun as prize. Men would have "tried to assist Indra in his fight against Death and Darkness by their ritual". (op.cit.p.221). This thesis ignores the spiritual significance of *svar*. It will be discussed in Ch.6.

<sup>47</sup> For Coomaraswamy the "problem of these *khāni* conduits or channels, the *niṣkhātāḥ panthāḥ* of the Breaths (JUB.4.24...) has been confused by a failure to recognize that the *khāni* of the Ṛgveda and those of the Upaniṣads are the same, and failure to recognize the symbolism of irrigation according to which these dug-out paths are the doors or sluices through which the *streams* of consciousness flow as from a common source ..." (op. cit. p..156)

<sup>48</sup> *pavīravī* is a word of uncertain meaning which, if really "proceeding from, or belonging to the thunderbolt ... may point to the well-known fertilizing or creative function of lightning and beings or phenomena allied with it ... " (J.Gonda. *Vision*. p.85)

## PART III AGNI AND FOHAT

### THE ACTION OF FIRE AS EXPRESSIVE OF THE UNIVERSAL MIND

"The Primordial Seven, the first seven Breaths of the Dragon of Wisdom, produce in their turn from their holy circumgyrating Breaths the Fiery Whirlwind. They make of him the messenger of their will. The Dzyu becomes Fohat; the Swift Son of the Divine Sons ... runs circular errands ... Fohat is the steed, and the Thought is the rider ... He passes like lightning through the fiery clouds (cosmic mists); takes three, and five, and seven strides through the seven regions above, and the seven below. ... He lifts his voice, and calls the innumerable sparks, (atoms) and joins them together." (Stanza of Dzyan. 5:1-2)

"Dzyu" is said to be "the expression of the collective wisdom of the Dhyāni-Buddhas". (S.D. I.p.108)

Mind's activity is here seen in terms of the dynamic, fiery energy emanating from those centres of intelligence - the *noumena* behind the phenomena, called Dhyāni-Chohans by H.P.B. (DhyānChohans in

modern publications). Each terrestrial phenomenon is regarded as linked to its noumenon, or primal cause, through its *electric impulse*, the *fiery whirlwind*, Fohat. Creative intelligence acting upon matter is considered a fire in the Vedas and the Avesta. So also in the Stanzas of Dzyan. To this fire H.P.B. gave the Tibetan name of Fohat, and she took great pains to explain its meaning. In the *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge* she explained:

"The word is a Turanian compound and its meanings are various. In China *Pho*, or *Fo*, is the word for 'animal soul', the vital *Nephesh* or the breath of life. Some say that it is derived from the Sanskrit 'Bhū', meaning existence, or rather the essence of existence. Now Svāyambhu means Brahmā and Man at the same time. It means self-existence and self-existing, that which is everlasting, the eternal breath ... Fohat is related to Mahat. It is the reflection of the Universal Mind, the synthesis of the 'Seven' and the intelligences of the seven creative Builders or, as we call them, Cosmocratores. Hence, as you will understand, life and electricity are one in our philosophy."<sup>41</sup>

"The Manifested Universe", H.P.B. writes

"... is pervaded by duality, which is, as it were, the very essence of its EX-istence as 'manifestation'. But just as the opposite poles of subject and object, spirit and matter, are but aspects of the One Unity in which they are synthesized, so, in the manifested universe, there is 'that' which links spirit to matter, subject to object.

This something, at present unknown to Western speculation, is called by occultists Fohat. It is the 'bridge' by which the 'Ideas' existing in the 'Divine Thought' are impressed on Cosmic substance as the 'Laws of Nature'. Fohat is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the 'Thought Divine' transmitted and made manifest through the Dhyāni-Chohans, the Architects of the visible World. Thus from Spirit, or Cosmic Ideation, comes our consciousness; from Cosmic Substance the several vehicles in which that consciousness is individualized and attains to self - or reflective- consciousness; while Fohat, in its various manifestations, is the mysterious link between Mind and Matter, the animating principle electrifying every atom into life." (S.D.I. p.15-16)

Is Agni, the mysterious, all powerful deity of the Vedas, in whom all gods are centered (III.11.9), promoter of visionary insight, immortal highpriest among mortals (III.1.18ab) at all comparable to Fohat, the swift Son of the Divine Sons? In the broad sweep of the pictures painted by means of allusions and eulogies, in his threefold division, his sevenfold compass, his varied tasks such as *uniter*, *messenger*, *knower of wisdom*, yes. Even in the above quoted paragraph we can glimpse traces of the activity and power ascribed to Agni. But details are lacking to be able to make a minute comparison especially where the cosmic tasks are concerned: to the ṛṣis, Agni is primarily important as the lord of sacrificial ritual, inspiring lord of wisdom, *secret agent* that takes man to the gods, to transcendent awareness, who speaks "secret wisdom" to the poets' heart, the messenger that brings words from heaven. Any meaningful comparison, therefore, between Agni and Fohat, must be based upon Agni's main characteristics and his significance for the ṛṣis; this significance, until the mid 20th century, was hardly understood, Agni being merely thought of as a god of fire worshipped as an awe-inspiring power. But Agni is far more than this: he represents "intelligence", "wisdom"; he "knower of births" or generations is *a multi-levelled power in the universe*: he is "Son of the Cosmic Waters", Apām Napāt, - no earthly waters but the fiery mists of Space, the *solar empowered waters* of the *Khgveda*. In Nature he is that power that fosters and destroys; in man that power that uplifts, drives onwards and shatters. It is this multi-levelled force of which *kratu*, the *seer-will* as Śri Aurobindo renders the word, or mental power as some see in it, is the very core, the motor-spring, that makes Agni comparable to Fohat, the wisdom in action of the Seven Supreme Lords of Meditation. Both are catalysing agents bringing all things forth and withdrawing all things in due course.

#### THE NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF AGNI

In R̥gvedic Agni is hidden the significance of the *secret doctrine* of the ages concerning the *sacred fire* at the heart of each human being as at the heart of the cosmos. Very few among scholars have understood this. But Stella Kramrisch has evidenced an unusual insight into Agni's fundamental meaning in her full

exposition of Agni's cosmic role, "The Triple Structure of Creation in the Ṛgveda". (*History of Religions*, 2, no.1 & 2, 1962-63.) The present study will concentrate on the esoteric aspects of Agni.

Tales of Agni abound, his vanishing and recovery by the gods, his being seized in the lap of the waters (VI.8.4), his abode or hiding in the waters, etc. (I.65.1; II.4.2; X.46.1&2, etc.) - meaningless to the literal-minded reader. Yet the fluidity of the watery element has ever marked the emotions which at their higher level are a reflection of the psyche's intuitive level. Agni's various flights image the withdrawal and reappearance of the flame-spirit to the ṛṣi's vision in the psyche's inner space called "ocean of the heart" (X.177.1) and *ākāśa* of the heart (in the Upaniṣads). They embody a great, hidden truth: the search for and activating of that flame seated in the heart *cakra* (I.67.3&4) which opens the way to the higher spheres so often alluded to in the Ṛgveda; an encounter resulting in the transformation of human nature from the earthly to the spiritual. To deny any mystical streak in the Ṛgveda, as W.N. Brown did, flies in the face of every piece of Ṛgvedic evidence. Phrases such as Agni "life of the waters" (*āyur apām* III.1.5) whether taken at the macrocosmic or microcosmic level, dweller "in the ocean, within the waters" or "kindled in the bosom of heaven" (X.45.3) extend in their meaning to the very secret of *tapas*, and through *tapas* to the inner kindling of Agni.

Singing themselves to ecstasy the Bṛghu fire-priests found Agni and worshipped him in the "home of the waters" (*apām sadhaste*) (X.46.2; II.42.2). Specific steps are indicated:

Agni was "first made manifest to Mātariśvan and Vivasvat through great mental power" (*sukratu* I.31.3). Agni is perceived in the "highest heaven" (*parame vyoman* I.143.2). As messenger of Vivasvat, the Sun, Mātariśvan brought Agni hither from afar (*parāvāt* VI.8.4cd). This "afar" is repeated in III. 9.5. to which is added "from the gods".

"Mātariśvan kindled the oblation-bearer where he lay in secrecy" (*guhā* III.5.10cd.)

He brings the fire but he is himself the Flame divine - identified with Agni in III.5.9 and as such is the messenger that takes the gods to the altar, linking heaven and earth. Agni as "gracious gift" Mātariśvan brought to Bṛghu (I.60.1) whom Bṛghu brought down to earth's central point, the altar (I.143.4); thence the outer ritual kindling acts as a mirror of the essential inner kindling. Here is implied a successive transmission (*paramparā*) of a sacred heirloom, a knowledge and practice passed on by divine beings to the ṛṣis. Mātariśvan is the original fire-bringer to humanity in its outer and inner senses (the latter not even suspected), just as Prometheus is in the Greek myth. The name is usually analysed as *mātari* + *śvan* from *śvi*, to swell, increase, hence he who grows in the mother or matrix, cosmic or human, Agni hidden in stone, wood, animal, human as well as in the Waters.

In its esoteric meaning the gift of the secret fire implies the awakening of the spirit in man and of his insight reaching out to illumination. Fire, fire-bird, fiery nectar poetically declare a profound experience of the psyche wherein its link with the divine is at its highest tension. This gift is transformed into a theft with the Greeks. In the Ṛgveda, the rape of Soma, an aspect of Agni, is seen as an unwanted intrusion in the divine domain. The Flame divine is a dangerous, two-edged power not to be easily granted to that disturber of the Cosmic Order, man. The close link between Agni and Soma is thus brought out:

"One of you Mātariśvan brought from heaven;

the other the falcon wrenched from the mountain." (I.93.6ab)

the mountain being on "the third ridge, in the bright realm of heaven" (X.86.27). In the earliest tale found in the Ṛgveda IV.26 and 27, the falcon flies to heaven "to bear to man the oblation loved of the gods" (IV.26.4). Soma's guardian aims his arrow and from the falcon falls a feather but the bird returns triumphant with the plant in its talons. Similar myths are found in Scandinavian and Babylonian mythologies. Whether as refulgent flame of illumination, or golden, burning nectar, Agni/Soma proclaim the great mystery of psyche, whose birth-place is space, *ākāśa*, whose earthly haven is the *heart cakra*.

F.B.J.Kuiper, in an essay published as "An Indian Prometheus?" in *Ancient Indian Cosmogony, essays*, etc. (1983) took a stand against the accepted Indian connection with the Greek Prometheus, claiming that "the correct translation of III.9.5cd can only be: 'Mātariśvan brought him, who was stolen from afar, for the gods'" not from the gods - which "disposes of the Indian Prometheus" (p.228-9). His whole case rests upon his assessment of a wrong translation of a grammatical case, an ablative instead of a dative, and the ambiguous reference of the word "father" in one verse; also upon an erroneous idea of the

asuras' status and habitat in the Ṛgveda. Thus in I.141.3-4 Mātariśvan steals the hidden Agni who is "carried away from the highest Father". Kuiper interprets the latter as an asura in the later sense, but whose world, for him, is one of chaos and therefore cannot "be localized in the world of the Devas", whereas in the Ṛgveda, especially in Book IV, the devas and asuras are not at all opposed, the latter being the highest celestial beings. Thus on the precarious basis of a questionable interpretation of the "Highest Father", and a disputed grammatical case, Kuiper makes light of the evident similarity of the Ṛgvedic and Greek myths and their profound significance. Both of these are based on the root meaning of the sacred fire through whose ministry man is raised in due course of time to "highest immortality" (I.31.7). Whereas the devas and asuras had won their immortality in previous ages, to give that *flame divine* to them at the same time as to men, lowers their status to that of mortal man, in fact is completely out of place.

#### AGNI AND MANIFESTATION

Agni's birth in the Ṛgveda goes back to the very origin of manifestation. The primordial creative urge from which proceeds "this whole universe" is called *kāma*<sup>42</sup>, desire, but as already observed, this desire is aroused as a result of *tapas*, the flame-power of supreme contemplation which was, for the ṛṣi, the highest creative act: *flame-power blazes forth in incandescent manifestation*, and

"Universal Order (*Ṛta*) and truth (*Satya*) were born of blazing *tapas*". (Ṛgv.X.190.1).

Truth and order are therefore, in our terms of reference, the *blueprint* of all, for all subsequent emanations of life must express as in a mirror - limpid at the higher levels of differentiation and more and more limited and distorted at the lower levels - that fundamental Order, Law, Truth, the very core of blazing *tapas*. Such blazing contemplation is to be "realised" or "measured out" (the main verb used in the Ṛgveda) by the great Cosmic Powers H.P.B. called Dhyāni-Chohans, called *asuras* and *devas* in the Ṛgveda, the architects of the manifested world. At the core of blazing *tapas*, is Agni, for *tapas* as exalting contemplative exertion, as spiritual travail burning but to bring all things forth, is Agni's all kindling, creative activity, "first born of Cosmic Order". As catalyst Agni, like Fohat, transforms quiescence into a dynamism of movement, action, unfoldment. Thus does Agni herald manifestation, just as his *Secret Doctrine* counterpart, Fohat does:

On the cosmic plane Fohat is that constructive power whereby the "Thought divine" becomes materialised in a particular form.

"He is 'metaphysically' the objectivised thought of the gods; the 'Word made Flesh' on a lower scale, and the messenger of cosmic and human ideations." (S.D.I.p.111)

Agni is frequently referred to as ruling over thought, (IV.6.1), as the means of manifestation, appointed by the devas as their messenger to men (IV.1.1), used as a chariot by men, their own envoy to the gods, and supremely as the "charioteer of the transcendent" (I.77.3). He makes the gods manifest to men (*kṛṇoti devān* I.77.1). For his most powerful might he was born for divine service. (I.127.9ab)

"Fohat", says the Stanza of Dzyan, "is the steed and the thought the rider". So Agni, "first born of ṛta" (X.5.7) is "charioteer of lofty Order":

"For thou of gracious mental-power and effective ability,  
hast been the charioteer of lofty Ṛta." (IV.10.2)

As driver and knower of Ṛta (*ṛtacit*), as protector and guardian of the divine Order (*gopā ṛtasya* I.1.8; 143.7; III.10.2), Aging is behind all cosmic processes. Whatever he does is done in accordance with the one Law, *ṛta*.

One of Agni's foremost tasks is to "bring together" (*samṛṇvati* III.11.2ab) men and gods, heaven and earth, the ritual and the ṛṣi's vision - for that *vision* offered on Agni's flame-steeds rises to the gods as the poet's best offering which he has fashioned with his heart and mind. This uniting action, often described as "binding" is also Fohat's task. In his ascending and descending Agni unites the ritual here below and the *ṛta* above, which is Cosmic-Order-and-Law as well as sacrificial offering; hence as embodiment of the rite-law-order, he unites the lower reflection, man's work and homage, and its higher expression, Cosmic Order - a priestly version of Agni's function parallel to the cosmic function of Fohat who "brings together all forms", as he is the "transcendental binding Unity of all Cosmic Energies ..." (S.D.I. p.111).

Whereas Fohat is described as

"... that occult, electric, vital power which under the Will of the Creative Logos, unites and brings together all forms, giving them the first impulse, which in time becomes law" (S.D.I. p.109); as

"... the personified electric vital power, the transcendental binding Unity of all Cosmic Energies, on the unseen as on the manifested planes, the action of which resembles - on an immense scale - that of a living Force created by WILL... (ibid. p.111),

so Agni, as uniter, dormant in undeveloped man, catalysing in the seer-sage, links "heaven" and "earth", the spiritual and the material in awakened man, as well as in the ritual. This can be glimpsed in the following cryptic verse:

"As head of heaven, as earthly centre-point, Agni has assuredly been  
the (ministering-)agent of both worlds. "(I.59.2)

He is the "messenger of Truthful speech" (VII.2.3) whose word is his bond, his deed. (cf. I.I.6).

Uniting in cosmos and in man the opposite polarities - earth and heaven - which originally he had "extended by his mental-power" (*kratu* III.6.5), he brings within man these two polarities, spirit and matter together, for he daily directs the merely human or mortal to highest immortality (I.31.7)

"For he the wise, friend-like, stallion, righteous, has become  
the charioteer of the Transcendent." (I.77.3 *adbhutasya rathi*)

an admission pregnant with profound meaning, for it implies that Agni brings illumination to human beings. Can a mere fire as we know it do that?

#### AGNI AS MENTAL POWER

This is a most important aspect of Agni which needs understanding for the Western mind which has relegated fire so far away from itself that the separation between the two has become an unbridgeable gap. This was not so among the sages of old. Agni reveals himself as the manifestation of mental power, *kratu*, of the divine insight into the cosmic inroads as well as heavenly secrets. *Kratu* is one of the very difficult R̥gvedic words to translate, for it blends purposeful will and intelligence. J. Gonda defines it as

"... a kind of effective mental power or intelligence, mental energy and determination, which enables its possessor to have solutions for preponderantly practical difficulties, 'an internal psychical and intellectual power such as inventiveness or resourcefulness enabling a man to proceed to successful creative action' rather than 'Willens- oder Verstandeskraft' [Geldner] ... [etc.] ."43

Śri Aurobindo's explanation might come closer to the essential meaning:

"*Kratu* means in Sanskrit work or action and especially work in the sense of the sacrifice; but it means also power or strength (the Greek *kratos*) effective of action. Psychologically this power effective of action is the will. The word may also mean mind or intellect and Sāyana admits thought knowledge..."

"Psychologically, then, we may take Agni to be the divine will perfectly inspired by divine Wisdom, and indeed one with it, which is the active or effective power of the Truth-consciousness. This is the obvious sense of the word *kavi-kratuḥ*, he whose active will or power of effectivity is that of the seer ..."44

It is by this *kratu* that Agni, "from of old has been the charioteer of precious boons" (VI.5.3). The conveyance to the gods or to humans, is effected by means of *kratu*, not with physical power or literal flames or chariots; it is Agni's *kratu* that conveys divine blessings to men or human offerings to the gods, offerings being usually songs, hymns, from the heart; e.g. in VI.5.6cd Agni is asked to be pleased with the singer's resounding chant (cf. IV.4.15). This internal process implies an early association of mind with fire among the ṛṣis, as it is among the esoterists who distinguish between mind and brain, the mind being closest to the essence of fire; its physical expression being the brain wherein the cells are now recognised as giving out electrical impulses.

Indeed, the electrical storm that we see out in the sky is similar to that occurring in the brain between neurons. Nerve cells are fired by minute electrical charges and thought is now recognised as starting from electrical impulses from neurons. The basis of the function of the brain results from the firing of neurons without which there would be no thought coupled to its relevant action. Thought, however, being imperceptible and intangible to the physical senses, comes from another sphere, but it has tangible results which can be measured or quantified; their link is the electrical impulse, or, in ancient terms, fire, the ignitor of action, "kindled in measure and quenched in measure". Through such electrical impulses the link between fire and thought becomes understandable. The brain serves many functions and itself emits many frequencies, now



the sacrificial level, but at all levels. This is "thought" for profound meditation.

According to the *esoteric doctrine* "Fohat, Prāṇa, electricity, magnetic fluid, are all terms used for the one vitalising life". "The close connection between mind and fohat or energy, or between thought power and electrical phenomena - the effect of fohatic impulse on matter - is fraught with peril ..."

It is only when man will have turned his activities towards altruistic purposes such as working selflessly with Nature for the good of all around, plants, animals and humans, that "he will find the method whereby electrical impulse, demonstrating as heat, light and motion, is controlled and utilised ..." <sup>48</sup>

#### AGNI'S THREEFOLD AND SEVENFOLD DIMENSIONS

H.P.B. explains that esoterically

"... there are two 'Fires' ... The first, or the purely *formless* and *invisible* Fire concealed in the *Central Spiritual Sun*, is spoken of as 'triple' (metaphysically), while the Fire of the manifested Kosmos is Septenary throughout both the Universe and our Solar System." (S.D.I. p.87)

This doctrine is reflected in Agni's "threefold" and "seven-rayed" description, or his seven stations.

"I am the threefold radiance, traverser of the firmament,  
everlasting heat, my name is burnt-offering." (III.26.7cd)

every word in this verse bearing several meanings, all of importance to the overall significance of the description. *Arka* or ray, flash of lightning, the sun, praise, hymn, song, implies the blend of light and sound, of flash and song. *Gharma* meaning heat, sunshine, cauldron where the milk is warmed, represents the cosmic receptacle in which broods the fire as well as the vessel in which warms the offering. Agni, has "three seats", "three tongues", "three bodies" (III.20.2). He is also the seven-tongued flame. Though born everywhere he has three main birthplaces, earth, mid-region and heaven. For Orthodox Brahmanism these refer to fire by friction needing fuel, to atmospheric fire or lightning, and to solar fire. There are several ways of looking at this threefoldness. Thus, Vasudeva Agrawala's basic trinity on this our plane of manifestation, viz. matter, life, mind is a broad generalisation represented by the Ṛgvedic triad Agni-Vāyu-Sūrya, in other words fire by friction, life or *prāṇa*, and intelligence, which he explains thus:

"Agni as the terrestrial deity represents the principle of matter, the five elements (*bhūtas*); as the atmospheric deity, the principle of life (*prāṇa*); and as the celestial deity, the principle of mind (*manas*)."<sup>49</sup>

Remembering that *vāyu* or *vāta* is the word generally used for *prāṇa* in the Ṛgveda, that Vāyu sweeps through space, that Sūrya represents the omniscience of the gods, their own all-seeing and all-knowing eye, we can understand why Agrawala takes this trinity in this way, showing gradations in the essence of fire; *prāṇa* being a differentiated form of fire, hinted at in Agni who, as "measured in his mother" is Mātariśvan and who "in his course has become the gust of wind" (III.29.11), a graphic description of the fire inherent to the breath; the solar fire being another aspect of fire which Agrawala relates to mind or intelligence for which choice specific verses give good grounds. (Cf. Śrī Aurobindo's thesis) But there is another way of looking at this threefold fire, namely 1) fire by friction, 2) solar fire which itself has a triple meaning, a) light, b) life or *prāṇa*, and c) intelligence or knowledge, and 3) electric fire, the innermost fire mostly unknown and holding mysteries which still need to be probed.

The Atharvaveda hymn to Earth shows this many-sidedness, yet underlying oneness of Agni so well understood by the ṛṣis:

"There lies the fire within the earth, and in plants, and waters carry it; the fire is in stone.

There is a fire deep within men, a fire in the kine, and a fire in horses.

The same fire that burns in the heavens; the mid-air belongs to this Fire divine.

Men kindle this fire that bears the oblation..." (Athv.XII.1.19,20. A.C. Bose trans.)

Agni's seed is found in all things, animate and inanimate, ('that which moves not') for his is the fire that gives life to all substances, his the cosmic power at the root of all, deeply anchored in each human being.

Agni's solar and lightning aspects will be taken up in the next two sections. Here the survey of his seven dimensions as important as the threefold, could be introduced with the following verse which brings in a

metaphysical geometry: "I praise the three-headed, seven-rayed, full-powered Agni,  
in the lap of his parents."(I.146.1)

Here, added to the threefold definition, is discovered Agni as seven-rayed; elsewhere his "stations" are seven, whilst he ranges between the two poles of creation, Heaven and Earth, the lap of his parents. These may be and are at times the pieces of wood from which he is kindled by rubbing, but more often they are Dyaus and Pṛthivī

. Similarly, Fohat, writes H.P.B., is

"... One and Seven, and on the Cosmic plane is behind all such manifestations as light, heat, sound, adhesion, etc ... and is the 'spirit' of ELECTRICITY which is the LIFE of the universe. As an abstraction, we will call it the ONE LIFE; as an objective and evident Reality, we speak of a septenary scale of manifestation, which begins at the upper rung with the One Unknowable CAUSALITY, and ends as Omnipresent Mind and Life, immanent in every atom of Matter." (S.D.I. p.139)

"Fohat, running along the seven principles of ĀKĀŚĀ, acts upon manifested substance, or the One Element, ... and, by differentiating it into various centres of Energy, sets in motion the law of Cosmic Evolution, which, in obedience to the Ideation of the Universal Mind, brings into existence all the various states of being in the manifested Solar System." (S.D.I. p.110; see also p.328)

Apart from its twofold (heaven and earth) division, the Ṛgveda usually refers to a threefold universe, heaven, mid-region, earth, always taken physically as sky, air, earth. Cosmologically this interpretation is wrong. Although *antarikṣa* is translated as mid-region with the meaning of atmosphere or air, it most probably refers to the middle, psychic realm. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (IX.5.2.12) calls these the "three oceans". In the word *antarikṣa*, the verbal root *īkṣ* means to see, view, observe, the word *īkṣa* pointing to that *seeing through* - a capacity of "being seen through" between the earthly and the celestial, or that which shines from within, which is in fact the psychic domain, between earth and heaven. (See Reinhold F.G. Müller's "Antarikṣa, ākāśa, kha" Rocznik Orientalist...24.2. 1961 p.53-8; and Śat. Br. VII.1.2.23 and Bṛhad. Up. I.5.4). Triads may be named and considered differently.

But there is a further sevenfold division of the universe in the Ṛgveda referred to as the "sevenfold foundation of the ocean" of space (VIII.40.5) or the "sevenfold divine waters" (X.104.8), two mentions which have remained a puzzle to exegesists; these could be explained as the above "septenary scale of manifestation", knowing that the "ocean" also means universal space.

This is one of those many tenets of *The Secret Doctrine* which throw light upon passing hints of the Ṛgveda that no modern theory of cosmos can resolve. Agni "circumscribes seven stations" (X.122.3) or domains of the universe, thereby marking out the "many manifestations of the Cosmic Order". Viṣṇu, in his turn, is said to stride over the seven regions of the world (*pṛthivī*, meaning the broad, rather than earth, hence the world I.22.16). These can well be taken as the seven differentiations or "foundations" of the Vedic world (VIII.40.5) which Agni pervades, Agni the highpriest "with the seven domains" (*sapta dhāmabhiḥ* IV.7.5). The word *dhāman* used here is again one of those words with multiple meanings, researched into by J. Gonda in his study *The Meaning of the Sanskrit term Dhāman*-. According to contexts, the word could refer to

"... a 'place, sphere, phenomenon in which a divine power is located; a holder or container of a numinous potency' ... (R. Otto, *Das Gefühl des Überweltlichen*. München 1932) it is not surprising to find it associated with *nāman*- 'name' ..."50

Of the possible meanings and contexts in which the word occurs, one in particular arrests the attention:

"Agni's *sapta dhāma priyāṇi* mentioned at VS 17.79 are according to Śat.Br. 9.2.3.44 the metres (*chandāmsi*), which are indeed supposed to consist of (three or) seven typical forms (cf. Śat.Br.10.3.1.1: 'the seven metres produced in Agni') ..."51

thereby showing the wide application of a single word, but at the same time a particular aspect of Agni's domain and influence in the field of vibration, a very esoteric hint of which the Ṛgveda contains many.

The *dhāmāni* generally are spheres of activity and power of particular gods within the Cosmic Order, and in the case of Agni, cosmically, are somewhat like those "seven planes" described in *The Secret Doctrine* as supervised by different orders of Dhyān Chohans, each expressive of each of the "seven principles of *ākāśa*" - the basic structure of cosmos. Upon this framework unfolds the drama of evolution. Since these *dhāmāni* do mean, according to Gonda, dwelling-places impregnated with the gods' power, they could be called the seven mansions of the cosmos, with the reservation that they also apply to such "domains" as those of sound.



Through his dual, outer and inner activity, Agni, as instigator-fosterer and sacrificial messenger between the polarities, heaven and earth, gods and men, positive and negative, brings out of the nurturing darkness of matter all the forms of life into the full light of growth and maturity. But this fostering applies not merely to Nature, however vast the field may be; it applies also to that intangible field of the mind, to the noumena behind the phenomena, to the world of psyche, to the realm of intuition, of vision, revelation. For Agni ranges over all these levels. This is his cosmic action, as well as microcosmic - pertaining to humanity.

Specific details relating to Fohat cannot enter into the compass of the Vedas, being collections of liturgical hymns with only allusions on which to rely, but by means of which one may piece the broad outlines of a cosmology and a religious view of life centred around Agni; but no detailed accounts could be given of specific cosmic tasks such as those described in *The Secret Doctrine*. Thus Fohat's "seven sons who are his brothers" are shown to "represent and personify the seven forms of cosmic magnetism ... whose cooperative and active progeny are, among other energies, electricity, magnetism, sound, light, heat, cohesion, etc." (S.D.I.p.145) Fohat is pictured as hardening and scattering the seven brothers, meaning thereby that he "electrifies into life, and separates primordial stuff or pregenetic matter into atoms, themselves the source of all life and consciousness." (ibid.p.76). Little transpires in the R̥gveda as to Agni's specific cosmic spheres of activity besides his "measuring" out and separating heaven and earth, and the various domains of space, thereby making them manifest, and as Apām Napāt, who "by the might of his asuraship gave birth to all beings" (II.35.2), i.e. brought to existence all beings as his offshoots (II.35.8), and manifesting as lightning. This will be considered in the last section. Agni's far pervasiveness recalls Heracleitus' famous dictum:

"This world order, the same for all beings, neither any of the gods hath made nor any man; but it always was, is, and shall be, ever-living Fire, kindled in measure and quenched in measure. (Fragment D.30)

Agni's seven flames or rays also described as tongues or reins or horses, sometimes also called sisters (X.5.5) have different connotations according to context. Agni's seven rays are referred to in I.146.1, I.105.9 and, somewhat ambiguously in IV.1.12. Their link with the seven solar rays is most probable for Sūrya is called the "face of Agni" in the sky. But what of the seven tongues and the seven offshoots over which Agni has dominion? Can they be in any way connected with the seven *prāṇas* expounded in the later *śruti*? Most scholars will deny this possibility. However this will be considered under the heading of Prāṇa.

Several references to seven sisters vary in meaning. The intertwining of Agni and Vāc, the divine Voice uttering the *sapta vāṇis* or seven notes in III.7.1-2 shows the link between flame and vibration, for in III.1.6 the seven notes are fused into the seven Rivers that, as one womb, contain the one seed of the Waters, Agni. Agni may be the positive, Vāc the negative aspect of that Flame-power that, for the ṛ̥ṣis, emerged at the beginning. In this respect Fohat has "seven sons who are his brothers" (S.D.I.p.145); and seven *śaktis* or energies are said to be the female aspects of Fohat, who thus appears dual like electricity. The details differ but the underlying thought is similar.

A summing up of Agni's cosmic function as well as a declaration of his supreme status is given in the following verse: "Vaiśvānara the seer (*kavi*), who (of) higher-mental power (*sukratu*) has

measured out the luminous spheres and etherial-spaces of heaven,  
who has spread around all worlds, [is] the undeceivable  
herdsman and guardian of immortality." (VI.7.7)

Besides differentiating the mansions of space, Agni is guardian of immortality. Agni as Vaiśvānara, "common to all men" can only refer to the spiritual principle which belongs to all humans, whose light implies intelligence, perceptiveness, understanding, whose blazing fire implies dynamism and drive in humans, who resting in the "hidden spot" (I.67.3-4) guards the entrance to that world beyond the senses, beyond earthly shackles. "We choose freedom and wholeness" sings a refrain (X.100); "may we be free; (may we be) sons of freedom, a stronghold amidst gods and mortals ..." (VII.52.1ab). To Agni is declared: "Thou grantest sinlessness, freedom, completely" (I. 94.15ab). These values are beyond the "natural" world to which Agni apparently belongs! They imply the moral, psychological and spiritual stand of Agni and by reflection that of the ṛ̥ṣis, their knowledge of the inner flame that drives man to the higher spheres of existence.

## AGNI, TAPAS AND PRĀṆA

**TAPAS**

The real knowledge of *prāṇa*, as against the theoretical, implies the knowledge and practice of *tapas*; one cannot really know the meaning of *prāṇa* unless one practises some form of *tapas* in depth; one cannot probe into the depth of *tapas* without encountering *prāṇa*. Both *tapas* and *prāṇa* having no equivalent in our languages and in our conceptions have been, until the mid 20th century, far beyond our Western capacity to grasp their inherent meaning. Since that time, with the greater interest in *yoga*, studies on fire as found in the ancient sacred texts, have multiplied; one of these being *In the Image of Fire* by David M. Knipe, 1975. The author investigates the intricacies of fire under their many aspects, including wrath, fury, heat and the practice of *tapas* with a whole range of meanings applied to fever, disease, cooking, "mystical sexuality" and speech which also is born of *tapas*. He extends his search to cover the Christian mystics' imagery.<sup>52</sup>

Mentioning that for L. Renou (and others) "*tapas* as 'cosmic ardor' in the cosmogonic hymns (RV.X.129.3; 190.1; cf.X.109.1) is a later Ṛgvedic *innovation*" (italic my own) thereby ignoring *tapas* as an inner discipline already found in so many allusions in the Ṛgveda, the author emphasises:

"It is our contention, however, in the light of our research into the triadic and pentadic ritual-speculations, and in view of the pre-eminent roles of fire and heat phenomena in the sacrificial structure of homologies, that ancient Indian religious experience did not have to wait until the seeing of tenth-mandala hymns to appreciate the cosmogonic significance of heat." Knipe "... pushes the limits back to the earliest Vedic expressions, and even beneath them to the Indo-Iranian epoch ..."<sup>53</sup>

He ends his study on *tapas* with the crucial remark:

"Thus the working model for the *tapasvin* is emphatically declared in the living presence of an interior *agni*."<sup>54</sup>

Here at last is the recognition of "the living presence of an interior *agni*", not only as the counterpart to the external fire, but also as the means whereby the practisers of *tapas*, or seer-poets, received their spiritual inspiration and vision, arrived at their view of life and of the cosmos; but also as signifying the very pathway to the core of *guptavidyā*, the hidden gnosis - and this long before the Upaniṣads.

Furthermore, as well documented by M. Eliade in both his books - *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* and *Shamanism* -

"The continuity between the oldest known magical technique (producing inner heat) is, in this particular, undeniable."

"The technique of 'producing inner heat' is not a tantric innovation. The *Majjhima-nikaya* (I.244) speaks of the 'heat' obtained by holding the breath, and other Buddhist texts (e.g. *Dhammapada*, 387) say that the Buddha is 'burning'. The Buddha is 'burning' because he practices asceticism, *tapas* - and we have seen that in India *tapas* is documented from Vedic times but that the ideology and practices of 'magical sweating' and of creation through autothermy were known from the Indo-European period on; indeed, they belong to an archaic cultural stage, being attested both in primitive cosmologies and in many shamanisms."<sup>55</sup>

Eliade here fails to see that to call *tapas* "magical sweating" is very misleading, and fails to recognise that *tapas* is rooted in basic mystical gnosis. The sweating of Ymir, the giant in Scandinavian mythology, from which emerged the first human pair, and that of Gayomart from which Ahura Mazda created the first man, are not just ordinary physiological activities, but indications of a purposeful exertion, *tapas*, like that of Prajāpati who "toils", "exerts himself" for creation. Similarly, when Ymir is said to have sweated in his sleep this hints that the exertion occurred whilst the senses were asleep. What is called "interior heat", and "sweating" by the ṛṣis, refers to mere physiological effects, not to the actual *process* which is never described except somewhat in later texts, e.g. Tantric Yoga. *Tapas* as a means of kindling the interior fire linking the earthly to the spiritual, is the very essence of the spiritual life of early humanity whose initiates knew a great deal more of spirituality's exigencies, being much closer to the spirit than our modern intellectual rationalists who failed to detect its meaning in the Ṛgveda. Even the *Yoga-sūtras* of Patañjali do not mention the secret fire or the word *kuṇḍalinī*, although they do explain the necessity of 1) *prāṇāyama* or controlling the prāṇic currents and 2) retention of breath (*kumbhaka*) which affects the flow of prāṇic currents, but is a source of danger. The emphasis is on "spiritual-exertion (*tapas*) self-study, self-surrender to the Lord" as constituting practical yoga

(II.1; cf.II.32 for the fixed observances which include purity, contentment, *tapas* and self-surrender; II.43 and IV.1).

From the poet's offering of his sweat, his toil, his vision, his chants<sup>56</sup> to Agni, messenger of men to gods, to Agni holding the jewel or pearl of great prize of all ages, verses upon verses indicate the practice of *tapas*, where the fuel is the human body:

"In his service" they, the seer poets, "offer up their sweat;  
on him, their own kin, they mount as on a ridge on earth." (V.7.5)

The significant remark of the *kinship* between Agni and man is passed unnoticed, but even if it were physically possible, why should a man mount Agni just to light a fire? In I.173.2 *svedu-havya*, the offering of sweat as a sacrifice again implies the inner toiling whereby the fire of *tapas* is activated. Why should Agni be asked to "sharpen us with his sharp-pointed flame" or glow, he "the sharp flamed power"? (VI.15.19 cf.I.79.10; VI.3.5). To what would lead such a sharpening of the seer? The inner flame sharpens our insight and similarly

"Wise-insight sharpens that excellent bolt of thine, O Indra,  
which is might and courage and mental power". (VIII.15.7)

What Agni stands for is skilfully woven in the attributes of the thunderbolt which is Indra's weapon - figuratively mind's weapon to cope with manifestation. It implies a psychological dimension hidden within the naturalistic terminology of the Ṛgveda.

The ṛṣis were past masters of *tapas* as evident from hymn X.154 where *tapas* appears as the all important process leading to mastery of the higher dimensions. Compare also X.109.4 where the seven Ṛṣis of old are described as seated at their *tapas*. To become a ṛṣi one had to be master of *tapas*. The great exertion needed to achieve this particular end is recorded in the Jaiminiya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa thus:

"The sages (ṛṣi) sat a session (*sattra*). They again and again with many, many introductory stanzas did in no way perceive the door of the heavenly world. And they with exertion (*śramena*), with penance, with the performance of vows, got possession of Indra". (Oertel's trans. J.U.B. IV.14.5ff.)

They ask Indra to teach them; he teaches the oldest among them, but no teaching is revealed.

The same fiery energy, *vāja*, that drives *outwardly* to procreation, impels inwardly the sage, or yogi or mystic, to spiritual exaltation. So Gonda translates III.27.11:

"The inspired ones eagerly inflame Agni with manifestations of the  
generative  
power known as *vāja*."<sup>57</sup>

This interlinking of fiery energy at the physical, intellectual and spiritual levels, declares the one fundamental underlying dynamic power that rules man and the universe, manifesting in the flame divine, radiating out in different "measures" and thus called by different names. Thoughts are inflamed with that same power, visions are promoted by that power and Agni, to use Gonda's words

"is invited to promote the power inherent in the word of the ṛṣi which contributes to the inflammation of the fire",<sup>58</sup>

especially to the kindling of the *interior flame* to raise man to ecstasy. This is very seldom realised. Hence the seers' request to Agni to "bring the generative word, *brahman*, that it may shine in heaven" (VI.36.16). It is through their exertion in *tapas* that the word will shine forth and accomplish the poets' aim.

A verse in the Soma hymns gives out a precise hint as to the knowledge and the function of *tapas*:

"Outspread is thy filter Lord of Prayer; supreme thou pervadest each and  
every limb. The immature, unripened body, cannot receive *that*; only  
vehicles made ready together, receive that". (IX.83.1)

The Lord of Prayer, who here is taken as merged with Soma, since Soma gives the power of invocation, has pervaded the whole body. Metaphorically, the filter is the human organism, the outer counterpart to what is used for purifying the pounded Soma plant. But the human vehicle (or vehicles) has to be brought to a high degree of maturity through *tapas*, to be able to receive Soma without any danger. The hints are in the words 1) *atapta* (from *tap* to burn) not heated, hence unripened, b) *āma* raw, uncooked, hence immature; and c) *śṛta* boiled, ready, matured. Furthermore, that filter of the "burner", or fire, is spread out in the seat of heaven, we are told in the next verse, that is, not only the physical body is involved but the inner psychological/spiritual man (represented esoterically by the emotional, mental and spiritual vehicles or veils) is involved in the whole

process. This seems to be completely lost on our Western scholars. Yet there is in the Christian scriptures a supreme example of the action of the inner flame over a prepared human vehicle, the preparation meaning complete purification and elevation of mind, which in the Vedas is shown as brought about by *tapas*. This is the transfiguration of Christ:

"... and he was transfigured before them and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light." (N.T. Math.XVII.1)

The solar blaze is always the criterion of the inner flame's transfigurative power, expressed in *varcas*.

We should note the close connection between *flame*, *prāṇa*, and *life* and their relation to *ākāśa* for in their understanding lies the secret of the esoteric viewpoint. All is fundamentally one, says the mystic. Flame is the quintessence of man, for man is "embodied flame" and this spiritual flame is his unfailing guide, driver and redeemer, one could almost say "creator", for it is that inner flame that moulds and drives man to pinnacles of achievements, whether physical, moral, intellectual, self-sacrificial or purely spiritual.<sup>59</sup>

Agni is thus shown as the wisdom and the power inherent to both gods and humans, though he be "hidden" in mortals who have to discover and make obeisance to him before he may raise them to "highest immortality". He is thereby on a par with Fohat of the Stanzas of Dzyan for it is said: "the Dzyu [wisdom] becomes Fohat" - manifests through the activity of the Flame divine.

## PRĀṆA

The primal *prāṇa*, the flame-breath of Life, of that One that emerged in the beginning to existence, self-kindled by *tapas* (R̥gv.X.129.3cd), that flame-breath has its counterpart at the microcosmic level; in that flame-breath, seated in the heart, equally differentiates the fire into *prāṇa* and this into seven aspects or *prāṇas*, later called *īśis*, the flowing or rushing ones whose abode is said to be in the head. Whence the origin of the *prāṇas* except in the motor principle of life inherent to the ever quickening flame "kindled in measure and quenched in measure"? In his becoming, says the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*,

"Agni shines as breath (*prāṇa*)", in his becoming "Vāyu pervades *ākāśa* as *prāṇa*", "as *prāṇa* the sun rises, from *prāṇa* food, from *prāṇa* the word." (J.U.B.IV.12.6)

The seven differentiations of *prāṇa* energise the seven outward turned sense-perceptions, but also their inward turned psychic counterparts. We, in the West, know of five senses only, but the esoteric doctrine and Hindu philosophy which has remained closest to it, count in addition mind, the organising and assessing sense, and *vijñāna* the spiritual insight, as the two higher senses.

According to the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* (ed. G. Feuerstein) *Prāṇa*

"almost invariably signifies the universal life force which is a vibrant psycho-physical energy similar to the *pneuma* of the Ancient Greeks. The Yoga-Vāsiṣṭhas (III.13.31) defines *prāṇa* as the 'vibratory power (*spanda-śakti*) that underlies all manifestation."<sup>60</sup>

Here again we perceive the hidden link between flame, life-energy or breath and vibration or sound. *Prāṇa* is explained in *The Secret Doctrine* as "*Fohatic* force" (S.D.II.p.525, fn), hence a differentiated aspect of Fohat which itself is the cause of electricity, magnetism, heat, light, sound, etc.

"*Prāṇa* is the motor-principle in Life." "Every principle is a differentiation of *Jīva* (life) but the life-motion in each is *prāṇa*, the 'breath of life'. *Kāma* (desire) depends on *prāṇa*, without which there would be no *kāma*. *Prāṇa* wakes the kamic germs to life; it makes all desires vital and living." (E.W.p.431) (also in *Inner Group Teachings of H.P.B.*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. p.26.)

*Prāṇa* pervades "the whole living body of man; but alone, without having an atom to act upon, it would be quiescent ... in *laya*, or as Prof. Crookes has it, 'locked in protyle'. It is the action of Fohat upon a compound or even upon a simple body that produces life." (S.D.I. p.526 fn)

Like an ox to a cart, says the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, is *prāṇa* yoked to the body (Chānd.Up.VIII.12.3; cf. Muṇḍ.Up.II.2.6). "Like spokes on the hub of a chariot wheel, are fixed on *prāṇa* all things - ṛks, yajus, sāmās, sacrifice, kṣatriya and brāhmaṇa."<sup>61</sup> (*Praśna* Up.II.6; cf.VI.6 and Kauṣītaki Up.III.8). The *Praśna* Upaniṣad went as far as one can in identifying *prāṇa* with fire, with the sun, the wind, Indra and finally *prāṇa* is born of *ātman* (III.3) and is the Lord of creatures, Prajāpati moving in the womb and born in the image of the parents, etc, all revealing a great deal of esoteric knowledge.

In Part 2 of the present chapter we saw how the differentiation of *prāṇa* into seven aspects was at one stage of Vedic culture applied or made equivalent to the seven ṛṣis. The *prāṇas* are the "movers" responsible in the human body for specific and vital organic activities and currents of vitality that manifest outwardly in sense perceptions and inwardly in psychic perceptions, *prāṇa* being responsible for the harmonious working of all these: hence a vital human being, a human world is born. The analogy is evident. As the senses were considered divine attributes (cf. Īśā Up.) it is no wonder that the *prāṇas* were called ṛṣis, movers.

In the Atharvaveda the human head is deemed the habitat of the seven ṛṣis identified with the *prāṇas*:

"There is a bowl (*camasa*) with its opening sideways, and bottom upwards; in it is deposited the glory of all forms; there sit together the seven seers, who have become the keepers of that great one." (Athv.X.8.9)

whilst the Yajurveda declares

"The seven ṛṣis are established in the body, the seven carefully guard their dwelling". (Yjv.VS.34:55)

From his studies of certain Ayurvedic texts, notably those of Suśruta and Caraka, Jean Filliozat found it possible to conclude that the Ayurvedic presentation of

"the organic force which animates the body, conceived as identical to the cosmic Force which animates the universe", is in agreement "with some of the principal Vedic conceptions ..."<sup>62</sup>

but, as he sees it, priority of realisation must have been given to the nature of the Cosmic Force as wind or Primal Mover in the universal momentum towards unfoldment - the cosmic principle of motion; this subsequently to be realised as inherent to the human organism and reflected in *prāṇa*.

It is during the course of meditation that one can become aware of the rhythm of *prāṇa* which normally, as out- and in-breathing, works on the outer rhythm of the life-force current, but can suddenly change to an inner rhythmic current that can take the meditator on the inner cosmic or soul inroads. This reverses Filliozat's speculation on the priority of realisation given to the Cosmic Force.

*Prāṇa* has been known in the East for ages, as of extraordinary power once marshalled and controlled. Its various differentiations in the human body J. Filliozat renders as "organic forces", a vague enough term, that yet indicates that these forces concern organic functions of the body.

The word *prāṇa* is seldom used in the Ṛgveda (cf.I.66.1 where Agni is compared to the solar splendour, to one's own son, to the breath of life, etc.; also X.189.2 and X.32.8). Its earlier equivalent is *vāta* or *vāyu* whose universal power was recognised as of primal importance - though few hymns are dedicated wholly to these.

R. Panikkar remarks very perceptibly:

"Wind, Breath, and Life form a triad which modern Man has broken asunder, but which Man some millennia ago still experienced as a whole, for he viewed these three not as identical but as deeply related and belonging together. Movement is a common feature to all three ... Movement is the soul, that is, the life-principle, of every phenomenon in the three worlds."<sup>63</sup>

Without motion there would be no world, neither would there be any without flame, both being interlocked. So to Varuṇa is said "The wind, thine *ātman* has blown through the region" (VII.87.2a) and Vāta is called "*ātman* of the gods, seed of the world" (X.168.4), whilst Agni is also "seed of the world" (X.45.6), one being a differentiated aspect of the other. Breath is vital to us, just as motion as the primal mover to the universe.

Can one find in Agni's seven flames or sisters or rays or tongues the slightest suggestion of an original notion of the seven *prāṇas* of the later texts? There are no clear hints to allow of any conclusion either for or against. However two typical examples point to such a possibility. Thus Agni "seated in every home, bestowing his seven jewels" (V.1.5) (*dame-dame sapta ratnā dadhāno*) may sound as if Agni is placed in every dwelling, but taking note of the various references to the "secret spot" (*guhā*) one can take each home as the human tabernacle wherein Agni resides in the *sacred* spot where no scalpel can reach, no physical eye perceive. The seven jewels could then refer to the seven inner sense organs, veritable "seers" in the domain of psyche, closed to outer perception - hence the seven *prāṇas*. This verse recalls another (IV.1.18) where the patriarchs, on "awakening" beheld and took hold of a "heaven-bestowed jewel" (*dyubhaktim*) and found all gods in their dwellings.

Ṛgvedic verses are subject to a scale of different meanings. The word *visruḥ*, branch, shoot, also river in

VI.7.6, even though it be translated as river agreeably to Indian commentators, (see Section on the Seven Rivers) may bear other meanings which change the purport of the verse. *Paraphrased*, with a few explanatory remarks, VI.7.6 could read thus: "by means of its inherent light, the Flame that belongs to all men, distinguishes the inner and outer spaces (= measures the ridges of heaven) from whose fountain-head emerge all offshoots, be these human beings, creatures, or organic forces whether cosmic or microcosmic - the seven streams of inspiration, or deva hosts, or prāṇic currents, or even human races". The verse bears a similarity to II.35.8 where there issue from Agni as offshoots "other beings and plants", the word used here for offshoot being *vayā*; Agni is here clearly seen as the source of all life in our terrestrial world, not merely of human beings, but of animals and plants, for "other beings" cover all lives. II.35.2 confirms this, Apām Napāt being said to have given birth to all beings through the mightiness of his *asura* dominion. There would be nothing incompatible or incongruous about Agni as "leader of the rivers" (VII.5.2) as prāṇic currents or as deva hosts. Very true is Frawley's remark that words in the Vedic language "have very complex meanings, which can vary greatly by association and juxta-position". (*Creative Vision of the Early Upaniṣads*. p.42.)

### NĀRADA ON THE PRĀṆAS

In order to understand the esoteric doctrine underlying this question of *prāṇa* it is worth casting a glance at the *Anugītā*, part of the Aśvamedha Parvan of the *Mahābhārata*, ch.IX (S.B.E. vol.viii) where the sage Nārada discourses upon the breaths or "life-winds" and their subdivisions (or "vital airs" as these were originally translated). This whole passage is examined in *The Secret Doctrine* (S.D. II.p.566 ff). Nārada explains that in the sacrificial offering the five main currents of *prāṇa* are offered to the fire.

These *prāṇic* currents that vitalise the whole body through the subtle channels, were seen as having various functions dealing with inhalation and exhalation, digestion, distribution of food, the "forth breath" (*prāṇa*) or ascending breath (including inhalation and exhalation) the *samāna* that distributes food through the body (Prašna Up. III.5) as essence, the *vyāna* that circulates in the subtle channels thereby pervading the whole body (Prašna Up. III.6), the "down breath" (*apāna*) concerned with the lower part of the body, and the *udāna* or up-breath whose highest function takes the psyche into *samādhi*. Thus it is said:

"Now, by one of these channels turned upwards and called *suṣumnā*, the *prāṇa udāna* leads the pure man to a pure world, the impure man to an impure world, and with both pure and impure to the human world." (Prašna III.7)

As stated in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Yoga* "Already in the ancient *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (II) this intricately patterned life-energy is conceived as forming a distinct field which is called *prāṇa-maya-kośa*."<sup>64</sup>

So Nārada explains how the *samāna* and the *vyāna* are the "principal offering" and the *prāṇa* and the *apāna* are "portions of the offering, and "between them is the fire. That is the excellent seat of the *udāna*" or the up-breath. Between the "pairs of vital airs" as between "the pairs of what exists and what does not exist" "is the fire", an enigmatic statement which points to the *secret fire* as residing between the two pairs of opposites, and cosmically forming the link between non-being and being; which is indeed the role of Fohat. Thus these "vital airs" or "organic forces" which activate the body are offered as fuel to the interior flame-spirit just as fuel is offered to the outer fire to keep it going. It is the very life of the fire as differentiated in its various functions in the human body, with its seven outlets in the head, which is offered up to the fire and which allows it to burn steadily on. Any sacrifice of human life or animal that may have occurred originally being a complete distortion of the inner meaning.

"In the midst of all these (life-winds) which move about in the body and swallow up one another, blazes the Vaiśvānara fire sevenfold." (S.B.E. vol.VIII,p.259)

Surely this must have been the meaning of the Vaiśvānara fire in Ṛgvedic times. Furthermore, says Nārada

"It is the teaching of the *veda* that the *fire* verily is all the deities, and knowledge (of it) arises among Brāhmaṇas, being accompanied by intelligence."

These lines are in full agreement with the esoteric understanding of Agni in the Ṛgveda, and with *the tapas* of the ṛṣis. The thread in the continuity of an age-old tradition of the *secret fire* is not broken but more facets of it are revealed as time goes on. H.P.B. remarks

"This 'Fire', according to Nilakantha's commentary, is identical with the 'I', the SELF [the *ātman*]

which is the goal of the ascetic; Vaiśvānara being a word often used for the Self. Then the Brāhmaṇa goes on to enumerate that which is meant by the word 'sevenfold', and says: 'The nose (or smell), and the tongue (taste), and the eye, and the skin, and the ear of the fifth, the mind, and the understanding, these are the seven tongues of the blaze of Vaiśvānara... Those are the seven (kinds of) fuel for me...

These are the seven great officiating priests.'" (S.B.E.vol.VIII.p.259) (Quoted in S.D. II. p.568)<sup>65</sup>

This explanation should not be turned down under the pretext that it is later than the Ṛgveda. What the Ṛgveda hints at in its poetic naturalistic language, and what the later texts expound, make a whole which should never be separated. The mystical verses of Agni underly all this.

Further insights may be found in Śrī Krishna Prem's *Yoga of the Kaṭha Upanishad* where it is stated:

5.5. "Not by *Prāṇa* or *Apāna* does mortal ever live. By Another do men live, on which both these depend." So Śrī Krishna Prem comments:

"The two terms *Prāṇa* and *Apāna* are often translated as the inbreath and outbreath. It is true that in some contexts they do have only this meaning but in reality the *Prāṇa* and *Apāna* are of much deeper significance. Fundamentally they are the two great tidal movements of the Cosmos, the mysterious 'Breath' of the Breathless One referred to in the Rig Veda as 'breathing' even during the Night of Pralaya. In all things whatsoever this Breath, this rhythmic inflow and outflow, takes place perpetually ...

... something more than mere breath is being referred to, for 'upwards' is hardly the direction we should apply to the intake of air nor 'downwards' to our exhalations. Yet upwards, i.e. towards the Pole of Spirit, is the direction of the *Prāṇa* and downwards, towards the Pole of Matter, that of the *Apāna* ... That which was upward in the Cosmos as whole becomes inward in man and that which was downward becomes outward." (op.cit. p.201-2)

What controls "... these two all-regulating Tides in their ebb and flow? What indeed but the one Central Power which ... is on the microcosmic scale, the Thumb-like Puruṣa, seated in the centre, the Dwarf, small in stature but immense in power. He it is who is the real Breather. He breathes and all the bodily and mental functions breathe with him; he leaves the body and all its breathing stops." (ibid.p.203)

"He it is who is the Pole-Star of the inner as of the outer Heavens, He who is surrounded by and worshipped by all the Gods. He it is whose presence in the body means its life and He whose departure causes it to fall apart in the chaos of death." (ibid. p.205)

The "thumb-like *puruṣa*", the "Lord of Fate", the stallion Dadhikrā or *hamsa* (swan) of Ṛgv.V.40 which ends the hymn on Dadhikrā, all express the one central mystic Fire.

"The great Winged Stallion ... is in fact the mighty Power which wields the manifested universe, the great dynamism which throbs at the heart of all being" (ibid. p.195)

- the Central Power at the Central Point between the two poles of manifestation.

"It is always and on all planes, through that Central Point that Power manifests because Power is in reality the fundamental Unity of being. Wherever two Poles come into manifestation, there the original and underlying Unity also manifests as a tension between them and it is that tension that we know as Power..." (ibid. p.197)

The transformation of the ṛṣis into the force of *prāṇa*, as noted in the study of John Mitchiner, signifies above all the mastery and wielding of one of the greatest powers lying buried within ourselves, a force of which we, in the West, have been completely unaware, but of which certain temple priests of Japan, certain yogis and monks of India and Tibetan lamas, are still masters. Breath is far more than just wind in motion, for the fire behind this wind is its *life spring* and the power within this fire can ultimately raise the human to highest illumination.

Just as the transformative power of heat in *tapas* is only the outer manifestation of that inner, spiritual, power-yielding exertion that burns up all dross in its all embracing momentum, so the force inherent to, but hidden behind the breath, is linked to the inner fire, is an aspect of it, and it is through the manipulation of *prāṇa* that the inner fire can be kindled in the human being. Hence "the gust of wind" rooted in Agni. There is a deep mystery behind these few words which point to the transformation of original fire into wind, which itself is breath through this essential "measuring", a fundamental Ṛgvedic conception of the creative action. A

"measure of fire"<sup>66</sup> conduces to a differentiation which leads to something different. Agni, when "measured in his mother" is Mātariśvan; "he has in his course become the gust of wind" (III.29.11) - Agni's mother being any form or receptacle wherein He dwells, stone, wood, plant, radiant cosmic waters or fire-mists of space, the Mother-deep, *ākāśa*.

Life is movement, transformation and the effect of heat on matter is rotary both at the microscopic and macroscopic levels. Thus for the wisdom tradition not only do the atoms and planets and constellations rotate around a central nucleus, but also the seven spheres or planes of differentiated matter and activity and the seven Cosmic rays or Powers, all forming an interlacing spheroidal network of forces resulting in our solar system and in the stellar galaxies. This is not mentioned in the Ṛgveda, but only the sevenfold foundation of the world or "sevenfold ocean" and the "seven solar rays" are mentioned.

Furthermore, the "fiery whirlwind", remarks H.P.B.

"is the incandescent cosmic dust which only follows magnetically, as the iron filings follow the magnet, the directing thought of the 'Creative Force'. Yet, this cosmic dust is something more; for every atom in the universe has the potentiality of self-consciousness in it, and is, like the Monads of Leibnitz, a universe in itself and for itself. It is an atom and an angel." (S.D.I. p.107)

It is important to understand this ancient concept that everything is alive, evolving towards a certain hidden purpose,<sup>67</sup> alive with the one life-breath breathed by Divinity and relaid by its energy-principles such as the "Seven Primordial Creative Powers" of the Stanzas of Dzyan, the Seven Ṛṣis and the 49 fires of the *śruti*, hence the *One Life* under the many forms, the many appearances.

"... Just as *tapas* or heat is the medium by which Brahmā<sup>68</sup> brings the creation into existence - and the Ṛṣis, by transforming their whole being into glowing and fiery heat, both attain heaven and also continue the task of creation - so too *prāṇa* is conceived as being the vital essence of all living beings, the breath of life which animates creation and brings into effect the cycle of creation - and the Ṛṣis are in turn identified as *prāṇa* or as the seven *prāṇas*." <sup>69</sup>

Thus *prāṇa*, *ṛṣi* and *agni* are intimately linked through *tapas*. As the living soul(s) or directing entity(ies) of which *prāṇa* is but a quickening emanation, the ṛṣis represent the very foundation of fire - man is embodied flame! Hence the triads: mind (*manas*), fire (*agni*), *prāṇa* and, anticipating the next chapter, *manas*, *prāṇa*, *vāc*, the *word* which is the resonance through matter of the fire, all differentiations of the flame divine. J. Mitchiner gives a most insightful summing up:

"*Prāṇa* is the breath in the body, just as it is the fire in the sun; and to realise the nature of *prāṇa* is to know *ātman* or the real self and *brahman* or the Self of all, and to know the unity of all three. For it is to know that he who is in fire is both yonder in the sun and here in the heart (Maitrī Up. 6.17;7.7; Taitt. Up. 2.8); the external forms differ, yet the internal and abiding essence is one."<sup>70</sup>

But to realise all this in truth is not as easy as it is made to seem, as will be demonstrated in ch.10. It is because the ṛṣis could exert themselves to such a degree through the mastery of *tapas* and *prāṇa* that they were able to express themselves by means of "fire-hot songs" (*agnitapobhir arkaiḥ*), chants activated by their own inner fire (X.68.6). One could say that the whole gnosis of *tapas*, the knowledge of the flame divine, its activating and its use for specific purposes, is behind such strange claims. At the back of these, encapsulated in such words as *arka*, in such songs as illumination-finding, (*arkasvarvidam*), the ṛṣi's songs glowing with the power of his own fiery exaltation, is concealed the ṛṣis' knowledge of the inner fire, the working up to inspiration-exaltation-ecstasy, a fact unrecognised by Western scholars up to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

One of the earliest ṛṣis, Atharvan, is shown drawing Agni forth by friction, a perfectly simple expression, yet the verse is incomprehensible when taken literally:

"Agni, Atharvan drew thee forth from the lotus flower by rubbing." (VI.16.13)<sup>71</sup>

As is now better known, the *cakras*, or force centres in that subtle counterpart of the human constitution (in one of which the sacred fire is curled as a serpent at rest), are called lotuses in yoga texts because of their resemblance, at least to clairvoyant sight, to lotuses on account of their whorls of fiery energy which seem to form petals. Note that this image of the lotus originates from the Ṛgveda, a fact generally unknown. This verse pregnant with secret meaning, referring to the sacred fire and its activation, is passed by as meaningless.

"They who understand stir thee to action with their thoughts" (VIII.44.19)

is another meaningful verse, lifting up the whole activity of the kindling of fire to the mental level (seldom



noted by Western exegesis) stirring the mind to deeper apprehension, fitting well with the Pañchavimsa Brāhmaṇa: "he who understands has wings" (XIV.1.13). Once again the *śruti* declares its continuity.

This brings us to Agni's solar aspect, in line with Fohat's secondary aspect.

#### AGNI'S SOLAR ASPECT

Agni's *solar aspect* combines a) solar power which in some respects is pure *ākāśa*; b) *prāṇa* or cosmic vitality of which our whole planet and its inmates receive a share; and c) the "eye" of perception, of insight, discernment, etc. This last one will be examined in connection with Sūrya in chapter 6. *Prāṇa* has already been examined as a differentiation of fire and later as ramifying right to the sense organs of the human constitution. Here another side of *prāṇa* will be glanced at: its solar aspect.

H.P.B. writes:

"In his secondary aspect, FOHAT is the solar energy, the electric vital fluid and the preserving fourth principle, the animal soul of nature, so to say, or electricity." (S.D.I. p.111-12)

In the above statement she fuses several elements and at least two principles found in the human constitution: on the one hand, the "electric vital fluid" is really *prāṇa* which, in the esoteric tradition, plays such a vital part in our planet and in the human constitution which it pervades; on the other hand, the fourth principle or *kāma*, when linked to *prāṇa* becomes the binding factor and mover at the lower level, hence "the animal soul of Nature" and of man. It is admitted that "the Fohatic force is the second principle, *prāṇa*, the male and the active" (S.D.I.p.525 fn.) when counting from the lowest to the highest, but *prāṇa* as well pervades all the principles in the human constitution. Fohatic force is called male by contrast with its female counterpart, *kuṇḍalinī śakti*, the female cosmic energy.

A magnificent hymn to *prāṇa* in the Atharvaveda (XI.4) makes evident the connection between the sun in the sky, the breath in the human, the wind in Nature and the seed of the Waters, Agni (Apām Napāt).<sup>72</sup>

In the Praśna Upaniṣad the identification of the sun with *prāṇa* is made:

"the sun is verily *prāṇa*" (*ādityo hai vai prāṇaḥ*. I. 5)

The Sun is regarded as the original fountain source of *prāṇa* for the whole solar system, hence it has ever been considered the life-giver, the source of vitality, the invigorator.

In the Ṛgveda Agni's second or solar aspect (second in so far as the esoteric doctrine is concerned, which does not agree in this respect with orthodox Brahmanism) is the life and light giving principle, the *breath of life* and the *light of consciousness*, both of which are necessary to the existence of beings. So Sūrya is Agni in the sky. The poet greets in worship his hallowed resplendence as "the face of lofty Agni in heaven" (X.7.3). Reaching out to the heavenly summit with his flame-columns Agni stretches upwards and blends with Sūrya's rays (cf.VII.2.1). Sūrya is the eye of the gods, the "eye of Agni" (I.115.1), of Mitra-Varuṇa (VII.63.1) and the *ātman* of what moves and moves not (I.115.1c). Agni was set as Sūrya in heaven by the gods (X.88.11); Agni, ocean-clad is "Savitṛ's stimulation" (VIII.102.6). Such examples are quite numerous, but are these mere poetic metaphors, or rather stepping stones towards a further understanding of Agni's transcendence as the very hearth of Sūrya, who by his all dazzling appearance spells out for man the significance of spiritual insight, revelation; how, for instance, when watched over by the poets in their heart, Agni leads to the discovery of the "sun" of illumination:

"Keeping watch in their heart, the inspired-bards variously take the ageless one to his abode. Seeking-him-with-longing they gazed around to the ocean: to them was the sun made manifest for men." (I.146.4)

This is certainly no allusion to the solar orb which any one can see, but to those who keep watch in their heart. It describes an aspect of *tapas*. That ocean towards which the bards gaze is certainly not the outer ocean but the inner "ocean" of psyche; the word "heart" gives the clue.

Fire as solar light expresses, in Vedic terms, the light of the mind, a more overt differentiation of the fire aspect of mind. This will be considered in ch. 6. So the ṛṣi prays:

"May that which guides men like a good charioteer  
who controls fleet-footed horses with the reins,

that which abides in the heart, most swift and active,  
may that my mind resolve on what is good." (Yjv.34.6 A.C. Bose trans.)

*Manas* joins the lower and higher poles in the human constitution, hence it "abides in the heart", in the *centre*.

A good summing up is found in the Praśna Upaniṣad. Thus  
"All forms has he, the golden one, the all-knowing. He blazes, final goal  
and single light. Emitting a thousand rays, in a hundred movements  
proceeding, the Sun arises, the Life of all creatures!" (Praśna I.8)<sup>33</sup>

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There is one more side to Agni's solar aspect which finds expression as Viṣṇu but of which only a few glimpses can be given here.

H.P.B. explains that, like Viṣṇu whose root *viś* means to "pervade", Fohat

"... is called the 'Pervader' and the Manufacturer, because he shapes the atoms from crude material. In the sacred texts of the Ṛg-Veda Viṣṇu also is a 'manifestation of the Solar Energy' and is described as striding through the seven regions of the universe in three steps, the Vedic God having little in common with the Viṣṇu of later times." (S.D.I.p.112)

The Vedic Viṣṇu appears as the great strider encompassing the three main spheres of Vedic cosmogony. No specific myth is ascribed to him, besides his standing by Indra's side during the latter's struggle with Vṛtra.<sup>34</sup> In VII.100.3 where Viṣṇu is said to stride forth three times over this earth, the word *pr̥thivī* is explained by the Indian Commentator as implying earth, mid-region and heaven, the three dimensions of Vedic cosmogony, or the world. This takes into consideration Viṣṇu's propping up the "highest station" through his triple stepping (I.154.1) which scholars' physical interpretation - earth, air, sky - fails to take into account. The main three spheres of the Vedic world are thus visited by, or are the domains of Viṣṇu and Savitr̥, two aspects of one and the same power, stimulating and far pervasive, later to become the preserving principle. For the same words used for Savitr̥'s measuring out the world's regions in V.81 occur in a hymn to Viṣṇu (I.154.1 *yaḥ parthivāni vimame rajāṁsi*).

Of Viṣṇu's three strides, two are visible to men - "we know both thy two broad expanses" (VII.99.1), the third being beyond man's ken (I.155.5), but all three strides enfold all creatures. They undoubtedly refer, in one sense, to the course of the sun across the three spheres of Vedic cosmogony, not necessarily only to the rise of the sun on the east and its movement to the zenith and down to the west, a simplistic theory that ignores the meaning of the third step. H.P.B. does give an esoteric meaning of the three steps. Thus the descent of the Logos into the material spheres implies involution; its reascent from earth to heaven in three strides implies evolution. Every evolution implies an involution.

"The three strides (of Viṣṇu) relate metaphysically to the descent of spirit into matter, of the logos falling as a ray into the spirit, then into the soul, and finally into the human physical form of man, in which it becomes life." (S.D.I.p.112-13 fn)

the physical form being symbolic of matter. This threefold striding, being seen in the Ṛgveda, on its reascent, accounts for the two "visible" regions (one earthly, one psychic, seen by ṛṣis) and the third or highest step of Viṣṇu which mortals cannot see but which, in accordance with the various descriptions, is the spiritual world:

"there indeed that highest step of the wide pacing bull shines brightly." (I.154.6 Macdonell's trans.)

For that abode in Viṣṇu's highest step where rejoice the worshippers is "a fountain of honey" (ibid.5), the higher gnosis, which no mortal can behold. Can these three steps which encompass spheres of *being*, not merely as locations or domains, but as levels of consciousness, be taken as the "two heavens" in the lap of Savitr̥ and the one which is the domain of Yama (I.35.6)? The two heavens cannot be physical, and Yama's domain is that of departed souls, hence the first zone of the psychic world; this division applies to the threefold heaven, or three luminous realms of heaven, or just three heavens, mentioned in the Ṛgveda (VI.44.23; I.105.5; VIII.69.3; IX.17.5; V.81.4; II.27.8 etc.). Do Viṣṇu's three steps cover the three main stations of Agni considered earlier - being earth, mid-region or the psyche's domain (*antarikṣa*) and heaven<sup>35</sup> or the spiritual? Most likely. Agni's activity spans three domains like the "traverser" of the heavens (VI.12.2). These three domains of the Fire which are also those of the solar principle are intermingled and yet parallel to those of the "pervader", Viṣṇu. Agni, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, seem to be in certain

respects permutations of each other.

In some verses a reason is given for Viṣṇu's steps. Thus

"Thrice he measured out the world's expanses for sake of human distress" (VI.49.13)

- to alleviate human plight ? In VII.100.4 his mighty step covered *pṛthivī* which he bestowed on Manu, Man, as an abode (*kṣetra*), the "field"(sacred spot, or place of pilgrimage) for growth. The use of the word *kṣetra* is most significant; matter or expansion is the field of experience for man. In I.155.4 Viṣṇu's three wide stridings are for sake of *life*, (*jīvase*), for supporting all life. Fundamentally the spiritual principle pervading all is life's safeguard. Furthermore, A.A. Macdonell makes a very pertinent observation: Viṣṇu's

"... three strides are imitated by the sacrificer, who takes three Viṣṇu strides beginning with earth and ending with heaven, for that is the goal, the safe refuge, which is the sun (Ś.B.1.9.3.10.15). The three steps of the Amshāspends taken from earth to the sphere of the sun, are similarly imitated in the ritual of the Avesta."<sup>36</sup>

The solar heaven, *svar*, or empyrean, is the supreme refuge and the fact that the sacrificer re-enacts these three steps ritualistically proclaims the deeper meaning of the rite, the mirror of the universal process. In VII.99.4 Viṣṇu and Indra are said to have made wide open space for sacrificing by generating Sūrya, Dawn and Agni: this is another mythologic representation of mental activity in its illuminating capacity; for Sūrya, Uṣas and Agni point to illumination, the dawning of light, not just outwardly but inwardly as well.

#### APĀM NAPĀT, SON OF THE WATERS, SON OF THE FIRE-MISTS

Whereas specific details of Fohat's cosmic activity are examined in *The Secret Doctrine*, Agni's own cosmic tasks are more inferred from images than spelled out directly; images and rhythm being the two main poetic tools of invocation, to bring to life certain visions. As the Primal Mover active on all seven levels of manifestation, Agni manifests and differentiates in Vāyu the wind/breath, in Sūrya the illuminator and life bringer, in Viṣṇu the pervader, in Indra the first to possess mind, for Agni's influence pervades every level. In spite of all the praises, qualities and epithets lavished on him, Agni remains a mysterious deity whose innermost core, the thunderbolt, is far from being understood, is what H.P.B. calls the "mystery of electricity".

"This is the thunderbolt that oft revolves from the orb of mighty Sūrya.

Beyond that is another glory... (X.27.21)

Thus looms Agni's third secret aspect, the lightning of which Apām Napāt is the manifestation in space. H.P.B. reminds us:

"Bear in mind that the Vedic and Avestian name of Fohat is Apām Napāt<sup>37</sup> ... The literal meaning is 'Son of the Waters', but these 'Waters' are not the liquid we know, but Aether - the fiery waters of Space. Fohat is the 'son of Aether' in its highest aspect, ĀKĀŚA, the Mother-Father of the primitive Seven, and of Sound or LOGOS. Fohat is the *light* of the latter." (S.D.II.p.400 fn)

This is an important explanation not merely in its pointing to the "waters" as the fiery waters (as described in the Bṛhad Up.I. 2.2), little recognised by our literal mindedness, but also in its showing Fohat as the Son of *ākāśa* just as is Agni. Fohat is, furthermore, called "the spirit of electricity which is the life of the universe." (S.D.I. p.139)

Only one hymn is dedicated to Agni as "Son of the Waters" (R̥gv.II.35) but there are many references to Apām Napāt, and Apām Napāt and Agni are both differentiated and identified (cf. I.143.1; 144.2; III.9.1; VI.13.3; etc.). Agni's third most secret aspect is imaged as the thunderbolt or lightning flash, the weapon wielded by Indra, or by the Lord of Prayer, Brahmaṇaspati, the weapon equated with Soma, the elixir of immortality. (cf. IX.47.3; 72.7; 77.1; III.44.5) These three personifications of principles holding a most recondite and unpredictable power are already hints enough as to the mystery of life and death involved in the thunderbolt's meaning and at the core of *zoe*. But this power, overwhelming and dynamic, is also imaged in the sacred stallion Dadhikrās,<sup>38</sup> already met: the heavenly steed who whirls around the heavens setting and holding the sun and galaxies on their circular, fiery pathways throughout the depths of space, scattering the starry dust, filled with *kratu* and shining like Agni (IV.39.2). The mixture of images reaches a paroxysm: Agni "the mighty, shadeless, leafless steed" (X.27.14) combines the tree of life and wisdom; fire which is leafless

and shadowless; also the seer-will, the sharp-sighted (*amūra*) inspirer (*vipodhā* X.46.5); and the steed, the ever whirling Dadhikrās, spreader of "curds" (the nebulae) - the horse symbolic of the sacrificial victim. The mighty stallion finds his reflection in our solar system, in our sun, uprising as the sun through the luminous ocean to shed its light on all, himself the stallion that drives the wheel of cosmic order revolving round the heavens (I.164.11,14), on which all creatures are dependent.

"Dadhikrās by his might has reached out to the five races (*pañca kṛṣṭiḥ*)  
even as Sūrya extends his light over the waters" of space. (IV.38.10)<sup>39</sup>

Esoterically understood, as we have seen, Agni as the fiery breath, circles round "in the mother's matrix", "in the imperishable syllable" (*akṣara* VI.16.35), woven through *ākāśa* the sounding board of nature, radiant space. All that the mighty fiery power of the universe, the luminous stallion of the heavens, meant to the poets, is summed up in the last verse of Ṛg.v.IV.40 in a rich array of images:

"Swan, seated in radiance, pervader seated in mid-space, priest seated by the altar, guest seated in the home, seated among men, seated in wide-space, seated in *ṛta*, seated in the empyrean, born of waters, born of herds, born of *ṛta*, born of mountain, (such is) *ṛta*." (IV.40.5)

*ṛta*, the cosmic order, *ṛta* the mighty stallion, the eternal movement. The mystical fusion is complete!

H.P.B. comments:

"The radiant essence curdles and spreads throughout the depths of space'. From an astronomical point of view ... it is the 'Milky Way', the world-stuff, or primordial matter in its first form ..." (S.D.I.p.67)

In this radiant space - flame waters of the Bṛhad Upaniṣad, *svarvatīḥ* waters of the Ṛgveda - Agni, the "swiftly, speeding golden son of the Waters", Apām Napāt, takes us to the core of the mystery of life. This is imaged in the lightning bolt vertically immersed in the reclining waves, thereby forming the cross of manifestation: from the lap of the waters he proceeds mighty, true, whilst around him

"lightning-clad, upright in the lap of the reclining ones, golden-hued,  
flow the undulating waves bearing his loftiest power." (II.35.9)

This is one of the most powerful images of the Ṛgveda in its cosmic compass and depth. This image is repeated in VIII.100.9 as poetically rendered by Griffith:

"Deep in the ocean lies the bolt, with waters compassed round about;  
and in continuous onward flow the floods their tribute bring to it."

Both significant images, seemingly unnoticed by Western exegesists, trace the cross of manifestation as the lightning descending vertically through the horizontal waters of space - not in the Christian sense or symbol of suffering, but in the sense of the spiritual activating principle of being, clothed in lightning, immersed in the fiery waters, descending or rising through the horizontal waters, the matrix that brings forth that spiritual seed which is kindling it to life - the waters whose ebb and flow spell the movement of creation, whose "rubbing" evokes the action of the polarities and the friction of life that result in fruitfulness, all centred around Agni, offspring of the waters, Apām Napāt. At the meeting point of the vertical and the horizontal, of spirit and matter, is the human being, the very embodiment of the flame-cross. This image is also as close as the Ṛgveda gets to that other vision of the Stanzas of Dzyan where

"... Light drops one solitary ray into the waters, into the Mother deep ..." (3:3. S.D.I.

p.64)

As "life-force" of the Waters, as Agni sunk in the lap of what moves and moves not (I.146.1), Apām Napāt is revealed as the great cosmic animating principle, also called Savitr (I.22.6; VI.50.13), the impelling, stimulating power inherent in the sun, Sūrya, expressive of Agni, the dynamo in the cosmic "waters" and Savitr, the vivifier in the heavens, part of the cosmic waters. For the ṛṣis fire and sun are kin.

Mind is lightning: its thoughts dart across its screen, flash constructive enlightenment or destructive criticism and disappear as fast. Agni the thunderbolt, itself identified with Soma, is said to be "the navel of the races of men" and to have "sustained the people like a propping pillar" (I.59.1cd.) Fohat, remarks H.P.B.

"... is the personified electric vital power, the transcendental binding Unity of all Cosmic Energies, on the unseen as on the manifested planes, the action of which resembles - on an immense scale - that of a living Force created by WILL, in those phenomena where the seemingly subjective acts on the seemingly objective, and propels it to action. Fohat is not only the living Symbol and Container of

that Force, but is looked upon by the Occultists as an Entity." (S.D.I.p.111)  
So also was Agni, even an *asura* in the Ṛgvedic sense of the bestower of the life-breath, *asu*.

This essence of life, *zoe*, is dual: life bestowing and death dealing to the form. This is imaged in the thunderbolt that slays the obstructions (*vṛtras*) but illumines the darkness. In certain contexts it is that by means of which one succeeds in attaining one's aim. So in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is stated

"By that *vajra*, the ghee, the gods clove the strongholds  
and conquered these worlds." (Śat.Br.III.4.4.6).

The bolt as ghee is the essence of the sacrifice and the womb wherein resides Agni. As such it is equivalent to Soma as "soul of the sacrifice" again referred to as *vajra* (Śat.Br.V.3.4.25). The sacrifice is itself, when rightly performed, a *vajra* that achieves its aim (cf. Ṛgv.I.8.3). Through his cosmological activities and his winning of *sva* and of the divine waters (III.34.8) etc., Indra obtains, as his prize, Soma equated with his thunderbolt in the Ṛgveda (IX.72.7, 77.1, 47.3). The thunderbolt implies the power of striking, of violence and Soma can be violent (*rabhasa*), can be fierce, wild, Soma dons violent vestures;<sup>40</sup> whilst Soma himself remains unconquered, he conquers foes in battle Soma the catalyst, the illuminator but also Agni's innermost secret, the life and light-giver, and the seemingly life-destroyer. With Agni is the power, creative and illuminating, lightning flash of instant insight granting ecstasy, which takes 'the mortal to highest immortality' (I.31.7), but only if the mortal be pure enough to face the tremendous blaze of the sacred fire, to rise unscathed from the burning ground of self, to transform the *serpent of matter* into the *serpent of wisdom*. This is not told but it implies highest qualifications which cannot be transgressed. The mystery of this blazing fire with its dangers for the unready and imprudent has been symbolized in a number of myths of which the best known is perhaps that of the Greek Icarus who lost his wings and fell to his death when he approached too close to the sun. Hidden in the significance of Agni *the kavi-kratu is the essence of initiation into the ancient gnosis*.

The serpent of matter in the Ṛgveda is symbolised in Vṛtra, the mighty obstructor and constrictor conquered by Indra; but there appears another serpent *ahibudhnya*, the serpent of the deep, called upon in invocations to many gods, especially to the Waters. Indra's bolt, "soma sharpened" (*somaśīta*), hurled into Vṛtra is Agni's lightning, the builder and the destroyer. *Ahibudhnya* is not hostile to humans, is said to be regent of the depths and asked to be favourable to humans (VII.35.13). His name is often coupled with the "One-footed Unborn" called in X.65.13 the bearer of heaven (*divo dhartā*), considered to be the sun. Stella Kramrisch, in her analysis of Agni's triple nature, views Vṛtra as the *past* of Ahi Budhnya, the serpent now rendered harmless by Indra's action; in fact, matter controlled, the mastery of which furthers human creativity. She brings out the two polarities of the serpent, hence of the *serpent-fire* as well, granting glimpses of a deeply hidden Truth:

"When Ahi Budhnya is invoked together with Apām Napāt (1.186.5; 2.31.6; 7.35.13), the Serpent of the Deep, in his depths (*ahir budhneṣu budhnyaḥ* 10.93.5) occupies the other pole in the waters in transcosmic space, below creation, whereas Apām Napāt is born at the bottom of 'the great dark space', in its lap, beyond and before creation ..." "The Son of the Waters, the highest birth of Agni, the Fire; the Uncreate One-Foot, the stable, static extension into creation of the Uncreate (*tad ekam* 10.129) and Ahi Budhnya, the Serpent of the Deep, form the axis of creation, from the Uncreate, beyond creation to the realm of non-existence, below the cosmos. The Son of the Waters and the Serpent of the Deep are its beginning and end; but as these lie in infinity, their situation is as distant from, as it is near to, one another." (op.cit. p.274)

The "dragon" in its figurative meaning has always had a secret significance lost to our modern intelligentsia. It points to that which holds in unison the polarities peculiar to every manifestation, but which the human mind has separated into neat categories as light and dark, good and evil, love and hate, etc. Such holding in perfect harmony spells maturity, wisdom, but also power, the equipoise that nothing can shatter. Hence Homer's exclamation: "Terrible are the gods when they manifest themselves" (Iliad XX.131) - for human beings - and H.P.B. to add: "those gods whom men call Dragons." (S.D.II.p.355) Here Śrī Krishna Prem's remark is most apposite: "All things are linked to their opposites by the unity out of which both are differentiated and it is that linkage which is responsible for the tendency all are subject to of passing into their opposites" (op.cit. p.37). The Ancients understood this; do we?

Is Vṛtra, the obstructor, now conquered by Indra, the residue of a previous dispensation where matter was paramount, holding imprisoned the potencies of life's onward momentum, matter now to be brought under the control of Indra, the "first to possess mind" (*prathamō manasvān* II.12.1), who released these potentialities to serve the needs of the spiritual aspect? Thus at one end of the spectrum of existence, looms Agni "Son of the Waters", the cosmic power; at the other end, Agni, the fire of matter, two pronged, which is ceaseless, all consuming desire for more and more to enjoy; but also desire for experience in order to know, to understand, and rise to higher and higher spheres. By sublimating desire, man conquers his lower nature, the serpent of matter, which, through experience and mastery, he transforms into the serpent of wisdom, Agni, the all-knower, the Flame divine, first born of Cosmic Order.

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### CONCLUSION

These glimpses into Agni's manifold tasks and the claims made about him, all scattered as passing allusions in the hymns dedicated to the flame divine, should bring it home to us that Agni is far more than a mere fire god, far more than the mere spirit of literal waters, far more than a mere thunderbolt crashing between the clouds of an overcast sky; that Agni is the very embodiment of cosmic Power whose dominion extends throughout the world and finds an abode in the human heart, summed up as highpriest of gods and men (III.2.8c), lord of *svar*, (VIII.19.1), Agni the finder of *svar* for humans, the "charioteer of the Transcendent." Naive literalism which has ruled scholarly exegesis for too long has taken no notice of the language of sacred texts based upon revelation, and confused the "primitive mind" with the archaic vision. Agni's many facets build up a picture with definite characteristics comparable to that counterpart of Agni which *The Secret Doctrine* depicts as FOHAT.

The mystery of the Fire is the mystery of the Spirit. Solve one and you will have solved the other. But to achieve this, one has to go through the burning ground of life, experience, trial and error, loss and redemption in its esoteric sense, and this is what human life is all about; fire that mysteriously bursts into existence out of seemingly nothingness, but to disappear as mysteriously within its own ashes, themselves the fosterers of new growth: this is life and death. That which brings to birth, nurtures to ripeness and finally burns away to cinders or decay, is the reflection in our terrestrial world of that unseen, impalpable, yet ever present flame-power of spirit that gives birth to all things which, as seeds, it fosters, matures and exalts through a variegated array of beautiful forms but to shatter all to extinction, and yet again to manifest as the life force ensouling other forms it creates and destroys to infinity. At the core of the atom is an electric charge which is the life of all; at the core of fire is the spark that ignites all into action; at the very core of life is the spirit that brings all things forth. Fire in the blood, fire of the heart, fire of intelligence, fire as the essence of will that drives on and on; all is fire, the untouchable, the incognisable, core of spirit. From the mystery of fire all beings have come, through the mystery of fire all beings proceed as the aeons pass away and back to the mystery of fire do they return, enriched and glorified to add each his own harvest, each his own touch to the mystery of fire.

Fire alone out of the four known elements was chosen by the Ancient seers as the best capable of representing the Divine Power that manifests through and behind all things and all beings; thus the Parsis' sacred fire and the Hebrew "Our Lord is a consuming fire" (Deut.iv.24). Thus the burning bush that alerted Moses to his destiny, etc. Beyond all the records of humanity's spiritual travail, looms AGNI the flame divine of the Vedas, the highpriest of the Cosmic Order, the messenger of heaven and earth, who sits hidden in the human heart, flame of creation and destruction, first seed of mind as *desire*, *kāma*, flame of love without which nothing could exist.

"Who knows this secret one" (I.95.4a) asks the poet of Agni, who "clad in splendour", "clothed in the ocean", "robed in light", of "unfading glow, toils here (on earth) in the guise of another" (II.35.13), whilst his "secret name waxes strong"? Apām Napāt, that *hidden power inherent to life*, brings forth, vivifies and electrifies all things to manifestation. In the guise of the sun it stimulates life; in the guise of inspiration, it brings illumination to humans; in the guise of the sacrificial fire it reveals the deeper meaning of life; in the guise of the great *śakti* energy hidden deep in the earth and in the human, unseen to physical eyes, asleep

among the unevolved, it yet silently and slowly burns away all dross whilst it nurtures all vital parts. This is indeed Agni; the Vedic counterpart to Fohat, "the transcendental binding unity of all cosmic energies", the creative power issued from the primordial wisdom, the blazing fire of *tapas*.

### PART III AGNI AND FOHAT:

#### FOOTNOTES

- 1 *Transactions of the Blavatsky Lodge*. p.70. Also quoted in G. Barborka, *The Divine Plan*, p.493. C.W.X.p.354
- 2 *The Secret Doctrine* comments that "... desire for a sentient life shows itself in everything from an atom to a sun and is a reflection of the Divine Thought propelled into objective existence, into a law that the universe should exist. According to esoteric teaching the real cause of that supposed desire, and of all existence, remains for ever hidden ..." (S.D.I.p.44)
- 3 *Vision*, p.183.
- 4 *On The Veda*, p.67,70.
- 5 *Vision*, p.51.
- 6 *ibid*.p.51.
- 7 The word *prophet* (*pro* forth, *phetes* speaker) refers to "one who speaks for God or for any deity, as the inspired revealer or interpreter of his will" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). For H.L. Ellison (*Men Spake from God* 1952), the prophet is not primarily a foreteller. "Ultimately it is the spiritual quality of his message which shows whether a man is a prophet or not." (p.14)  
This applies to all the ancient so-called prophets, irrespective of their religious affiliation.
- 8 A. Bailey. *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*. p.602; 259, 260.
- 9 *Sparks from the Vedic Fire*, .p.6.
- 10 Hence statements like: "we know thy... *dhāmāni*, O Agni, which are distributed in many places ...; we know thy highest ... name, which is secret ..." (X.45.2) etc. Quoted in *Dhāman*. p.20-21, 23.
- 11 *ibid*. p.23-4.
- 12 See fn.29 of ch. 5 for Knipe on "speech born of *tapas*".
- 13 *ibid*. p.111.
- 14 *ibid*. p.121.
- 15 *op.cit*. p.106; p.333-4.
- 16 cf. Ṛgv.I.77.4; VI.16.47; 5.6d; V.13.1; 17.3&4; VIII.44.2, etc.
- 17 *Vision*. p.141. The word *vāja* was originally considered to mean booty! See A.C. Bose, *Hymns from the Vedas*. 1966. p.37.
- 18 *ibid*. p.141.
- 19 Many will find it difficult to relate intelligence, consciousness, etc. to flame. Śankara is reported to have stated: "the knowledge of the absolute Spirit, like the effulgence of the sun, or like heat in fire, is naught else than the absolute Essence itself". "IT - is 'the Spirit of the Fire', not fire itself", explains H.P.B. "therefore, 'the attributes of the latter, heat or flame, are not the attributes of the Spirit, but of that of which that Spirit is the unconscious cause'". Quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*.I.p.6. So the spiritual element pervading all, and flame being its closest manifestation, it becomes more understandable why all these manifestations are related to fire. According to the *Bodhimör* "Fire and Flame destroy the body of an Arhat, their essence makes him immortal." (*Bodhimör*, bk.II a - Mongolian translation of a Tibetan sūtra. S.D I.p6)
- 20 *op.cit*. p.265.
- 21 For those who know little Sanskrit these words mean: the verses, the formulas, the chants, the nobles (or warrior caste that protects all), the Brahmans (the highest caste that holds the reins of religious education and knowledge). The three original Vedas, the Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma, were linked to the science of vibrations, of mantras and invocations, to the right sounding of the word, *brahman*, etc.

- <sup>22</sup> "La Force organique et la Force cosmique dans la philosophie medicale de l'Inde et dans le Veda". In *Revue philosophique*. cxvi, 1933. p.428. P. Mus, in his article entitled "Du nouveau sur Ṛgveda 10.90?" published in *American Oriental Society J.* 1962, vol.47, points out in a note that this contribution of J. Filliozat has shown how the "correlations" "between the human person, the sacrifice and the world do not proceed from a rudimentary anthropomorphism." "It is not the body of the living being which explains the organisation of the world; microcosm and macrocosm intermingled explain each other." (op.cit. p.166)
- <sup>23</sup> *Vedic Experience*. p.204
- <sup>24</sup> op.cit. p.266.
- <sup>25</sup> What is translated as *mind* and *understanding* or spiritual insight, are in India, the sixth and seventh senses; hence the *sevenfold fire* concerns the seven sense perceptions or channels of knowledge and understanding, from the most outward bound to the innermost, linked to the life-breaths or *prāṇas*, of which only five are named. Are the higher two "senses", linked to *idā* and *piṅgalā*, the two *prāṇic* currents along the spinal column, - the "vital airs" - between which is the "fire", the "pure *ākāśa*", the real power? See also S.D. II.p.568-69 , fn.
- <sup>26</sup> In this respect, the very esoteric passage in the Maitri Upaniṣad VI.35, as rendered by A. Coomaraswamy in his article "Measures of Fire" (p.390-1) is worth quoting:  
 "Of the Fire (*tejas*) that is hidden within the Sky it is but a little measure (*amśa-mātram*) that (glows) in the midst of the Sun, in the eye and in fire. That (Fire) is Brahma, Immortal ... It is but a little measure (*amśa-mātram*) of that Fire that is the ambrosia (*amṛtam*) in the midst of the Sun, whose growing shoots (*āpyayaṅkurāḥ*) are Soma and the Breaths" (*prāṇaḥ*. MU.VI.35)  
 "And so" comments A. Coomaraswamy, "indeed, just as sparks disperse in all directions from a blazing fire, so from this Prescient Spirit (*prajñātman*, the ultimate and solar Self) the Breaths and other substances disperse to their stations (BU.II.1.3. Kaus.Up.III.3, IV.20. Muṇḍ.Up.II.1.1, MU.VI.26,31 with negligible variants) and it is from this point of view that Brahma is compared to a "sparkling fiery wheel" (MU.VI.24). Now 'these functional powers (*indriyāṇi* = *prāṇāḥ*) are of the Spirit (*ātmakhāni*), it is the Spirit (*ātman*) that proceeds (in them) and that controls them' (MU.VI.31); they are the solar rays or reins (*raśmayāḥ*) by which the Only Seer and Thinker sees, hears, thinks and eats within us (MU.II.6, VI.31, BU.III.7.23. JUB I.29,30 etc.) ..." (op.cit. p.391-2)
- <sup>27</sup> Cf. "*Saṅkalpa* (purpose) and *Dharma* (righteousness) the two foundations of all creation" quoted in *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*, p.292.
- <sup>28</sup> Cf. Tait.Up.3.2: "By *tapas* seek to know *brahman*; *brahman* is *tapas*." (*tapasā brahma vijijñāsva tapo brahmeti*).
- <sup>29</sup> *Traditions of the Seven Ṛṣis*, p.279-80, and 286 where Mitchiner notes the "creative breath" or *ruach* of God moving over the waters, starting the cycle of creation in *Genesis* (I.i ff.)
- <sup>30</sup> Ibid. p.290.
- <sup>31</sup> A.C. Das in his *Ṛgvedic Culture* (1925) shows how far-fetched and sometimes absurd can be attempts at literal explanations. Thus: "How did Atharvan draw Agni forth from the lotus flower passes our comprehension, unless we suppose that the sparks emitted by striking two flint-stones together were caught by the dry lotus petals which were thus ignited." (p.74) There is evidenced here a complete ignorance of the meaning of the verse which is one of those holding in its simple words certain secret teachings revealed through yoga practices long ago. But *yoga knowledge* was then denied to the ṛṣis.
- <sup>32</sup> Athv. XI.4 is beautifully rendered by R. Panikkar in his *The Vedic Experience*, pp.206-8.
- <sup>33</sup> ibid. R. Panikkar's translation. p.211.
- <sup>34</sup> See F.B.J. Kuiper's "The Three Strides of Viṣṇu" (*Ancient Indian Cosmogony*, 1983. pp.41-55) for the many opinions of scholars. P. Mus among others, in his *L'Inde vue de l'Est*, p.22, comments on Viṣṇu as  
 gifted with the "power of awakening life in the world which his three mythical steps were opening out". Kuiper concludes that Viṣṇu in the Ṛgveda "has no particular connection with the sun"! mainly on the premise that "Viṣṇu's strides are not connected with any natural phenomenon". (p.45) True, but for another reason, viz., that Viṣṇu pervades the Vedic "world" in its three main dimensions. Yet to deny his solar connection is to ignore Ṛgv.V.81.3 & I.154.1.



35. To translate the word *dyo* or *dyaus* e.g. in *dyaus* and *pṛthivī* as sky and earth is to bring the term down to the mere physical and ignore the derivation of the word from *div*, to shine, implying the celestial or shining world of spiritual dimension; there are very occasional exceptions to this meaning.

36 *Vedic Mythology. p.40.*

37 A glance at the Avestan Apām Napāt would be pertinent here, as commented upon by P.N. Tavaría in his *A Manual of Khshnoom* and by F.S. Chiniwalla in his *Essential Origins of Zoroastrianism*. The word Napāt, in Apām Napāt, is explained in an Avestan dictionary quoted by Tavaría as meaning "centre", the "source, navel of the Son of the Waters". In his succinct definition of Apām Napāt according to *Khshnoom* Tavaría writes: "... Apām Napāt is the blissful current that effects reformation of the souls by investing them in elemental bodies (i.e. made of the four elements) and finally repatriates them to the centre of the heaven of Ahura Mazda, i.e. to the empyrean." (T.op.cit. p.236) Napāt being the centre of the empyrean - placed in mythical geography right up in the dome of heaven - is the fountain of divine wisdom which as a current flows downward through the various spheres of the cosmos (described by Tavaría and Chiniwalla) with its 27 constellations and traverses "the transitional regions"; mixing with "lower fire energies" present in these, it becomes "diluted". Coming down from the highest realm of wisdom of Ahura Mazda, Apām Napāt, like water falling from the mountain (Tavaría's image), becomes a current infusing "seed- souls" and moulding these into souls as they migrate down the spheres of manifestation, and also produces the "elements" which will clothe these souls. It also has the power to "accelerate" the "reformation" of souls, hence is referred to in the Avesta as the "swift-footed steed". (Yt.19.52) A Zoroastrian invocation to Apām Napāt says: "We sacrifice unto the Son of Waters, the swift-horse, the tall and shining lord ... who made man ... a god who lives beneath waters, and whose ear is quickest to hear when he is worshipped." (S.B.E.vol.23. Quoted in T. p.237) Apām Napāt is clearly linked to souls, to the shaping of man through the four elements, etc.

For Chiniwalla Apām Napāt is a "store-house" wherein a "source of matter of all sorts of fineness and coarseness and fitness is established..." This store-house contains "'ap' meaning waters" - "matter-seeds of elements designed to form *Nisti Geti* (the universe and corporeal bodies) taking them through a course whose ultimate object is to lead towards 'Napāt'... centre of Ahura Mazda ..." (C. p.98-99) One recognises here *The Secret Doctrine's ākāśa* with its degrees of differentiation (all sorts of fineness and coarseness) and the Ṛgvedic sevenfold foundation, as well as the doctrine of the pilgrimage of every soul. The Avesta, like the Ṛgveda, uses the term "water" for the later Vedic *ākāśa*, but curiously, neither of the two writers on *Khshnoom* gives any explanation for the esoteric meaning of "water" which figures prominently in the name of Apām Napāt, the very centre of the empyrean. They seem to take water simply as an image of fluidity. Note also that the Zoroastrian fire is closely linked to *asa*, truth, cosmic order, whilst in the Ṛgveda truth and cosmic order were born of "blazing tapas". (X.190.1). "Aśa, according to Zoroastrian cosmology" writes J. Duchesne-Guillemin, "is the patron of fire; fire is the auxiliary of truth ..." ("Heracleitus and Iran" in *History of Religions*.vol.3, no.1 1963. p.47) This would explain why human *manas*, being an individualised expression of *ākāśa*, would be influenced by Apām Napāt which, both writers claim, directs souls to their ultimate goal. Through the perspective given us by H.P.B. one glimpses what is meant by the descent of Apām Napāt from the centre of Ahura Mazda's empyrean, his forming the world and guiding souls back to the empyrean. Other similarities, implying a common fountain-source of the ancient gnosis, are writ large in both these ancient texts.

38 Three hymns are dedicated to Dadhikrās in the Ṛgveda, IV.38,39,40, where he appears as a horse of great speed but also as a falcon, ending as the celestial swan identified with *ṛta* (IV.50.5). Two further Ṛgvedic hymns, I.162,163, are dedicated to the sacrificial horse, the earthly version of the heavenly stallion.

39 The frequent mention of 5 races - even "seven races" occurs in VIII.39.8 - may seem curious and a strange coincidence! For *The Secret Doctrine* claims that five human races have so far evolved (two more are to come), races called Root-races, with their sub-races, etc. The words used in the Ṛgveda being *janāḥ*, *kṣitayas*, *kṛṣṭayas*, have been interpreted as Aryan tribes e.g. the Yadus, Turvaśas, Druhyus, Anus, and Pūrus, but also as classes of beings, such as the *devas*, *gandharvas*, *apsarases*, *asuras*, *raḁsasas*. See Ṛgv.1.7.9; 89.10; II.2.10; III.37.9; 53.16; IV.38.10; V.32.11, etc. Of these five races Indra is the head, except in some hymns where Agni is the lord, and in V.86.2 where Agni and Indra are lords. Both have the title *rājā* or *patiḥ kṛṣṭinām*. The words *pañcajanās* or *kṛṣṭayas* are used for the five races and *saptamānuṣaḥ* for the seven races (VIII.39.8). For Monier

Williams, the term *pañca kṛṣṭayas* might have originally referred to the five tribes but it "comprehends the whole human race".

40 The honey-sweet Soma juice has an element of violence or terror: "Do not make us tremble or throw terror in us, O King Soma, do not strike our heart with thy vehemence (*tviṣ*)" (VIII.79.8). Cf. IX.90.3; 73.6; VI.52.3d.





## CHAPTER 5

*LOGOS AS SOUND, or THE CREATIVE WORD: VĀC, AKṢARA, BRAHMAN*

## THE ROLE OF LOGOS IN THE VEDAS

## INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of the *logos* is very complex and with multiple shades of meanings. Scattered allusions are found all through the Vedas showing that there was among the ṛṣis a certain *gnosis* of the powers and hidden characteristics of sound, and of the inherent value of the Vedic metres and their influence over humans and environment, whether immediate or cosmic, but no adequate exposition is given that might give a clue to certain mysteries of sound. *The Secret Doctrine* gives out some teachings and throws some light upon certain Vedic statements as to the ṛṣis' use of *logos* or *vāc*. Whatever doctrine lies behind it all remains well hidden, but in due course of time some theories surfaced to form the basis of teachings such as Tantrism embodied. But, was the whole *gnosis* of the word ever given out?

We have noted that the two tools of manifestation by means of which the Universal Mind is said to manifest and work in this our space-time dimension world, are considered to be *fire* (flame/light) and *sound*: *Agni* and *Vāc*, two powers that seem to be complementary to each other. We have also noted the intricacies of the aspect of fire and its operations as conceived in the Ṛgveda and *The Secret Doctrine*. It now remains to glance at the aspect of sound or vibration, no less intricate as it is the other side of fire. Both *fire* and *sound* are facets of equal importance of *logos* as reflection of Universal Mind. *Logos*, like a many-faceted diamond, reveals to us especially those two facets, sound and light-flame, for these concern the formation of our universe.

The *Logos* is defined in *The Secret Doctrine* as

"... the rendering in objective expression as in a photograph, of the concealed thought. The *Logos* is the mirror reflecting DIVINE MIND and the Universe is the mirror of the *Logos*, though the latter is the *esse* of that Universe." (S.D.II.p.25)

The *logos* is the *esse*, i.e. the *being* or *be*, the very essence of the universe; the universe reflects the *logos*; the *logos* reflects the THOUGHT DIVINE. This reflection from the highest to the lowest is the very basis of one of the most important of the occult laws (the law of correspondences which shows through all the Brāhmaṇas): *as above, so below*.

In a Ṛgvedic verse already quoted, we found that *ṛta*, Universal Order, together with truth, is first manifested from blazing *tapas*, the mighty contemplation of Deity, the latter being left unnamed. Cosmic Order thus projected into being out of *tapas* implies a "blueprint" right at the very dawn of what was to unfold. We may think that such modern expressions as *blueprint*, or *pattern* may not have been conceived, but the word *pratimā* belies such a would-be assumption; it means image, likeness, reflection, shadow, symbol, whilst *pratimāna* means blueprint, thereby pointing out that such ideas were quite developed. The above *Secret Doctrine* definition of *logos* gives the key to the Vedic concept of *ṛta*, Order, *satya*, Truth, born out of *tapas*, hence reflecting the divine contemplation which itself implies tremendous concentration, so tremendous that it is qualified as "blazing". It blazes forth into a cosmic, orderly universe, the pattern in the heavens. The THOUGHT DIVINE - obviously out of all proportion to our little "thought" on our infinitesimally small level of awareness - is a blazing fire from which issues as a spiritual reality the Cosmic Order which is necessarily a reflection of the Source from which it is projected; so, from the *blueprint* of Cosmic Order the world is

projected still further outwardly or objectively, again as a reflection and further and further down the scale of *being*; the very core of all: blazing fire. As the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad puts it:

"As sparks innumerable fly upward from a blazing fire, so from the depths of the Imperishable arise all things, and to the depths of the Imperishable they in turn descend." (Muṇḍ.Up.II.1.1)

But this blazing fire out of all relation to the fire we know on earth, emits a vibration, a sound which is constantly going on, which shapes and holds in shape all things; hence the two aspects, *fire* and *sound* as the two sides of the one *power*, the LOGOS, the Creative Deity, which ITSELF is the reflection of the THOUGHT DIVINE, hence the UNIVERSAL MIND at work throughout the universe. *Everything is a reflection, more and more limited, of what has projected it.*

This perpetual emission of a vibration explains the perennial complementariness of sound and fire, or Agni and Vāc. For the *wisdom tradition*, as comes out in the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*, the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* and the *Anugītā*, sound is the attribute of *ākāśa* (its correlation, writes H.P.B.). *Ākāśa*, also called "fire-mist" in *The Secret Doctrine*, can itself be considered the noumenon of what we here know as fire; logos is the primal vibration in the *ākāśa* that differentiates it into its various grades of lesser and greater density, hence the interlinking of fire and sound-vibration, such complete fusing occurring at the innermost level where differentiations cease but where the potentiality for these is the very seed of forms.

In a footnote in vol.I of *The Secret Doctrine*, H.P.B. further elucidates:

"In Esoteric philosophy the Demiurge, or *Logos*, regarded as the CREATOR, is simply an abstract term, an idea, like 'army'. As the latter is the all-embracing term for a body of active forces or working units - soldiers, so is the Demiurge the qualitative compound of a multitude of Creators or Builders." (S.D.I.p.380.fn)

Hence the hosts of spiritual entities or devas issued from the seven primeval archetypal Dhyān Chohans, themselves issued from the one Power. Hence, also from the Primeval One Vibration differentiates an infinite variety of vibrations, the "Army of the Voice" of *The Secret Doctrine*, or the *angels* of Christian folklore, which H.P.B. explains as

"... closely connected with the mystery of sound and speech, as an effect and corollary of the cause - Divine Thought." (S.D.I.p.93)

Hence the very *human* description of angels with harps or other musical instruments, and the *gandharvas* of the Ṛgveda become heavenly musicians in the later *texts*. All these folkloric touches have their root in the age-old revelation of the powers of sound-vibration.

H.P.B. gives a few metaphysical comments quite important for the picture as a whole:

"This Logos which sleeps in the bosom of Parabrahman"

- during the phase of inactivity called in Hinduism *pralaya*,

"cannot cognize Parabrahman otherwise than as *Mūlaprakṛti* - the latter being a cosmic veil which is 'the mighty expanse of cosmic matter' - is thus only an organ in cosmic creation, through which radiate the energy and wisdom of Parabrahman, *unknown to the Logos, as it is to ourselves.*" (S.D. I. p.429)

We may well ask, if it is *unknown* how can such a statement be made? Only by inference or analogy, is the answer. However, the passage goes on:

"Moreover, as the Logos is as unknown to us as Parabrahman is unknown in reality to the Logos, both Eastern Esotericism and the Kabbalah - in order to bring the Logos within the range of our conceptions - have resolved the abstract synthesis into concrete images; viz., into the reflections or multiplied aspects of that Logos, or Avalokiteśvara, Brahmā, Ormazd, Osiris, Adam-Kadmon, call it by any of these names - which aspects or Manvantaric emanations are the Dhyāni-Chohans, the Elōhīm, the Devas, the Amshāspends, etc." (S.D.I.p.429)

It is, claims H.P.B., through the "conscious energy" or "*Light*" of the Logos, called in the Bhagavad Gītā *daivīprakṛti*, (S.D.I.p.430) and according to T. Subba Row, in some Buddhist books, *Fohat*, (S.D.I.p.137)

"... that everything is created. This ROOT of mental SELF is also the root of physical Self, for this light is the permutation, in our manifested world, of *Mūlaprakṛti*, called *Aditi* in the Vedas. In its third aspect it becomes Vāc, the Daughter and the Mother of the Logos ... In the Ṛg-Veda, Vāc is 'mystic speech', by whom Occult Knowledge and Wisdom are communicated to man, and thus Vāc is

said to have 'entered the ṛṣis'. She is 'generated by the gods'; she is the *divine* Vāc, the 'Queen of gods'; and she is associated - like Sphīrāh with the Sphīrōth - with the Prajāpatis in their work of creation. Moreover, she is called the 'Mother of the Vedas', 'since it is through her powers, (as mystic *speech*), that Brahmā revealed them, and also owing to her power that he produced the universe' - i.e. through speech, and *words* (synthesized by the 'WORD') and numbers." (S.D.I.p.430)<sup>1</sup>

"Mystic speech" may seem meaningless to most, but from the comment it evidently refers to the mantric quality of Vāc, a quality which is underlined by the power of rhythm and frequency.

#### MEANING OF THE WORD LOGOS

Ancient cosmogonies bear witness to human attempts at probing the mystery of sound, or vibration, usually referred to as the *word*, using the term not merely as an indicator of phenomenal sound, but especially of its hidden potency, of which ordinary sound is a faint reflection. Even the latter, namely sound, acts upon matter as Chladni's plates experiments have conclusively proved. Furthermore, we know that when a glass is sympathetically resonated, one can hear its fundamental tone or frequency. But such has only to be increased and the glass breaks. This can be done with the human voice, a violin, etc. Sound gives shape or destroys that shape. It is this very ordering capacity which alerted the seers of old to the mysterious power of sound. To shape and make order implies measure, ratio.<sup>2</sup> If we consider that, at our own lower level, *logos* means measurable proportion which implies ratio, hence an ordering capacity that demarcates and creates order, cosmos out of chaos, we can see why *logos* is said to reflect DIVINE MIND, for it is mind which separates, divides, distinguishes, clarifies and gives form. *Logos*, a Greek word, is said to refer to "the rational principle expressed in words and things" for words are the expression of mind. *Logos*, in its essential meaning, is then the divine, formative *utterance*, the particular vibration which shapes, moulds, fashions all things in their outer forms, and primarily chaos, in accordance with the *pattern* in the Divine Mind. Hence the notion of the *Word*, enunciated with will-power and dynamic purpose, as *creative*. Vibration becomes *locked* in a particular form as its frequency, whether that form be a stone, flower, vase, plate, tree, animal or human. If this frequency is known, it can be stimulated by external resonance, for beneficial ends, or over stimulated with destructive effects. Such dangerous knowledge was kept secret from the general public for all too obvious reasons. It gave rise to the doctrine so prevalent in ancient times, of *names* as the essence of things and beings. Hence to know the name of a person or an entity is to have power over it. This is clearly borne out in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*. Hence the real name was only whispered in the ear of the child and kept secret.

Looked at from this standpoint, the *logos* is the creative vibration which shapes by giving all things that frequency which causes their particular appearance; which gives their inner resonance and light; hence which gives significance to all it touches; thereby is woven a finer web of interlocking forces which link all things in a wholeness unperceived by our senses and our separative mind, but which the seers of old, whether of India, Egypt or Chaldea, *saw* and *experienced*. Hence the notion of Cosmic Order in the Vedas, of Maat in the ancient Egyptian theogony, and the Vedic identification of Cosmic Order, or *ṛta*, with the "waters of space", *alias ākāśa* whose one attribute is *sound* according to the *śruti* itself; the whole universe being one mighty interlocking web of *sound-light*.

The human psyche also embodies the resonance of the *logos*, since *manas*, *the psyche's tool*, is the human expression of Mahat, and *logos* is the mirror reflecting Divine Mind as it vibrates throughout creation, a resonance which allows the psyche to penetrate to the very essence of all, hence to really *know* through *identification*. Only *through perfect resonance* from one object or entity to another can anything be truly known and appreciated. This is the reason for that "identification" so promulgated in the Upaniṣads, so little understood by Western exegesists. (On this subject see ch.10). The "essence of *puruṣa* is *vāc*" says the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (1.1), a most esoteric statement, which should now be comprehensible, and *puruṣa* is that celestial aspect in the human being which links the human to the eternal. This is part of the *gnosis* handed down and experienced by the sages, from age to age.

So, " this Logos is the *Śabda Brahman* of the Hindus ... the *Avalokiteśvara* of the Buddhists, the *Verbum* of the Christians in its real *esoteric* meaning, not in the theological disfigurement..." (S.D.I. p428).<sup>3</sup>

All the more or less anthropomorphised logoi or creators of ancient cosmogonies, at two or three removes

from the Primeval ONE passed over in silence, are the more or less concrete representations by the human mind, of the creative force at work through flame-light and sound; these, as they appear in our own space-time world, being but the ultimate physical differentiated aspects of powers we cannot imagine.

*VĀC, THE ṚGVEDIC LOGOS: AKṢARA. THE ETERNAL WORD: BRAHMAN, THE EVOCATIVE WORD*

Three words are used in the Ṛgveda to denote the *logos*, the primeval mover shaping primordial substance into a universe, but also, at the human level, giving form and attracting through resonance: *vāc*, *akṣara*, *brahman*,<sup>4</sup> one feminine, one masculine, one neuter: the last one, *brahman*, in due course of time somewhat changed its meaning in the Upaniṣads to that of Universal Principle, *brahman*.

1) *Vāc*, with the sense of creative power is *nityā vāc*, the eternal word (VIII.75.6), a power that ranges over the whole world (X.125), is the foundation of all and therefore upholds all.

"I gave birth to the Father on the head of this world. My womb is in the waters,  
within the ocean. From there I spread out over all creatures and touch  
the very heaven with the crown of my head." (X.125.7)

2) *Akṣara* whose history stretches from the Ṛgveda, to the Brāhmaṇas, the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Vedānta, comprises the idea of syllable, the smallest particle of the word, and the idea of the eternal; these two converge on the *eternal logos*, the word of power that in its formative activity brings all things to life. *Akṣara* is the very frequency of that eternal Breath that originally "breathed, breath-less-ly by its own power" (X.129.2). In the Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad it is that "upon which *ākāśa* is woven warp and woof". (Brhad.Up.III.8.11)

3) *Brahman* which in the Ṛgveda signified, not the universal principle as in the Upaniṣads, but the "evocative, dynamic and creative power of the spirit which expresses itself through the word, sometimes in cryptic or enigmatic formulae and in mantra form, but basically as a word of power capable of evoking the devas through their own resonance and of acting upon the phenomenal world of forms ... an invocation to the gods and an evocation or calling forth of the gods."<sup>5</sup>

The first two words have cosmogonic implications in the early *śruti*. *Vāc* is slightly personified as she is queen of the gods (VIII.100.10), or a lowing buffalo-cow. The ṛṣis found *Vāc* in themselves (X.71.3) as they sought out that inaudible vibration of the inner being, whence the *mantra* which they developed into sacral speech and ritual formula. *Akṣara* remains more or less abstract as the eternal syllable issuing in the mansion of the Cosmic Cow, or Aditi, the cradle of space; at the base of which *word* is the god-given (*devadatta*) power of the word in humans, the *brahman* which, in one of the mystical hymns of the Atharvaveda is the matrix of being and non-being (Athv.IV.1.1), a forerunner of its later development. In time it overtook the other expressions of *logos* and from word of power and efficient *mantra*<sup>6</sup> assumed preeminence as the Universal Principle underlying all. It was always universal, since *logos* also underlies all, but now there is a shift of emphasis from sound to principle, and slowly the *secret science of sound* recedes more and more into the background, into silence and partial oblivion.

One important statement in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa identifies *akṣara* with *brahman*:

"I praise what has been and what will be, the great *brahman*, the one *akṣara*, the old *brahman*,  
the one *akṣara*; for indeed, all the gods, all beings pass into that *akṣara*." (Śat.Br.X.4.1.9)

Similarly the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa identifies *Vāc* with *Brahman*; *brahma vai vāc* (IV.21.1). Such identifications are also found in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad:

"This *akṣara* is indeed *brahman*, this *akṣara* is indeed the supreme.

Whatever he desires is his who knows this *akṣara*." (Kaṭha II.16)

Compare also *akṣaram brahman*, the everlasting *brahman* (Kaṭha Up.III.2) and Muṇḍaka (I.1.4-5, II.2.2) and Bhagavad Gītā (8.3). He who knows and can resonate to the ultimate sound of creation from which all other sounds and forms develop, knows its Universal fountain source and the essence of his being.

*VĀC'S COSMIC ROLE IN THE VEDAS*

One whole hymn (X.125) is dedicated to *Vāc* in the Ṛk, another (X.71) deals with the higher knowledge of which *Vāc* is the inspirer, leading the ṛṣis to the understanding of the secret of vibration, hinted at in several



enigmatic verses scattered through the *samhitā*.

H.P.B. refers to Vāc as having *called* forth the universe to life out of chaos, out of the "slumbering waters" of space. This is expressed in the Ṛgveda in the simple imagery of the ṛṣis thus:

"The buffalo-cow lowed as she fashioned the flowing waters, one footed,  
two footed, four footed, eight-footed, nine-footed she became, she who is  
thousand-syllabled, in the supreme heaven." (I.164.41)

Vāc may be thought of as a force of momentum developing and moulding all seeds latent in the bosom of space and unfolding in mathematical progression. The "call" mentioned in *The Secret Doctrine* is the activity that ensues through Vāc's vibration. The verbal root *mā* used in the above quotation, interestingly enough, has two distinct meanings: to sound, low, or roar; and to measure, or mark off. Here the perfect tense shows that the meaning of the verb is to *sound*. The choice of this verb is not haphazard, for the idea inherent to the verse is that, as the sound goes forth, so does the measuring or demarcation aspect of the sound, begin. There are two implications: one- shaping, fashioning; the other cutting, chiselling (*takṣ*), so that forms appear in the formless.

The choice of the buffalo-cow as symbol is also meaningful, for buffaloes are associated with water. It is again interesting to note that the word *gaura* (*gaurī*, feminine) apart from referring to the buffalo, means when an adjective, shining, brilliant! Vāc is described as the lowing buffalo-cow and at the same time there is a connotation of brilliance, both of which imply sound and glow, which two are inherent to the meaning of the word *ākāśa*, whose verbal root is *kaś*, to shine, be brilliant, and whose one attribute is sound according to the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, and the Anugītā<sup>7</sup> - hence *ākāśa* is, in the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa, said to *be the word*:

"This *ākāśa* is the word for from *ākāśa* speaks the word." (1.23.1)

V.S. Agrawala in his study entitled "Gauri"<sup>8</sup> in which he gives the esoteric exegesis of Ṛgv.I.164.41, claims that the "she-buffalo" was chosen as against the cow, because she is the "symbol of Varuṇa's 'waters' ... the buffalo is an animal that loves water", and "its skin is of a dark color", thereby making it quite an apt symbol of Varuṇa's hegemony as "lord of the waters", the deity of the ocean (*samudra*), the latter signifying the primeval source of the universe in which all matter exists in an undifferentiated form and which conceals within its womb all the possibilities of existence." (p.1) This agrees with H.P.B.'s explanations of the Stanzas of Dzyan, with Ṛgv.X.129.3 where hidden in darkness all is indistinguishable surging water (*salila*), and with Varuṇa's measuring out an earlier seat or dispensation,<sup>9</sup> prior to that of Indra. The "waters" are taken in the esoteric sense of latent pre-cosmic matter before manifestation.

W.N. Brown, on the contrary, in his exegesis of Ṛgv.164,<sup>10</sup> taking everything at its literal or face level, as is his wont with Vedic imagery, stresses the fact that "... no question is raised" about the origin of the "water" or *salila* as mentioned in Ṛgv.X.129.3, which waters (*salilāni*) in I.164.41 he calls "tumultuous chaotic floods", nor does the hymn offer any "information on the origin of Vāc or description of her qualities, if indeed they are describable, or wherein lies her metaphysical power" (p.203). That power indeed lies in herself, in that vibration which she is, in that *akṣara* that flows from her and that fashions all things as forms. Her origin is obviously in the waters, called *ākāśa* in the Upaniṣads where it is stated that "*ākāśa* is woven warp and woof on *akṣara*" (Bṛhad.Up.III.8.11), for *ākāśa* and *akṣara* are one. This is all very obvious.

W.N. Brown criticises Agrawala for referring "... to many ideas and teachings which cannot be overtly supported from the Ṛgveda or even from the other Samhitās, involving varieties of mysticism for which the Samhitās offer no evidence unless one reads into Vedic terms esoteric or unexpressed implications based upon much later usage of those terms or of what Professor Agrawala takes to be related terms." (op.cit.p.201)

W.N. Brown usually shows complete ignorance of such terms and their meaning, and here gives no examples of these. One *fact* of which scholars seemed unaware is that, however underground the esoteric tradition may have been, it was never extinct, and appears in all the scriptures - Ṛgveda, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas, right to the Purāṇas, etc. in one way or another. Enough has already been explained about the enigmatic verses pertaining to the mystical lore of Agni in the Ṛgveda, the *tapas* of the ṛṣis not understood by a whole generation of scholars, and here the Vāc secret doctrine, etc. to disprove W.N. Brown's ignorant contention. However, in this particular case, the origin of Vāc and her power are found expressed not merely in the Upaniṣads but in the Ṛgveda itself. Thus in X.125, she is made to say:

"And on the summit I bring forth the Father, my home is within waters, in the ocean,  
from where I extend to all existing worlds and yonder heaven I touch with my forehead.  
And it is I who, like the wind, breathe forth, and set all existing worlds in motion.  
Beyond heavens and beyond the earth am I, and all this I have become in my splendour."  
(Ṛgv.X.125.7&8. A.C.Bose. trans. *Hymns from the Vedas*)

It is obvious from X.125.7 that Vāc is the vibration of the "Waters" - always erroneously taken literally, though the Ṛgveda calls them *svarvatīḥ*, whilst the Bṛhad Up. does give a clue to their meaning when it refers to them as "flame" or "radiant". One has only to understand the meaning of *svarvatīḥ* to understand the connection. It is also obvious that since the all pervading "waters" are Vāc's home, the "summit", from the mind's standpoint, refers to the pinnacle, in this case the empyrean, the Hearth of the all Blazing Contemplation wherein the "Father" or *Creator god* emerges to manifestation. However, one must disagree with Agrawala's reference to *ākāśa* in its later meaning of the fifth element or ether of the Ancients - "*ākāśa* is the first and foremost of the five gross material elements, and therefore Vāc became the symbol, par excellence, of the *pañcabhūtas*" (op.cit. p.2.) as in the Sāṅkhya philosophy;<sup>11</sup> whereas in the Ṛgveda, in some of the Brāhmaṇas and in the early Upaniṣads (Chānd.and Bṛhad.) first as *water*, then as *ākāśa*, both refer to primordial root matter, the dark waters of Ṛgv.X.129. To reduce *ākāśa* to the fifth terrestrial element does anticipate a later stage of development than the one dealt with in the Ṛgveda, and this is erroneous. But of this Agrawala seemed unaware, and of this W.N. Brown surely was quite ignorant. On the other hand, Agrawala was aware that originally,

"There is even a greater sublimation of the doctrine of Speech in which Vāc is equivalent to *Brahman*, both being *aja* and *jāyamāna*, i.e. combining the transcendental and immanent aspects of Reality, or the complete symbols of the entire cosmic coherence, and therefore designated as *catuśpāt*." (op.cit.p.2)

Vāc was originally the *logos*, the power of vibration inherent to the "waters of space", to the original *prima materia* until these "waters" took on the name of *ākāśa*, which from being the ultimate *prima materia* became confused with the fifth element (ether) of our terrestrial elements, hence Vāc's falling from her high estate.

The "lowing" of the "buffalo-cow", Vāc, *fashions (takṣati)* the Waters. As explained by Agrawala:

"The root-meaning of *takṣa* is 'to fashion forms by cutting' and that meaning suits very well the context, provided it is clearly explained in the background of an approved cosmogony ... Wilson translates *takṣati* as 'fabricating the waters', Griffith as 'forming the water-floods', and van Buitenen as 'building(?) separate lakes'. These are all correct in so far as they go ..." (op.cit. p.4)

but they do not go far; the spirit of the verse is completely lost (except in Griffith's rendering) through lack of appreciation of the fundamental meaning of the "waters" and their cosmic significance, and the literal approach. Agrawala goes on:

"but the real significance is that the principle of Vāc creates or fashions out the manifold forms out of the waters of the Infinite Ocean of the ultimate Reality ... All the *rūpas* are called *tvāṣṭra (tvāṣṭrāṇi vai rūpāṇi, Śatapatha Br.2.2.3.4)*, i.e. depend for their genesis on the principle of cutting, or making separate fragments out of one whole, i.e. Brahman as *ekamevādvītyam* is transformed into *bahudhā (RV.1.164.46)*, the one into one, two, three ... and infinity. The work of Vāc as *Tvaṣṭā* is essential to creation which is tantamount to the One becoming the Many ..." (op.cit. p.4)

Only, he does not explain that it is *through vibration* that this cutting or separating can occur (just as the voice or the violin can break a glass to fragments or arrange particles of sand into patterns.). The mathematical ordering function inherent to "sounding" is implied in the progressive measures of unfoldment as expressed by one footed, two footed, etc. of I.164.41 as quoted above. Vāc, as the ultimate sound contains all the possible vibrations in their original undifferentiated state, hence she is the thousand-syllabled, and hence one-footed is the first step towards differentiation, two footed, the next step, etc. until the highest digit, 9 is reached implying full differentiation, 10 being made up of 1 + 0, so not used. We have thus presented here a full measuring out or differentiating of the "waters" or primordial matter, by the mythic buffalo-cow, image of Vāc, the *word*, as she sounds the various notes. As the highest heaven (*parame vyoman*) or *loka*, the empyrean, implies an innermost dimension, the one footed would apply to it; or, as Agrawala put it "Vāc as the one-

footed (*ekapādī*) cow has reference to the unborn or transcendental aspect" (p.2); two-footed would apply to a less subtle dimension, the four-footed to our space-time dimension or the square of fully manifested matter, etc.

A further orderly unfoldment appears in the next verse, but the word used is not *vāc*, but *akṣara*:

"From her flow away the oceans; thereon depend [lit. live] the four directions.

Thence flows the eternal-word; thereon depends [lit. lives] the whole universe." (I.164.42)

*Akṣara* was to be used in the early Upaniṣads as the *word* on which *ākāśa* is woven warp and woof.<sup>12</sup> "From her" refers back to *Vāc*. This *akṣara* whose abode is in the supreme heaven (*paramavyoman*) (I.164.39) is the thousand-syllabled *Vāc*, the undifferentiated sound that yet contains all possible vibrations in potentia and gives shape through the measure implied in vibration. This is the *logos* teaching of *The Secret Doctrine*.

So from a zero point of vibration in the darkness of "non-being", in the "waters of space" which contain all frequencies in potentia, hence the thousand-syllabled word, vibrates the word, undulates the eternal-word; the sound flows (*kṣarati*) like a wave. The "waters" as they manifest more and more, expand into the four points or directions of the compass, up and down, left and right, thereby making the cross of manifestation, and laying the foundation of our structured universe. The "four directions" referred to imply this structural basis.

In one hymn, III.55, *akṣara* the word is said to begin to sound at the break of the first dawns, in the celestial mansion of Aditi, the Cosmic Cow, Space, the mighty waters (*bṛhatīr āpaḥ*) that in their womb hold the cosmos in potentia;

"When the primordial dawns shone forth, the mighty word (*mahad akṣara*)

manifested in the footprint of the Cow." (III.55.1)

In the Cow's hidden footprint (IV.5.3), in the secret name of the Cow (V.3.3), in the three times seven names borne by the Cow (VII.87.1), as the quaint but mystical language of the Ṛgveda has it, resides the mystery of creation, not only as cosmic unfoldment or evolution according to the measures of vibration, but also of "creation" in human terms of inspiration, visionary insight and poetic eloquence. This mystical streak is so evident that one wonders how can one deny it? The Pythagoreans according to *The Secret Doctrine*

"... asserted that the doctrine of Numbers - the chief of all in Esotericism - had been revealed to man by the celestial deities; that the world had been called forth out of Chaos by Sound or Harmony, and constructed according to the principles of musical proportion ..." (S.D.I.p.433)

This mighty archetype of the *word*, the *logos* as the fashioner of chaos into cosmos, resounds throughout antiquity, echoes from sacred scripture to sacred scripture right to St John's Gospel:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (N.T. John I.1)

But does the average Christian ever stop to ponder over the meaning of those words? Does he wonder why the *word* is in the beginning? Why is it associated with *God*? What kind of relationship is there with the Deity? Why is it finally identified with Deity? Can we say that the *word*, as the original vibration, expresses an aspect of the *Divine Thought*, or *Contemplation*, and in this sense is the divine power that makes and unmakes worlds, hence the divine thought-power in action, and thereby the Demiurge. All this is considered by H.P.B. who discusses the very terms used as translation, liable to have a different shade of meaning. (See *The New Testament Commentaries of H.P. Blavatsky*, compiled and annotated by H.J. Spierenburg, 1987). The mystery of the *word* and its decipherment is enshrined in the Vedas, in the age-old *gnosis* or *veda* of the ṛṣis, kept securely hidden from profane interference, though many hints there are scattered through the *samhitās*, but they have not been understood.

#### APPORIONING OF SPACE THROUGH VĀC

The idea of apportioning or measuring out a certain amount of space for fashioning chaos into cosmos is typical of the Ṛgveda. Space in due course of time becomes organised, delimited and this will be the task of the building devas, as shall be seen in chapter 7. Here, the Ṛgvedic verses that concern *Vāc* give but a broad outline, the first steps. *Vāc* as the primordial vibration

"has been apportioned in four divisions", we are told. She is also described as having four udders which themselves are related to the four Vedas or four expressions of the one wisdom tradition, as she gives milk from her four teats. The full verse runs thus:

"Vāc has been apportioned in four divisions; these the enlightened Brahmans know;  
three of these deeply hidden, are not activated. Men speak the fourth division of Vāc." (I.164.45)

A similar thought runs through another verse concerning the Puruṣa, or celestial man, sacrificed at the beginning of the aeons that the world might be:

"One fourth of him (*puruṣa*) encompasses all beings;  
three fourths of him abide immortal in heaven." (X.90.3)

In both cases only one fourth of the divine, whether Vāc or Puruṣa, the word or the spirit, is enshrined in our terrestrial sphere; Vāc, like Puruṣa, is fourfold, her highest aspect being beyond human ken, being that purest vibration that no mortal can apprehend.<sup>13</sup>

The mere hints given in R̥gv.I.164.45 as to Vāc's four divisions without any explanation as to what this means, clearly indicate that a doctrine was there, that what is explained later was already known much earlier. These divisions are explained in *The Secret Doctrine* in a quotation from T. Subba Row's *Notes on the Bhagavad Gītā*:

"Our old writers said that Vāc is of four kinds ... *Vaikharī-Vāc* is what we utter. Every kind of *Vaikharī-Vāc* exists in its *Madhyamā*, further in its *Paśyantī*, and ultimately in its *Parā* form. The reason why this *Prāṇava*<sup>14</sup> is called Vāc is this, that these four principles of the great Cosmos correspond to these four forms of Vāc. Now the whole manifested solar system, exists in its *Sūkṣma* (subtle) form in this light or energy of the *Logos*, because its image is caught up and transferred to cosmic matter ... The whole Cosmos in its objective form is *Vaikharī-Vāc*, the light of the *Logos* is the *Madhyamā* form and the *Logos* itself the *Paśyantī* form, and Parabrahman the *Parā* aspect of that Vāc. It is by the light of this explanation that we must try to understand certain statements made by various philosophers to the effect that the manifested cosmos is the *Verbum* manifested as cosmos." (S.D.I.p.138; also on p.432; and p.26 of TUP ed.)

H.P.B. explains the *parā* form (beyond the noumenon of all noumena) as

"... the ever-subjective and latent Light and Sound, which exist eternally in the bosom of the INCOGNIZABLE; when transferred into the ideation of the *Logos*, or its latent *Light*, it is called *paśyantī*, and when it becomes that light *expressed*, it is *madhyamā*." (S.D.I.p.432)

The law of correspondences, one of the laws of esotericism, could here help us to understand the 4 divisions of Vāc which when made parallel to the four states of human consciousness as outlined in the Upaniṣads can throw at least some light on the meaning of each division. Thus

- |  |                |  |
|--|----------------|--|
| 1) <i>vaikharī</i> audible, outer sound (vocal speech)                               | corresponds to | <i>jagrat</i> waking consciousness     |
| 2) <i>madyamā</i> middlemost (level of dreams,<br>emotion, inspiration, imagination) | "              | <i>svapna</i> dream consciousness      |
| 3) <i>paśyantī</i> seeing and hearing the truth<br>(higher visioning)                | "              | <i>suṣupti</i> sleep of the senses     |
| 4) <i>parā</i> beyond all the four; transcendent                                     | "              | <i>turīya</i> fourth, state of ecstasy |

One may think in terms of each of the four fundamental frequencies of Vāc corresponding to, because informing each of, the four states of consciousness which themselves correspond to states of matter. These are the four "udders" of Vāc that apply to both cosmic and human levels, from the most subtle to the grossest. Another clue may be found in the Maṇḍukya Upaniṣad (2) where the *ātman* is said to be four-footed (*catu pāt*) "possessed of four quarters" which refer to the four states of consciousness or four stages in progressive unfoldment of the inner awareness, the first covering the outward world of the senses, hence waking, the second their inner mind-feeling stream of dream-consciousness, the third, the vibration-less state so similar to deep sleep that it seems to be "nothing", - but in fact the dark womb of all possibilities, opening to the fourth or *turīya*, full enlightenment, or awakening to the spiritual state. The parallels are most instructive.

Transcendent Vāc is "stepped down" from her highest estate through the differentiated levels of the cosmos and through the grades of creative powers dwelling on each of these levels, the various categories of celestial beings, to appear as sound on our level and speech among humans. Because Vāc is stepped down through the devas, these are said to "create" Vāc, they mould her, transform her, whilst men fashion her through their mantras, which is a way of saying that men also wield the power of the *word*, the combination of sounds which affect matter in particular ways. A whole philosophy is hidden behind this ancient lore of the *word* which later

developed into various theories, but to consider these would be to digress too much.

### THE MYSTICAL MEANING OF VĀC

In the Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa (I. 9.2) Vāc is all the devas - obviously she is their frequency. Hence the mere mention of the "Army of the Voice", in *The Secret Doctrine*,<sup>15</sup> has this whole background lore behind it. In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa Vāc is described in glowing terms:

"Endless, beyond creation, immense, all the gods, the gandharvas, men and animals abide in her. In the word men have their seat. The word is the syllable, first born of Order, Mother of the Vedas, navel of immortality." (Tait.Br.II.8.8.4-5)

This statement has a profound significance, for the *word*, here shown to be first born of *ṛta*, Cosmic Order (cf. Agni first born of *ṛta* in Ṛgv.X.5.7), is *both the primordial vibration and the blueprint of Cosmic Order*, since word, or vibration implies ratio and ratio implies order, mathematical progression, hence cosmic unfoldment. It also implies that he who vibrates in unison with the "order" holds the key to divine knowledge, to harmonious living and to "liberation". For the word is equated with the eternal wisdom, hence it is the Mother of the *veda*, wisdom. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad, in its very beginning, had claimed: "the essence of *puruṣa* is *Vāc*" (Chānd.Up.I.1.) - perhaps not so meaningless now. This ultimate vibration or sound contains in itself the "blueprint" of all, since it contains in essence ratio, the means of orderly unfoldment, hence the very basis of *law*, order, which in the Ṛgveda is *ṛta*, first born of blazing *tapas*, the effulgent divine contemplation. And *ṛta* is also the goal, the supreme harmony to which all are invited to achieve in our space time dimension:

"All the devas, one-minded, one-intentioned, unerringly proceed to the one purposeful accomplishment." (Ṛgv.VI.9.5cd)

"Vast truth, mighty order, consecration, contemplative exertion (*tapas*) prayer (*brahman*), sacrificial offering, uphold the earth." (Athv.XII.1.1)

Vāc, in the Ṛgveda, may be viewed mystically as the sound that is emitted through its own radiance, its own purity, in true ṛṣis' vision, a viewing which tallies with the idea of *ākāśa* as *luminous space* and *sounding board* of *noumenal nature*. To the separative mind, that *ākāśa* be identified with sound makes no sense. Yet, if we but realise that what the seers referred to as sound, or word, *logos*, would nowadays be called vibration, or even frequency, that everything in Nature has its own frequency, its specific note, the sum total of which is called the *word* (*vāc*, *akṣara*, *śabda*, *nāda*, *prāṇava*) so it is in the word "frequency" that lies for us the key to understanding the equation *ākāśa* = *akṣara* or *logos*. *Ākāśa* is itself the underlying frequency, the very pulse of everything it informs.

H.P.B. gives several descriptions of Vāc based upon the Vedas, referring to Vāc as

"... the most mysterious of all the Brahmanical goddesses; she who is termed 'the *melodious* cow who milked forth sustenance and water' (the Earth with all her mystic powers) ... *Isis* is also mystic Nature and also Earth: and her cow's horns identify her with Vāc. The latter, after having been recognized in her highest form as *parā*, becomes at the lower or material end of creation, *Vaikhari*. Hence she is mystic, though physical, nature, with all her magic ways and properties.

Again, as goddess of Speech and of Sound, and a permutation of Aditi, she is *Chaos*, in one sense. At any rate, she is the 'Mother of the Gods', and it is from Brahmā (Īśvara, or the Logos) and Vāc, as from Adam-Kadmon and Sēphirā, that the real *manifested* theogony has to start." (S.D.I.p.434)

She claims that

"The various cosmogonies show that the Archaic Universal Soul was held by every nation as the 'Mind' of the Demiurgic Creator; and that it was called the 'Mother', *Sophia*, with the Gnostics (or the female Wisdom), the *Sēphirāh*, with the Jews, Sarasvatī or Vāc, with the Hindus; *the Holy Ghost being a female Principle*" (S.D.I.p.352-53)

originally in Christianity until it was made masculine by the Church Fathers.

H.P.B.'s further comparisons with other, similar ancient traditions bring one more proof to *The Secret Doctrine's* claim of a fundamentally common basis to all ancient traditions and religions. Thus she writes:

"'Kuan-yin-T'ien' means the 'melodious heaven of Sound', the abode of Kuan-yin, or the 'Divine

*Voice*’ literally. This ‘Voice’ is a synonym of the *Verbum* or the Word; ‘Speech’ as the expression of thought. Thus may be traced the connection with, and even the origin of, the Hebrew *Bāth-Kōl*, the ‘daughter of the Divine Voice’, or *Verbum*, or the male and female Logos, the ‘Heavenly Man’ or Adam-Kadmon, who is at the same time Sephīrah. The latter was surely anticipated by the Hindu Vāc... For Vāc - the daughter and the female portion ... of Brahmā, ... is, in company with Kuan-yin, with Isis ... and other goddesses, the female *Logos* ... the goddess of the *active* forces in Nature ... If Kuan-yin is the ‘melodious Voice’, so is Vāc ‘the melodious cow who milked forth sustenance and water’ (the female principle) ... as Mother-Nature ... ” (S.D.I.p137)

Here is a glimpse into the hidden role of sound in Nature, which as *frequency*, the very pulse of *ākāśa*, gives shape to all things and, in a peculiar sense, calls all things to life; hence the idea of "milking forth sustenance", and the personifying of Vāc - finally to be identified with Aditi.

### SOUND AND LIGHT

We must have observed, in most of the above quotations, how sound and light are considered almost as one in the Logos. This is because they were experienced as blending at a much subtler level than our physical senses can perceive, again an aspect of the secret lore of the ṛṣis. We in our sceptical, critical, usually arrogant mental attitude, may reject such a notion, or anything concerning the *word*, as nonsensical, but we do have to admit that 1) on investigation, the *śruti* is full of references to this *logos-light* more or less incomprehensible to Western scholars; 2) that behind the hints there must be some evidence that the ṛṣis would not have gained their renown for mere chimeras unrelated to specific truths of their own *psyche*, indeed of the human *psyche*, though we may now be ignorant of this; 3) that there was a *gnosis* relating to sound and light, not explained in written form but obviously extant in Ṛgvedic and Upaniṣadic times, to surface later in Tantrism, in the Śivaist Śākta system, in Pañcarātra Viṣṇuism, etc.; traces of its existence can even be found in certain expressions in our own languages: such as the "chromatic scale" (*chromo* being the Greek word for colour, and scale referring to the octave of specific notes), or the word *tone* which can apply to a colour as well as to a sound, or in that phrase well known to the ancient Egyptians, "his voice rings true" (or false), that in the very tone of our voice, the resonance of our being, we express our integrity or falsehood as much as in the look of our eyes. According to the Vedic doctrine, when we contact the living truth within ourselves and become one with it, our very life becomes the articulation of the *śabda brahman*. This is the gnosis of which the Vedas sing in enigmatic aphorisms. And it is the same gnosis as the Egyptians’ wisdom, especially concerning the judgment when the soul was recognised as "justified of voice", i.e. true to its very core.

The secret of the incantation and its efficacy in the ritual is intimately linked to knowledge of the *word* as the right combination of sound (or frequency) and light or colour, which in turn is a development of the original sound, the master vibration. The secret science of the ṛṣis concerned the right blending of sound vibrations and light or radiance which allowed glimpses into different dimensions of being, human, devic and cosmic, and yielded an unequalled vision of the universe. This is the reason why the Vedāntist, T. Subba Row, often quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*, declared that one of the meanings of the Vedas is

"... indicated by the metre and the *svara* - intonation<sup>16</sup> which are ... the life of the Vedas ... Learned pundits and philologists of course deny that *svara* has anything to do with philosophy or ancient esoteric doctrines; but the mysterious connection between *svara* and *light* is one of its [the *veda*’s] most profound secrets." (Quoted in S.D.I.p.270, fn)

These words would appear as completely nonsensical to the average mind, but in the light of the glimpses already given and recalling the *psyche*’s resonance, some sense might be seen in them. For the "mysterious connection" referred to was the key, for the ṛṣis, that opened the door to the realms beyond the senses, to those vast expanses of planes of consciousness that by comparison make our space time dimension quite puny, that opened the inner eyes to a vision of cosmos out of all relation to ordinary perception and conception, to infinite possibilities and infinite harmonies. But a warning is given in that most mystical of hymns, X.71:

"Whoever has eyes [literally sees] has not seen Vāc; whoever has ears [lit. hears] has not heard her; to another she reveals herself, like an adorned spouse who unveils herself to her beloved." (X.71.4)

Vāc does not necessarily reveal herself to anyone either through sight or hearing, but she does so to those who

follow the path of Truth.

"For one deserting a friend who knows the truth there is no grace even in the holy Speech.

What he hears he hears amiss; to be sure, he does not know the path of righteousness."

"When with mental impulse shaped by the spirit  
friends who know the speech perform rituals together,  
some are left back with much they still need to know,  
while others move onward, regarded as adepts." (X.71.verses 6&8. Trans. A.C. Bose)

Only a clear-sighted mind bent on integrity can "see" truly; the warping of lies obscures the mind, and negates the "vision". Through their sacrificial rites, the ṛṣis tracked down Vāc and found her abiding in themselves (X.71.3ab). Hence the mantra fashioned in the heart where Agni sits and leads the way.

In Ṛgv.I.72.6 the three times seven *guhyanī padā* are the secret mystic sounds and the centres from which they emanate which "the holy ones discovered deposited and to be kept secret in thee", Agni, "by which means they, of one accord, protect the ambrosia"; for Agni is knowledgeable of the journeyings of the gods. (I.72.6 & 7cd). Is this the outer or the inner fire? This is another of those mystical verses meaningless to most scholars. The *mystical sound* and *flame* are here declared to be interlinked for Agni, the Knower, is light and intelligence as well as fire and knows each frequency: in Agni, within the human constitution, are deposited these seven secret sounds. The number seven tallies with the seven most important *cakras* in the human subtler body which also link to the *guhyanī padā*. This aspect of fire and sound will be taken up in the next section.

It is noteworthy that Gonda renders *pada* in VII.87.4 as "mystic word"<sup>17</sup> which is one among a multitude of meanings ascribed to *pada*, such as footprint, trace, mark, sign, home, ray of light, etc.; the gist of the verse being that wishing to benefit the later or coming generation, the wise or "initiated" one will proclaim as it were the secret of the mystic sound, for "to me has the wise Varuṇa voiced the three times seven names that the Cow bears", the latter being interpreted by the 14th century commentator Sāyaṇa, as Vāc whose 21 names are 21 metres. The Cow is Nature, Vāc is the vibration of Nature that gives form.

In our scepticism, we may well ask how can words or their sounds have any effect on sacrificial rites or pierce through the many layers of consciousness from the objective to the subjective, to the subconscious, to the so-called unconscious, to the core of psyche? As already stressed, it is more than the mere word or sound that is at stake, more even than the rhythm, but the very frequency of the sound, the innermost core that acts upon its correspondence all around and in the subtler spheres as well as in our inner consciousness, for there pulsates the resonance. It is also absolute concentration of the mind to the point of complete absorption. This aspect of consciousness was fathomed out in Vedic times, proved by the many hints in the Ṛgveda, all centred around the sound-light and vision-revelation (*dhīh*) of the ṛṣis. The knowledge that certain combinations of sound have peculiar effects upon human sensitivity and even upon the environment; that every state of consciousness has its counterpart in a fundamental vibration and every vibration affects states of consciousness, underlies so many verses. Particular states can thus be brought about by initiating particular kinds of sound. We all know how music can be soothing, all entrancing or nerve-wrecking! The knowledge of the effect of vibrations gave rise to the science of invocation, viz., the call of the lower or more material to the higher or more subtle, of the human to the godly, and the response from the latter as *theophany* or divine manifestation, this being attested to not only in the Vedas, but in all the scriptures of the world; aspiration, prayer, rhythmic chanting, ritual, being means of preparing the ground. Hence the mantras.

Each vowel of the Sanskrit alphabet with its accompanying consonant, was considered the vehicle of a basic eternal power, *akṣara*, inherent to its vibration. In the Chāndogya Upaniṣad (II.22.3) the vowels are said to be the *ātman* of Indra, the spirants the *ātman* of Prajāpati, and strangely enough, the consonants belong to Mṛtyu, Death, possibly because death implies matter, vowels belonging to the spiritual side of the spectrum, consonants to the material side. The *mantra* represented particular combinations of sounds with their own peculiar radiance or light and resonance that would bring about specific effects. The *mantra* may be thought of as the power within the idea clothed in sound/frequency, the vehicle of creative energy hidden in the psyche. No mantra can be "worked out" by the intellect, it is "fashioned in the heart" (I.67.4), its utterance and clothing in specific sounds, the result of an intuitive *knowing*, hence psyche's action. The innermost centre of the human being, the heart, not the physical organ but its counterpart at a subtler level, the transformative-power-centre in the human being, is the fountain source of the mantra, that centre wherein Varuṇa, Lord of Cosmic

Order, placed *kratu* (V.85.2), that centre wherein "a thought is brought to birth as light within the heart" (III.26.8), wherein "visionary thought shines from the seat of truth" (X.111.2). Each of these verses (and many more) is meaningful to the utmost. The sounding of the right word, which emitted the right kind of light shining forth as required, was the ṛṣi's worship. In chanting his praise to the gods, he shone forth his very being, his truth, his integrity which was visible to his brother ṛṣis<sup>18</sup> and thereby attracted the devas or powers of his choice. This whole ancient lore, with infinite implications, has completely escaped the insight of exegesists, bound only by philology and logic which do not belong to the realm of psyche. Hence certain Ṛgvedic verses which appear like a riddle - without a background of such knowledge of the *word* - might now, with the few glimpses given, become more understandable:

"Proclaim three words (*tisro vācaḥ*) that are preeminent in Light" (*jyotir agrāḥ*);

(="light projecting"); three words which "milk that honey-yielding udder" (VII.101.1).

Here the word is unequivocally shown as *light-bearing*: the *word* is *light*, and it is this light that milks the nectar of heaven - be this inspiration, illumination, or spiritual insight, etc. The three words are interpreted by the Indian commentators as the *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*, in other words, the three Vedas, or what constitutes their essence: each of the mantras in these was known to have a specific influence on objective and subjective entities and indeed environment.

"Who knows not this, the eternal-syllable (*akṣara*) wherein all the devas have their abode in the highest empyrean, what will he do with the *ṛk* (sacred verse)? They who know sit here assembled." (I.164.39)

This verse partially gives out the secret. Each syllable is the abode of a *power* which can *act* upon things and thus carry an effect, constructive or destructive. The source of that *power* locked in the *sound* at the subtler level is the highest heaven (*vyoman*) where the devas have their principal seats.

"The highest heaven and the sacred syllable or primordial sound are identical and it is in this spaceless space that the ṛṣi encounters the gods. He who does not know the particular sound/vibration linked to the gods cannot manipulate the *ṛk*, ... i.e. the *ṛk* will have no effect. Another verse confirms this:

'Within the eulogic mantra which the Lord of Prayer utters, the gods,

Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman, have their abode.'" (I.40.5)<sup>19</sup>

The *madhyamā vāc* mentioned earlier, is that state or condition of Vāc, wherein shines the Logos light and dwell the higher devas, from which they descend through the channel of the sound, to within ṛṣi perception and hearing. To this the Ṛgvedic verses bear witness.

Once we have grasped the underlying multi-levelled significance of Ṛgvedic language, many otherwise difficult verses reveal their meaning quite easily. Thus when the sun was made apparent by the chants of the patriarchs, or when the ancient sages revelled together with the gods, the patriarchs found the hidden light and with effective mantras brought forth the dawn, it is far more likely that the statements have a mystical intent bearing upon the finding of the true sun (*satyam sūryam*) of illumination. Such illumination gives the inspiring vision and knowledge, the *dhīḥ* which manifests in the ṛṣi's consciousness as a result of the chanting, of the exalting stirring through the singing. A similar meaning is found in the following:

"Some chanting, conceived the great-song (*sāman*)

whereby they caused the sun to shine." (VIII.29.10)

This particular chant clearly brought forth the illumination, the solar splendour. Similarly the patriarchs, are said to have broken open the firmly fixed rock by means of their chants (Cf.IV. I.14,15; V.45.3)

"They made for us a pathway to lofty heaven ..." (I.71.2c)

In many verses the verb used for chanting is *arc* which means not merely to sing but also to shine. It is the Lord of Prayer himself, Brhaspati (short for Brahmaṇaspati) who discovers the *arka* or glowing-hymn (X.67.5), which *arka* is a gift of the gods to men (VII.97.5). The two strands of meaning of the word *arka* including both light/shining and sound/singing once again point to the subtle link between light and sound, merged at the inner level of psyche from which the ṛṣis operated. This is a completely different perspective which so far does not seem to have found any room in our understanding!

"The song shines, its radiance sings. Both are the measure of the poet's transportation and power of entrance into sacred realms. The singers 'bring the light in their mouth' (X.67.10), their words shine with their inner radiance, with their fervor, perhaps another form of *tapas*, who knows? Hence *arka* is the hymn, and Indra's thunderbolt is the *arka*, the flashing song (X.153.4) which the singer



himself places in Indra's arms (I.63.2). *Arka* is thus a power wielded by the inspired seer-priest, a power akin to lightning, but also to the *word* as used in the ancient scriptures of Egypt and the Old Testament. Thus

'Is not my word as a fire and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?'

(Jeremiah XXIII.29)<sup>20</sup>

By means of the *arka* or glowing hymn used as panegyric, Indra is said to have spread out the age-old pair, Heaven and Earth (I.62.7).

H.P.B. has several comments on all this, explaining what lies behind these strange notions, strange only to our separative mind:

"Every sound corresponds to a colour and a number, a potency spiritual, psychic or physical." (E.W.p.431)

We know now that the Brahmans, as shown in the *Brāhmaṇas*, had worked out a complete theory of correspondences between the ritual, the altar and the cosmos, this being only one side of their doctrine of correspondences. Some aspects are expounded, and yet others are not.

H.P.B. explains how humans can get in touch with spiritual entities:

"The *magic* of the ancient priests consisted, in those days, in addressing *their gods in their own language* ... 'Each must be addressed in the language of his (the god's) respective element' ... that *Element-language* ... 'is composed of *sounds*, not words; of sounds, numbers and figures. He who knows how to blend the three, will call forth the response of the superintending Power' (the regent-god of the specific element needed).

Thus this 'language' is that of *incantations* or of MANTRAS, as they are called in India, *sound being the most potent and effectual magic agent, and the first of the keys which opens the door of communication between Mortals and the Immortals.*" (S.D.I.p.464)

"... Sound and rhythm are closely related to the four Elements of the Ancients ... such or another vibration in the air is sure to awaken the corresponding powers, union with which produces good or bad results..." (ibid.p.307)

This forms part of the secret knowledge of the ancient initiates that allowed them to come into contact with non physical forms of life; now lost to us through the development of the separative, analytical, logical mind which scoffs at anything out of its orbit. But the above quote should at least clarify why incantation was used, why sounds were known to affect the elements and how everything in nature is interwoven or interlocked.

Whereas one may consider that the gnosis of sound and colour was peculiar just to the ṛṣis and their descendants, H.P.B. envisaged that

"... the Vedic Āryans were quite familiar with all such mysteries of sound and colour. *Mental* correlations of the two senses of 'sight' and 'hearing' were as common a fact in their days, as that of a man in our own seeing objective things before him with his eyes wide open at noon ...

... the conceptions of the words 'sound' and 'light', 'to hear' and 'to see', *are always associated* [in the Vedas]. In Hymn 10.71, verse 4, we read: 'One - though *looking*, *sees not the speech*, and the other *seeing*, does not *hear* it'. And again in verse 7th, in which a party of friends is represented as emulating each other in singing, they are characterized [sic] by the double epithet placed side by side: *akṣanvanta* and *karṇavanta* or 'one furnished with eyes' and 'one furnished with ears'. The latter is natural - the singer has *a good ear for music*, and the epithet is comprehensible in view of the musical emulation. But what sense can the *akṣanvanta* have in this case, with his good sight, unless there is a connection and a meaning in it that are not explained, because probably the hymn refers to days when *sight* and *hearing* were synonymous terms?"<sup>21</sup>

H.P.B.'s summary of the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* states:

"Sound is the characteristic of Ākāśa ... it generates air, the property of which is Touch; which (by friction) becomes productive of colour and light.' " (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* bk.1.ch.ii, pp.34-35). She goes on "Perhaps the above will be regarded as archaic nonsense, but it will be better comprehended, if the reader remembers the Aurora Borealis and Australis, both of which take place at the very centres of terrestrial electric and magnetic forces. The two Poles are said to be the store-houses, the receptacles and liberators, at the same time, of Cosmic and terrestrial Vitality (Electricity), from the surplus of which the Earth, had it not been for these two natural 'safety-valves', would have been rent to pieces

long ago ..." (S.D.I.p.205) Polar lights are accompanied by "whistling, hissing, and cracking" sounds. Fire, light and sound are interlinked, as claimed in the Vedas, but it requires psychic insight to observe this, and psyche is denied existence, though the Vedas demonstrate its vision and thereby its existence. A further explanation might bring more light:

"Now, letters, as vocal sounds, cannot fail to correspond with musical notes, and therefore with number and colours; hence also with forces and *tattvas*.<sup>22</sup> He who remembers that the universe is built up from the *tattvas* will readily understand something of the power that may be exercised by vocal sounds. Every letter in the alphabet, whether divided into three, four, or seven septenaries, or forty-nine letters, has its own colour, or shade of colour." (E.W.p.419)

H.P.B. corroborates what the Ṛgvedic seers have hinted at through their enigmatic verses, and the Upaniṣads have formulated in more straight forward language. She goes on in more details:

"In the Sanskrit, as also in the Hebrew and all other (ancient) alphabets, every letter has its occult meaning and its rationale: it is a cause and an effect of a preceding cause, and a combination of these very often produces the most magical effect. The vowels, especially contain the most occult and formidable potencies. (S.D.I.p.94)

This implies a whole lore, lost to us, of which very sensitive people are becoming aware. So to Agni, is assigned the *gāyatrī* as he links the three main planes of Vedic cosmogony; to Savitṛ the *uṣṇih*; to Soma the *anuṣṭubh*; to Brahmaṇaspati the *bṛhatī*; to Mitra and Varuṇa the *virāj*, to Indra the *triṣṭubh*; whilst the *jagatī* penetrates all the gods (X.130.4&5). From the fully performed sacrifice arose the mantras and the chants (*sāmas*), the metres (*chandas*) and the formulas (*yajus*) (X.90.9), in short, the whole of the Vedas. Thus with the *rathantara* which consists of verses 22 and 23 of Ṛvg.VII.32, the ṛṣi enters into an illumined state. The seers "discovered through mental perception" or "meditative insight" (*manasā dīdhyanāḥ*) "the original sacrificial formula", the particular liturgical words with their own specific vibration and rhythm that were "emitted as a pathway to the gods" (X.181.3). Thereby through the use of the appropriate sound/vibration or frequency, the ṛṣis were able to link the earthly to the heavenly realm, the outer to the inner. Their psychic insight helped in this discovery, together with their ritual, chanting, mantras, meditation, in short their *tapas*. This is an ancient lore so completely lost to us with our mere terrestrial, money-minded horizon, that it is hardly understandable, yet it was once part of the horizon of the sages and their followers. Yet, some can still get into a heavenly state, or ecstasy when listening to certain melodious music.

All these "measures" are connected to specific frequencies linked to their function, all belonging to the numinous powers, the devas who fashion forms out of subtle matter (the "waters"). Through the *svara* of chants the poets discovered the inner mathematics of the cosmos and of the human constitution, thereby they became *seers* (X.130.6). The link between the inner soundboard of Nature and humanity and the Vedic metres is given in I.164.23-25 which last verse runs thus:

"With *jagatī* he established the ocean in heaven;  
with the *rathantara* he beheld *Sūrya*; it is said that  
there are three kindling-sticks for the *gāyatrī*, whence  
it surpasses (all other metres) in majesty and might." (I.164.25)

One might surmise that the *svara* of the *gāyatrī* is deemed to resonate in the heavenly expanse which it outspreads; *Sūrya*, the illumination of the seer, flashes forth with the help of the *svara* of the *rathantara*, etc. The *rathantara* is said to have been granted to the seer *Vasiṣṭha* (X.181.1) by solar deities. From these, another seer, *Bharadvāja* received the *bṛhatī* which is the *sāman* of the sun. These are just a few examples of what is "let out" and what is involved.

#### THE MANTRA

In respect of this doctrine of sound and its power, and of the *mantra*, J. Gonda has done profound research and come to certain conclusions which tally with the findings expressed in this chapter. In "The Indian Mantra" (*Oriens*, 16. 1963. pp.244ff) he expounds as much of the doctrine as it is possible without the esoteric key. Two footnotes are of great relevance. The first confirms T. Subba Row's explanation:

"Hence also the doctrine that in the highest stage in which speech is believed to exist (i.e. the non-manifested, transcendent stage which, being devoid of all succession in time, exists only in pure

consciousness or in spiritual contact with the basis and essence of our being) speech is also called *māntrī vāk* 'mantric speech' ... According to the Indian philosophers of grammar the sound of a word is only the outward manifestation of that word (*vaikhari* form); it presupposes a subtle form (*madhyamā*) in which the words are not articulated as aerial vibrations, but are articulated as mental processes. This state presupposes the still subtler form (*paśyantī*) in which the word and the concept for which it stands lie inseparable as a potency like the seed of a tree before sprouting. Behind this potential state is the state called *parā*, i.e. the above-mentioned highest state."

The linking of all levels is noteworthy. From the highest to the lowest or grossest, each state is reflected as frequency.

"The high importance of human speech was early understood and made the object of speculative thought. (see. e.g. Chānd. Up. 7.1&2 and in general B. Essers *Vāc*. Thesis. Groningen. 1952.)

The doctrine of mantras is therefore closely connected with the theory of the eternal word which is the subtle link between concept and utterance ...

... the so-called *prāṇava*, i.e. the 'mystic' syllable *OM* - originally a 'numinous primeval sound' which is still uttered with the utmost reverence - is throughout many centuries regarded as a positive emblem of the Supreme. It is said to have flashed forth in the heart of Brahmā, while he was absorbed in deep meditation. It unfolded itself in the form of the Gāyatrī, which, in its turn, became the mother of the Vedas.

*The mantras relating to the gods represent their essence* - they are in a sense identifiable with them, - and the gods have, according to the teachers whose views are reproduced in this paragraph, no power other than that of the mantras, each of them being represented by a special mantra, in which the deity has revealed one of its particular aspects...

...*A mantra is from this point of view a syllable or series of syllables, of the same frequency as the (usually invisible) being to which it appertains; by knowing it one is able to command the elements and phenomena of the universe.*" (op.cit.p.273-5) (italics my own)

Hence, the many stories, throughout antiquity, and not just in India, of humans able to enter into communion with celestial beings, and with Nature's creatures, such as birds and animals, - knowing the language of birds, fish, etc. This is obviously part of ancient "magic" lore so derided by sheer Western ignorance .

The four "udders" of Vāc are allegorically related to four specific *words*,

"the gods live on two of her udders (*svāhā* and *vaṣaṭ*)"

"mankind on the sound *hanta*, the *pitris* [or ancestors] on the sound *svadhā*",

we are told in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (V.8.1), each sound being symbolic of specific functions and dimensions bearing a particular relationship to the class of beings to which it applies; or perhaps resonating to the frequency of the entities invoked. All of which is incomprehensible and meaningless to most of us! Yet it is not senseless as it may appear on first reading. When the wise ones addressing the Lord of Prayer, first stirred speech by giving names to things, their "most deeply hidden secret" was made "manifest through love" (X.71.1), a quite unexpected admission for the liturgical Ṛgveda, yet one which here must refer to *sympathetic resonance*. This science of sound needs fathoming. Several keys are given in *The Secret Doctrine* for its unlocking. As it is there pointed out, letters, especially vowels, are vocal sounds with specific frequencies which through their inner power, must necessarily influence surrounding objects, plants, trees, animals, etc. for better or worse, for all these also have their own frequency.<sup>23</sup> There is here a vast field of research, but one fraught with danger as real as the kindling of the "sacred fire", the hidden fire; for if using a specific frequency, a human voice can shatter a glass, what more serious damage can it do? And what can most discordant frequencies issuing from inwardly discordant or evil minded humans do among Nature's elements?

### SOUND AND FIRE

The interlocking of *sound* and *fire* is perhaps the most abstruse aspect of this doctrine. Agni and Vāc, those two tools of the Universal Mind, appear as complementary to each other, emerging from that One "set within the core of the Unborn" (X.82.6) in whom flame-powered contemplation (*tapas*) flashed forth whence all was kindled to manifestation (X.129.3). In the flame-waters of space (Bṛhad.Up.I.2.2)<sup>24</sup> *sound* vibrates to call all latent seeds to life (I.164.41&42). *Logos*, or *Vāc*, the primal vibration, differentiates the fire-mist, *ākāśa*, into

its various grades of tenuity and density - the 7 planes of manifested cosmos, pervaded by Agni in his seven "stations".<sup>25</sup> Vāc extends over all for her home is in the waters (X.125. 7&8) the *flame* waters, or *ākāśa*. As formative sound concealed at the heart of all things, Vāc shapes these by setting limits according to need, whilst Agni, the propelling flame at work in all things, urges them onwards to an unknown consummation. The interlocking is complete.

By means of sound Agni himself is said to perform certain actions. Thus Agni

"like the Unborn sustained wide-expanding earth and,  
with truthful *mantras* propped up the sky." (I.67.5)

Here are no hints but a direct pointing to the Vedic doctrine of effective *mantras*, or combination of sounds, to bring about tangible results - but this prerogative pertains to no less a god than the Flame-divine, Agni! The "upholding" of earth and the "propping up of heaven", the separating of the spiritual from the material, the "upper" from the "lower", are effected by means of *sound*, or *frequency*. The flame-divine is *light* and *sound* when differentiated, fire and sound being fundamentally one in their very essence. Hence their origin in *ākāśa*, the glowing, singing fire-mist. It is now a known fact that the higher the frequency the closer to fire, the lower the frequency the closer to earth. The latter absorbs high frequencies but low wave frequencies pass through.

The link between Vāc and Agni again appears in the following verses addressed to Agni:

"Seated in the womb of Cosmic Order (*ṛta*) he flashes forth  
as the father's father in the mother's matrix, in the imperishable syllable.  
O Jātavedas (Knower of births), pilgrim Fire, bring us the prolific word  
that it may shine in heaven." (VI.16. 35&36)

What does this anomaly of Agni seated in a syllable or word as womb of Order mean? *Akṣara*, eternal vibration, thrills through *ākāśa*, itself indissolubly correlated with it. (Bṛhad Up. III.8.11) The later *śruti* only confirms the mantra portion, something ill-understood, even denied! The matrix of creation, another image of the "waters of space" which themselves express the Cosmic Order, is here identified with the word (*akṣara*), which resounds throughout the depth and breadth of space. "Across the framework of Vāc as measure" is the world established (*Aitareya Āraṇyaka* I.6). So Vāc considers herself the womb of the world (X.125.7). In that matrix Agni flashes, taking the role of his "Father" the Unborn, becomes the creative god who presides over the Cosmic Order, in its cosmic and ritual aspect, the latter a reflection of that Order and symbolised by the altar where Agni is seated. These seeming identifications should be understood in their inner meaning.

One specific aspect of sound/vibration and fire, linked to *prāṇa*, hence to the human constitution, is of utmost importance. This is *svara*, another of those Sanskrit words difficult to translate. This aspect might be better understood through *svara yoga* now more openly divulged, as revealed in Swami Satyānanda Sarasvatī's book, *Swara Yoga*. Therein he analyses *svara* as the "sound of one's own breath", one's most intimate frequency linking vibration with prāṇic fire. His reference to the three different "flows" - not "arteries" - of energy issuing through the nostrils, known as *īḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā*, points to this prāṇic fire. The energy flow created through the activation of both nostrils "act something like the positive and the negative currents in an electrical circuit." (op.cit. p.3) The *Svara Śāstras* connect the *svara* with *prāṇa*, the "vital energy force" which is

"the medium for transmission of *prāṇa śakti* throughout the whole body.  
Therefore it affects more than just the gross plane of existence. It is most  
important in the subtle and spiritual realms." (ibid. p.3)

*Svara Yoga* gives a particular method for concentration on the breath behind which is the prāṇic current, itself an emanation of the secret fire. As all things in this our universe vibrate to a certain frequency, so does our breath, so do the prāṇic currents and so does the ultimate flame-spirit. Here is the root of the equation of sound and fire. But its manipulation is very dangerous.

In her esoteric papers H.P.B. explained that

"*svara* is the root of all sound, the substratum of the Pythagorean music of the spheres ...

the spirit within spirit, or as very properly translated, the 'current of the lifewave' ... " (E.W.p.399) the term life-wave may seem vague, yet its connection with *prāṇa* is obvious, hence with the secret fire. Without *prāṇa* there would be no conductor from the flame-spirit from the mind to the body. But H.P.B. warns against the use of the breath to activate the prāṇic current. For *īḍā* and *piṅgalā* "the sharps and flats of that *fa* of human

nature" have to be "struck in a proper way", which means the quality of life, the degree of mastery of the lower nature, self oblivion in altruistic purpose, etc. must give the keynote of the human being's life, *must ring true*, i.e. in complete harmony with his innermost flame spirit, the *puruṣa* whose essence is *Vāc* (Chānd. Up.I.1).

T. Subba Row's enigmatic statement re *svara* might now be better understood:

"... the mysterious connection between *svara* and light is one of its [the Veda's] most profound secrets". (Quoted in S.D. I. p.270 fn)

Indeed a secret not spelled out in so many words. The Chāndogya Upaniṣad's statement that *Vāc* consists of *tejas* (VI.5.4) implies *Vāc*'s fiery energy, radiance, splendour, a statement reminiscent of Jeremiah in the Old Testament: "Is not my word as a fire?" (O.T. Jer.23.29)

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad further stresses Agni's link with human speech, *Vāc*'s fourth measure:

"Speech, truly, is a fourth part of *brahman*. It shines and glows with Agni as its light. He who knows this shines and glows with fame, with splendour, and with eminence in sacred knowledge." (III.18.3)

Thus the *word* shines, glows with its inner fire, and the ṛṣi understands the mystery of the word as light. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad identifies *Vāc* with Agni:

"This organ of speech is fire; this fire is the sacrificial priest." (III.1.3)

The sacrificial priest, man, sacrifices through his own inner sacred fire. Akṣara or *Vāc* and Agni, two facets of the same power which is the pulsating heart of Cosmic Order, are found as the pulsating heart of the human being also - his power basis. In the zenith is fire, in speech is fire, in the heart does speech reside (Bṛhad Up.III.9. 24-25). Hence the esoteric doctrine that the closer we approach to the mental level the closer we come into contact with fire. Hence the Vedic declaration of Agni as the *kavi-kratu*, the inspired illuminator in humans, the *seer-will*. So Agni, as Knower, is asked to bring to men that word of power, *brahman*, that it may shine in those higher states of consciousness called heaven, and inspire seers to more creative inspiration, hence "progeny".<sup>26</sup> For the *word* is power, the *word* is fire, in it flashes Agni. The *word* brings its own progeny for better or for worse, flashes of inspiration and intuition; but the *word* can also bring curse, ruin, death. This power of the word is found in all ancient sacred texts:

"Is not my word as a fire? And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (O.T.Jer.23.29)

Hosea, in similar strains, declared: "I have killed them by the word of my mouth" (O.T.Hosea 5).

In the Vedas, the *brahman* shines, the *brahman* radiates, sparkles through light and sound, through fire hot songs, takes the bard to higher states of consciousness, finally transformed and expressed as the *mantra*. It was mentioned earlier that the three times seven secret mystic sounds were discovered hidden in Agni (I.72.6). Both the thousand-powered word and the firm-handed and vigorous progeny converge on Agni:

"That Agni, indeed, let him surpass (all) other fires, wherein offspring, vigorous and strong-handed, meets with the thousand-sphered syllable." (VII.1.14)

Offspring certainly does not refer to sons here as too many commentators think. With the arousal of the secret fire comes the power of evocation, exaltation, eloquence, insight, intuitions, come the burning utterances, the vision, the experience of *svara*.

Van Buitenen shows quite an insight into this interlocking of fire and word and their "progeny", and their correspondence in the sacrificial area and the cosmos:

"The interdependence, the biunity, of Word and Fire could hardly be expressed more completely [than in R̥gv.VI.16.35-36]. Fire is contained in the germ of Speech, which is the Syllable; and the Syllable itself is the embryo which becomes the fully delivered *brahman*; but Fire is also wedded to Word, for without Fire the Word cannot even conceive the Syllable which is the germ of the ritually potent Formula, hence Fire is also the father of the Syllable which in its turn begets the powerful Fire of the sacrifice. The birth of Word and Fire is a cosmic event which is reproduced in the sacrificial area but happened primordially, at the beginning of creation, in heaven. But once reproduced in the sacrificial area, this area itself becomes the matrix of the cosmic order: it is the source from which the *brahman*, the ritually powerful utterance, is born to beget offspring again, the source therefore of the everlasting continuity of the true order which, after its first initiation in heaven, is perpetuated ever since."<sup>27</sup>

For Heracleitus logos was linked to fire for "fire obeys the universal measure's principle".

In the mythological language of the R̥gveda, the Lord of Prayer, Brahmaṇaspati, cleaves through the demon cave Vala (X.68.6) by means of "fire-hot songs" or "glowing hymns" (*agnitapobhir arkaiḥ*), a mightily strong

expression that refers to the quality of the hymns thus chanted. This Brahmanāspati is also said to have revealed *sva* by means of *brahman* (II.24.3) the power of the evocative word. The typical Vedic image of fire-hot songs

"... implies that the hymns or songs glow with the force of fire; they are indeed like lightning flashes, hence the dual meaning of song, hymn and ray of light or lightning flash (*arka*) ..."28

The word *brahman* in the Ṛgveda meant

"... a drawing forth out of the subconscious layers of the *psyche* of that power, creative ... and dynamic, which lies latent in each human being, and which is directly related to the ... *ātman*. The plunge into the depths of consciousness - a subjective action which is the essence of absorption (*dhyāna*) and marks a step further than thinking - with mind completely stilled and in a poised, receptive state of awareness, results in *revelation*. Such revelation ... may take the form of vision, of sudden flashes and realisations of great truths otherwise left unconceived, or of communion with denizens of another dimension of life, or their manifestation; it expresses itself finally, at the mental level, through what is poorly translated as *magic formula*, rather a cryptic or shorthand transcript, or equation ... by means of the right combination of sound, rhythm and image values, expressive of cosmic mysteries.

This is the essence of the Vedic *brahman*, the Vedic magic; ... a deliberate drawing forth out of a probing deep within the *psyche*, and the appropriate mantric formulation thereof ... clothing the *inspiration-vision-action*. Far more than prayer, far more than petition, far more than magic formula, the generating of the *brahman* which is nevertheless god-given, as the universal divine creative act heralds the conception of the universal principle of the Upaniṣads, for *brahman* already in the Ṛgveda is the power of the unborn, *aja*, or *ātman*."29

Our various translations of *brahman* destroy the basis of powerful utterance inherent in the word. So many Sanskrit words loaded with power are thus reduced to nothing.

"Heed the brahman; be invigorated by the song; make the sun manifest" (VI.17.3)

is a typical Vedic prayer, an injunction, a summons to lift up the mind and heart to higher spheres, a knowledge that this *brahman* will bring about the manifestation of that "true sun" which is supreme illumination. *Brahman* is, in one enigmatic verse of the Atharvaveda, the very power lodged within the matrix of being and non-being, a profound revelation with remarkable implications:

"The *brahman* that of old first manifested from the luminous borderline, the seer has uncovered; its loftiest station, fathomless, he has uncovered as the womb of the manifest and the unmanifest." (Athv.IV.1.1)

This word of power marks the transition between the unmanifest and the manifest. It is the call to manifested Life from the ETERNAL. Here we step closer to the *brahman* as the highest principle, impersonal and eternal, of the Upaniṣads, the transcendent and immanent *brahman* of Vedānta.

### THE ECLIPSE OF VĀC

Like every conception in our world of impermanence, Vāc's supremacy from being the all powerful Creative Principle inherent to the One set within the Unborn, creating the "Father" on the world's summit, embracing all creatures dwelling in her (X.125.7&8), making whomsoever she loves a sage, or a Brahman, dwindled and passed away. *Akṣara* in some Upaniṣads superseded her, and finally OM was fully revealed to become the be-all and end-all of existence, whilst *brahman* assumed the role of Eternal Principle and substratum of all. R. Panikkar explains:

"The first cleavage of that which was *one* (cf. *vāc* as *eka* in Ś.B.VIII.4.3.3) can be seen in the Ṛgveda, where in one verse *vāc* is both the subject of speech ('the Word speaks', i.e. 'revelation') and the object of speech ('the word is spoken by all kinds of beings', i.e. language). In the first instance she is also the Queen of the Gods; in the second she is produced by the Gods. [This refers to the stepping down process which pertains to all manifestations.]

The attention of the Upaniṣads is directed more toward the realization of the individual and the interiorization of external actions. In consequence the revelational, liturgical, and cosmological aspect

of vāc loses momentum ..."<sup>30</sup>

Vāc, seen from a cosmic, transcendental aspect as in most Ṛgvedic verses, as the vibration in and the resonance of the "waters of space", now disappears into another aspect of herself, the goddess of eloquence and wisdom, of inspiration and gnosis in the inner ocean of the human psyche, Mother of the Vedas, Sarasvatī; and her cosmic function of stirrer of the transcendental waters and shaper of forms, of bearer of gods and blower of the breath of life from the nadir to the zenith of the heavens, slowly dwindles to oblivion. Assimilated to Sarasvatī, to Aditi, to Prakṛti the basis of the manifested universe - herself assimilated to Mother Earth - Vāc disappears re-moulded in gracious Sarasvatī. But the grandiose cosmic vision evoked through her becomes anthropomorphised, and thereby minimised. The doctrine of *logos* remained, to flower forth in certain schools of Hinduism, to infuse Greek philosophy and echo right to St John's Gospel (1.1-5).

Thus the *Mantraśāstra* with which Pāñcarātra Viṣṇuism deals is, in the words of J. Gonda

"... a kind of 'mystic and esoteric linguistics' applying itself to the secret sense of mantras in order to exercise power over the potencies manifesting themselves in them. The Pāñcarātrins believe in the esoteric nature of the mantras which are regarded as the energy of God (Viṣṇu) as pure consciousness ...

The doctrine that God's Creative Power as incarnate in sound led to the conviction that the mantra expressing the highest religious belief is not only a bearer of supranormal power, but also the concentrated essence of all divine truth ..."<sup>31</sup>

These few glimpses show the great influence that the Vedic thought concerning the *word* had on subsequent speculation.

In his well researched study on "The first speculations on the powers of the word"<sup>32</sup> A. Padoux gives a summary of the history of the development of this speculation in India. Thus India is the one country

"... where speculation on the word has continuously gone on from remotest times; where myths wherein the primordial Word, the Verbum plays an essential role, were elaborated, hence lived; where speculation on the cosmogonic or magical power of certain aspects of the Word, reflection on the worth and nature of language went on and a phonetics and grammar were elaborated at a very early time. A country where one succeeded in looking on grammar as a *darśana*<sup>33</sup> - insights into the world which are at the same time pathways to salvation - since it helps to preserve and understand an original revelation... given out in sacred formulas (*mantra*) pregnant with riddles and correlations which express and wherein is expressed the *brahman*, both transcendental Reality and supreme Word."<sup>34</sup>

This is quite a homage paid to early Indian insights. Padoux traces two currents stemming from the primordial revelation of the *veda*: one, which developed into "speculations on what makes sound; the validity of the word or phrase as means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*)", thereby elaborating an "epistemology of the word, a philosophy of knowledge as linked to language, and a metaphysics of language or sound"; the second concerns the mythical, archaic vision of the cosmos and its genesis, "a thought which never gets free of myth", even among "real philosophers like ABHINAVAGUPTA" - myth, for all its depth of insight and poetic resonance, is obviously beyond the orbit of the modern rational mind. It is with Tantrism that the knowledge and the wielding of the powers of the word, "henceforth assimilated to divine energy (*śakti* herself)", and also linked to the inner or subtler human constitution, will reach their greatest development. Tantrism, for Padoux, represents the full flowering of this second current.

#### THE AVESTAN GNOSIS OF SOUND

This very ancient gnosis of sound, its powers, and the "mysterious connection between *svara* and *light*" with its far reaching implications, was not the sole possession of the ṛṣis; it also belonged to the sages of other peoples, e.g. the Egyptians or to the Kabbalists whose references to the powers of letters is so completely misunderstood. It also belonged to the Avesta whose system of sounds could not be recovered by Western philological application, and indeed was just lost to it. It needed Tavaría and Chiniwalla to try to expound it somewhat in accordance with the ancient tradition as explained to them by Seth Behramshah. They both touched upon sound/vibration culminating in the mantra in their respective books *A Manual of Khshnoom* and *Essential Origins of Zoroastrianism*, introduced in ch.1. Only a few glimpses can be given here.

For Tavaría the philological claim that the Avestan language is a mere dialect is erroneous from the higher standpoint, for, although based on grammatical rules, he maintains that it is "a specially formed

language for liturgical and ritualistic purposes" (T.p.46) - a somewhat similar claim is made for Sanskrit and its *devanāgarī* script and for the Egyptian hieroglyphs, behind which claims lurks the esoteric doctrine of vibrations. All known ancient languages used for liturgical purposes - Arabic, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Greek, Latin - have a definite mantric quality. On the original dialect, Kyan, current during Zoroaster's time, Tavoria explains that "the prophet applied 'Ilm-e-Staota', the laws of vibratory colours, sound, etc.", basing "the vocabulary of his Staota Yasna on the lines of the original 'Staota Yasna' functioning in nature in the pre-cosmo-genesis world" (T. p.47) - the harmonics of nature which the prophet was capable of detecting in profound meditation - indeed like the ṛṣis! The understanding of the "laws of vibrations", the fact that every form, every organism, emits a vibration, a particular note which can be captured by sensitives, giving the latter a view of the universe totally different from that of our barren view, enabled the adepts of Staota Yasna to enter into the very resonance of Nature and its denizens on subtler planes of life. This is identical in essence with the claims of the Ṛgvedic ṛṣis for whom the universe was the *sāman* of the gods - "the devas revel in the sacred-song of ṛta" (I.147.1d), their own handiwork since they "vision and establish" the domains of ṛta (IV.55.2), etc. and "Savitṛ fashions the holy-song" for the sake of his own *dharman* (IV.53.3). The universe is the poetic song of the divine.

Tavoria observes that the mantras change in power and refinement of vibrations as they pass from themes concerning the higher worlds of perfected souls as occurs in most of the Gathas, to those of the Yasna of the seven chapters that relate to the "defective souls" (imperfect or not fully evolved souls) and their lower worlds. Such observation could of course never be noted by Western scholars, but it points to the constant interlocking of meaning and inner resonance completely lost to philology. He argues that those who understand nothing of this language which combines meaning, sound/vibration and colour (or light) are "not competent to judge Avesta texts and to misconceivedly criticise them" (T. p.53) This is another aspect of sacred texts disregarded by Western exegesis, the attitude being that this is unimportant. However Gonda could at least report:

"The doctrine that God's creative power is incarnate in sound, led to the conviction that the mantra expressing the highest religious belief is not only a bearer of supra-mental powers but also the concentrated essence of all divine truth ... " ("The Indian Mantra". p.179)

No scholar, it seems, detected the essence of meaning in these Vedic and Avestan apparent riddles with that of St John's gospel "In the beginning was the Word" etc. (even though Zaehner was a Catholic). There is much food for thought in H.P.B.'s remark that "letters as vocal sounds, cannot fail to correspond with musical notes and therefore with numbers and colours" etc. and in man esoterically considered, the microcosm of the macrocosm. What Zoroaster discovered in his profound immersion in Nature's resonance, he rendered into the appropriate words, with the right luminosity. This in itself shows the stature of Zoroaster as a visionary, hence a "prophet". It is in essence equivalent to the ṛṣis' revelation of what their gnosis entailed:

"Who knows not this, in which syllable of the ṛk abide all the devas in the highest empyrean, what will he do with the ṛk?" (Ṛgv.I.164.39)

These very ancient views are evidently in full accord with the Vedic tradition, but the fact that Tavoria was able to bring them to the forum of discussion (without having any inkling of the similarity to the Vedas or other sacred doctrines) shows that Seth Behramshah had received a genuine training in accordance with the ancient discipline, a rarity in our "modern" times. But it also shows the complete and lamentable failure of our modern disciplines to fathom out the gnosis which lies beneath the surface words of sacred texts!

It is, according to Tavoria, by means of "Manthra Spenta" that the "combined Fravashis" who "represent divine Wisdom and are referred to as 'Ashaunam Fravashi' in Favard Yasht", "are stated to have given help to Ahura Mazda" turning the "chaos into cosmos in the pre-cosmo-genesis world". One easily recognises here *The Secret Doctrine's* Dhyan Chohans, or the devas of the Ṛgveda fashioning the universe by means of the notes they emit which are finally woven into songs. The Fravashi, according to H.P.B., is the "spiritual counterpart" of gods, humans, animals, etc. the "soul of the body".

"... the celestial beings of lower Hierarchies had each a Fravashi, or a celestial 'Double'" (S.D. II.p.478.) So Zoroaster is invited by Ahura Mazda to "invoke his Favrashis", "that is to say, the impersonal and *true* Essence of Deity, *one with Zoroaster's own Ātman* (or Christos), not the *false* and personal appearance".



(S.D.II.p.480)

The "compound technical term" *Ashaunam Fravashi* was mistaken by Zaehner "to be Fravashi of human beings (Ysn.55.1)" and his rendering of "Fravashi as 'external human soul' ... is quite incorrect" (T.p.124), in fact is senseless, for souls are never "external" to any manifestation whatsoever. For Tavarua, the "combined Fravashis represent divine Wisdom" - like the Vedic devas, or the Dhyan Chohans. "It is these supreme grade Fravashis, and not the 'external human souls' that are stated to have given help to Ahura Mazda" (T. p.124) and that aid "was given in the shape of Manthra Spenta". Zaehner completely misunderstood and missed the whole point of the role of sound/light as the creative agent of celestial beings in cosmic unfoldment, yet it is vital to ancient cosmogony. His conclusion, as quoted from *Dawn* by Tavarua, that human contribution was needed to prevent the onrush of evil powers, even the collapse of the material universe, turns out to be not merely erroneous, but in the light of a Divine Cosmic Order, ludicrous.

Tavarua sums up this aspect of the doctrine thus:

"In this Staota Yasna lies the pattern of the entire Universe that came into being later on". (T.p.108) Unwittingly, he is here giving the Avestan equivalent to the Vedic statement of the Word as "first born of Cosmic Order" (Tait.Br.II.8.8.5; cf.Ṛgv.I.164.37, X.190.1, etc.) - since the word is both primordial vibration and blueprint of rta; sound implying ratio and ratio order, mathematical progression, orderly unfoldment, as expressed in Ṛgv.I.164.41.

The ancient gnosis is once again perceptible in this aspect of esoteric Zoroastrianism. But here again it is not alone, for very far away from India or Iran, one finds among so-called primitive peoples, the Australian aborigines, an ancient memory of this lore telling how the world was streaked with tracks which the spirits, in the dream-time, chanted into existence in order to create plants, animals and humans. A poetic way of expressing a secret gnosis? The ancient sacred ritual, whether of the Vedas, the Avesta, the Ancient Egyptians, etc. was an *attuning* process by means of consecration, incantation, chanting mantras to bring the officiating priests in tune with the cosmic powers. This is the basic meaning of *yaj* : to worship, relate the lower human to the higher divine octave. Was H.P.B. so very wrong when she declared that the *secret doctrine* "was the universally diffused religion of the ancient and prehistoric world? (S.D.I.p.xxxiv) Perhaps she just used the word *religion* slightly differently from our use of it.

### CONCLUSION

The whole mystery of the *word*, of *svara*, of *mantra*, the very core of that *darśana* or discipline which the ṛṣis held as their sacred lore and which gave rise to so many by-ways of speculation, lies hidden and to be discovered in certain inner mainsprings of the subtler human constitution and only properly aroused as a result of *tapas*. Herein lies the secret of the gnosis. So long as this vital link between specific inner activities of the human psyche and their outer manifestations remains unrecognised, misunderstood, ignored or derided, so long will the secret science of the *word* yield no valuable revelation and remain a mere speculation, a puzzle to exegesis, a nonsense to the rational mind.

Such Ṛgvedic verses as have been examined in chs 4 and 5, with their evident *esoteric doctrine* of fire/frequency as underlying the whole of manifestation, led to the affirmation of the gnosis as comprising knowledge of the *aksara*, the *puruṣa*, the truth. Here is implied a depth of cosmic and human insight that can only develop within a vast lapse of time; for the reaching out to, and the experiencing of, that highest gnosis and its final conceptualisation, its bringing down to the level of the mind for verbal expression, and the developing of a whole doctrine thereon, demands centuries of maturing process. To know the *akṣara* is to know the most intimate frequency within one's own *prāṇa/secret fire* - later called *ātman* which ever remains *flame-spirit*, later called *puruṣa*. To know the *akṣara* is to live in harmony with this innermost frequency which links humans to the devic/cosmic frequency - a rare achievement. It is to realise our bond with the cosmic harmony, hence with the devas and remain one with it. This was achieved by the ṛṣis. It means the conscious merging of the human *prāṇic* frequency with the Cosmic rhythm, to which leads deep meditation. The truth lies in that *flame-spirit* hidden in the human *heart cakra* whose basic frequency echoes the cosmic one. This was the mystical path of the ṛṣis as spelled out in the Ṛgveda in enigmatic images and hints, and somewhat explained in the Upaniṣads. This fact can no longer be denied! Can it be understood? The ramifications of the knowledge

of the *secret fire* and its *svara* are far extending, macrocosmically and microcosmically. Its original discovery and expression, lying with the original sages, the Ṛṣis of Āryāvarta, may be dug out in the Ṛgveda; certain explanations may be discovered in H.P.B.'s *The Secret Doctrine* and her *Esoteric Writings*.

## LOGOS AS SOUND, or THE CREATIVE WORD.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Note the further comment: "But there are two distinct aspects in universal Esotericism, Eastern and Western, in all these personations of the *female* power in Nature, or Nature the *noumenal* and the *phenomenal*. One is its purely metaphysical aspect ... the other terrestrial and physical, and at the same time *divine* from the standpoint of practical human conception ... They are all the symbols and personifications of *Chaos*, the 'Great Deep' or the Primordial Waters of Space, the impenetrable VEIL between the INCOGNIZABLE and the Logos of Creation." (S.D.I.p.431)

<sup>2</sup> In ratio we have the seed of reason; logos and logic, ratio and reason are interlocked and expressive of that ordering capacity which as sound shapes atoms or molecules into forms, which as mind plans and orders our lives according to certain patterns or archetypes inherent to the Universal Mind. Sound implies ratio and ratio implies reason and the latter implies, in humans, articulation. In man sound becomes speech, the articulation of reason.

<sup>3</sup> An unfortunate error has crept in this statement which the editor failed to pick up, viz., that Avalokiteśvara is assigned to the Hindus instead of to the Buddhists as always noted everywhere else. I have corrected this and it was corrected in the 4<sup>th</sup> Adyar edition. Perhaps the Sanskrit term contributed to the confusion for the editor. For H.P.B. knew very well that Avalokiteśvara is the "logos of the esoteric Buddhist" - see fn S.D.I. p.74. In C.W. vol. V she refers to "that only manifested deity ... called by the Northern and Chinese Buddhist Avalokiteśvara." In S.D. p.108 she writes: "As the synthesis of the seven Dhyāni-Buddhas, Avalokiteśvara is the inner 'God' of Gautama, who, in China, is called Amita(-Buddha)". See also S.D.I.p.130 fn, and the explanation of the meaning of the word in I.p.471-2, etc.

<sup>4</sup> This word whose meaning changed in course of time, is given in Monier Williams *Dictionary of Sanskrit* as literally "growth, expansion, evolution", but in the Ṛgveda as the "sacred word", "a text or mantra used as a spell", etc. *Brahman* in this sense of sacred word or formula capable of evoking the denizens of another dimension, is accented on the first syllable, as contrasted with brahmán the Universal Principle.

<sup>5</sup> *Cosmic Waters*. p.126.

<sup>6</sup> In his investigation of the science of *mantra* Gonda summarised his findings thus:

"The *śabda* or sound of a mantra is conceived as a 'spiritual' sound, produced by the worshipper's mind heard by the heart and understandable only by the initiated ... Each being, in all states of existence, and each inanimate object possesses a bodily form attuned to a certain frequency of vibration. That is to say, there is associated with each organic creature (sub-human, human and super-human) and with each phenomenal object or element, a particular rate of vibration. If this be known and formulated as sound in a mantra and if it be used expertly it is considered capable of disintegrating the object with which it is in

- vibratory accord, or of impelling deities to emit their divine influence. To know the mantra of any deity is therefore to know how to set up psychic communication with that deity ..." ("The Indian Mantra". In *Oriens* 16.1963.p.275). This is a most important explanation which throws light on the whole problem.
- <sup>7</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* BkI. ch.II.p.34-5. *Anugītā* ch.35 (S.B.E. vol.8.p.384) declares: "Now *ākāśa* has one quality and that is stated to be sound only ... *ākāśa* is the highest element (being all pervading) ..." This can be taken at the highest cosmic level and at the lowest - our terrestrial sphere.
- <sup>8</sup> op.cit. "Indological Studies in honour of W.N. Brown". *American Oriental Series*. vol.47, 1942. pp.1-7.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ṛgv.*VIII.41.10 *sadhāma pūrvyam mame; 4c samāta pūrvyam padam.*
- <sup>10</sup> "Agni, sun, sacrifice, and Vāc: a sacerdotal ode by Dīrghatamas (*Ṛgveda* I.164)." In *J.A.O.S.* 88 (2) June 1968, pp.199ff.
- <sup>11</sup> Even though its origin is not mentioned in J.N. Farquhar's *Outline of the Religious Literature of India*, which only traces it to the *Sāṅkhya-kārikā* by Īśvara Kṛṣṇa whom scholars date to the beginning of the 4th century A.D. , it is ascribed, in the *Purāṇas*, to the sage Kapila. In *The Secret Doctrine* vol.II pp.570-72 references are made to the various Kapilas of the *Purāṇas*. "The Sāṅkhya philosophy may have been brought down and taught by the first, and written out by the last Kapila". "Kapila ... is also the generic name of the Kūmaras, the celestial ascetics and virgins ..." The tenets of Sāṅkhya may have been "in the air" so to speak, during the age of the ṛṣis, without their having to mention its themes in their hymns. For *Ṛgv.*X.129 anticipates the Sāṅkhya theory of involution (*tirobhāva*) and evolution (*āvīrbhāva*) or manifestation; or *pralaya* and *sarga*, dissolution and creation; and the pre-existing "waters" of X.129.1, profound, unfathomable, that like a void covered that which was to come into being (v.3) herald the idea of *prakṛti* (matter) which emerges out of latency to objectivity - to serve the needs of the *puruṣas*.
- <sup>12</sup> *Bṛhad.Up.* III.8.11; cf. *Athv.*IX.10.22; XIII.1.42.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. *Ṛgv.*VIII.100.10; *Śat.Br.*IV.1.3.17.
- <sup>14</sup> *Prāṇava* refers to the sacred word which H.P.B. explains thus: "The *prāṇava*, OM, is a mystic term pronounced by the Yogins during meditation; of the terms called, according to exoteric Commentators, *vyahṛtis*, or Aum, *Bhūr, bhuvah, svaḥ* (Om, Earth, Sky, Heaven) *prāṇava* is the most sacred" (S.D.I.p.432.fn)
- <sup>15</sup> According to *The Secret Doctrine* "The 'Army of the Voice' is a term closely connected with the mystery of Sound and Speech, as an effect and corollary of the cause - Divine Thought ... The 'Army of the Voice' is the prototype of the 'Host of the Logos', or the 'WORD', of the *Sēpher Yetzīrah*, called in *The Secret Doctrine* 'the One Number issued from No-Number' - the One Eternal Principle." (S.D. I.p.93, 94)
- <sup>16</sup> *Svara* for H.P.B. "is the root of all sound" - "And if as Hindu philosophy teaches, at the beginning of cosmic evolution, 'Svara threw itself into the form of *Ākāśa*', and thence successively into the forms of *vāyu* (air), *agni* (fire), *apas* (water) and *pṛthivī* (solid matter) then it stands to reason that we have to begin by the higher supersensuous *tattvas* ... (E.W.p.399) This shows the *svara* as underlying all the elements.
- <sup>17</sup> Gonda's explanation of *Ṛgv.*VII.87.4 is quite revealing of the change of attitude towards the Vedas and the ṛṣis as evidenced among the best of Western scholars. He notes that "... *Varuṇa* is said to have revealed to the poet who calls himself 'wise', i.e. 'initiated' (*medhira-*), that the man who has knowledge of the

'mystic word' should utter it as (one reveals) mysteries, if he wishes to offer, as an inspired seer, his service to the later generations." (*Vision*. p.110)

<sup>18</sup> This is really the gist of Ṛgv.X.71.8&9. For Vedic meditation see my *The Vedas; Harmony, Meditation and Fulfilment*. Section II.

<sup>19</sup> *Cosmic Waters*. p.140.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* p.54.

<sup>21</sup> C.W. VII.p.66-67. Quoted in Spierenburg's *The Veda Commentaries of H.P. Blavatsky*. p.51.

<sup>22</sup> The *tattvas* (from *tat* = that + suffix *tva* = thatness or suchness) are the element-*principles*, or forces of Nature that ensoul and sustain matter. (E.W.p.391) The "*tattvas* are the modifications of *Svara*" which imply the action of *svara* on the element principles.

<sup>23</sup> Experiments have been made with music to find out how it affects plants and animals, harmonious music having a beneficial effect, discordant music affecting plants very badly.

<sup>24</sup> Compare Taittirīya.Sam.: "The fire is in the nest of the waters; therefore waters draw the fire; verily they enter their own birthplace." (Tait.S.V.6.44)

<sup>25</sup> Ṛgv. X.122.3; 45.2; IV.7.5; VIII.40.5; Śat. Br.VI.3.5.16.

<sup>26</sup> There is an esoteric meaning to progeny which has nothing to do with "sons", but with the fruit or results of the action described or hinted at. Here obviously the word that may bear progeny is the word that brings about and enhances eloquence, vision, etc.

<sup>27</sup> "Akṣara". *J.A.O.S.* vol.79.no.3. 1959. p.178-9. The fact that "without fire the word cannot even conceive the syllable" etc. implies the esoteric doctrine that mind is an expression of fire. Van Buitenen uses the word "ether" for *ākāśa*. From the esoteric and Śaṅkara's standpoint (the latter as noted in ch.3) the fifth terrestrial element is ether, not *ākāśa* which is the ultimate tenuous space matter. As we have no word for *ākāśa*, and *ākāśa* as the ultimate source of matter is unknown to the Western mind, one may understand why *ākāśa* is at times translated as ether. H.P.B. also occasionally lapsed into this confusion probably for convenience.

<sup>28</sup> *The Vedas*. p.68.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.* p.48-9. See also fn.25 of Ch. 10.

In connection with the *word* which finally manifests as speech D.M. Knipe emphasises:

"Speech, too, is born of *tapas*, and we recall the archaic links, perhaps Proto-Indo-European, between mind and speech. The *mahāvedī*, or sacrifice-ground, is at once the multi-leveled cosmos, the divine victim and the human sacrificer. Ś.B.3.5.3.3. expressly tells us that 'the *āhavanīya* fire is his mouth'. This corresponds with the moment in the *agnicayana* when Agni is established on the fifth layer of bricks 'in the center of speech' (VS.15.51). From the RV. - e.g. the enigmatic 'kindling' of speech(?), *vagnūn-indhānā*, in RV.10.3.4, a hymn to Agni, or 'the hymns with the heat of fire' (*agnitapobhir arkaiḥ*, RV.10.68.6) used as magic weapons by Bṛhaspati - through the Upaniṣads, there are constant connections established between fire and speech." (*In the Image of Fire*. p.96)

<sup>30</sup> *Vedic Experience*. p.109.

- <sup>31</sup> "The Indian Mantra". *Oriens*. Vol.6. 1963. p.277, 278-9. See also footnote 6 for Gonda's explanation of the *śabda* and frequency. (cf. *Śiva Sūtra* I.4)
- <sup>32</sup> "Les Premières Speculations sur les Puissances de la Parole." In "Recherches sur la Symbolique et l'Énergie de la Parole dans certains Textes Tantriques". Institut de Civilisation Indienne. 1963. fasc.21. pp.1-389.
- <sup>33</sup> *Darśana* = seeing, observing, perception; applies to the philosophical systems .
- <sup>34</sup> op.cit. p.15.

## CHAPTER 6

### SŪRYA, THE LIFE GIVING ILLUMINATOR

#### INTRODUCTION

The subject of the sun is one of the most seriously misunderstood and misinterpreted in Western exegesis of Ṛgvedic sacred texts. The esoteric tradition has always claimed a divine nature for the sun, and that is where the difficulty lies. According to *The Secret Doctrine*, the sun is the *logos* of our system, with all that this word implies, hence not just an incandescent orb but a centre of divine life.

For the Ancient seers the universe was no lifeless collocation of atoms haphazardly put together, a meaningless mechanism without any inner directive. They could not conceive an absurd world, but rather a network of live, intelligent forces, called *devas* or shining ones in the Vedas, closely interdependent and working together towards the achievement of a totality, a wholeness whose keynote can best be described as *harmony, order*; everything in the universe influenced everything else on every plane, subtle and invisible as well as visible and tangible; nothing was useless in the greater whole, and humanity had its specific role to play in the arena of life, like every other kingdom of nature; the sun and moon and the planets were interlinked and the abode of cosmic intelligences that influenced everything else. This was experienced, visioned; and this is where the ancient doctrine has little meaning to most since our world has been deprived of *life, zōe*, in the sense of energy activated from and through various centres of intelligences far superior to us and in no need of physical bodies, but manifesting on subtler levels, and intelligences far lower than us, a gradation of entities behind all phenomena of nature, indeed of cosmos. This perspective, part of the ṛṣi's vision of Cosmic Order, implies an essential solidarity of all beings and an interlinking of all things, an integrity at the cosmic level as ṚTA for the ṛṣi, as MAAT among the Egyptians.

Certain verses point to this *integrity* governing the cosmic and the human world:

"All devas, one-minded, one-intentioned, unerringly proceed to the one purposeful accomplishment." (Ṛgv.VI. 9.5cd)

"Vast truth, mighty order, consecration, contemplative exertion (*tapas*) invocation (*brahman*), sacrificial offering, uphold the earth." (Athv.XII.1.1)

"Where spiritual and ruling powers move together in unity, that world shall know as holy, where dwell the shining ones together with the Flame-divine." (Yjv.VS.20.25)

So ṛta is the order of the ṛṣi's vision as he chanted and addressed the sun as

"The brilliant countenance of the gods has arisen, the eye of Mitra-Varuṇa and Agni; Sūrya, spirit of the moving and unmoving, has filled the earth and sky and mid-region." (Ṛgv.I.115.1)

giving voice to a living experience at the core of which is supernal light, illumination. It is in this light that matured the vision and wisdom that made the seer a ṛṣi. To understand the mystery of the sun as viewed in the wisdom tradition, as one can reconstruct it in the Vedic texts, and as unveiled by H.P.B.,

one must understand, at least in its broad outline, the mystery of *light*.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of light has always accompanied the presentation of *revelation*, the mystery of the universe, of evolution, of life. But light is also concerned with our cognitive and understanding capacity and thereby with wisdom, the *gnosis*: evolution, growth and transformation, these three imply *life* and their understanding implies wisdom. Life and wisdom are inextricably interlinked through *light*, not through light in a metaphoric sense so much as an active factor that works through life and through our consciousness which thereby becomes capable of somewhat fathoming out the secret of the many facets of life, evolution, growth.

In ordinary parlance, we detect three aspects of light:

- 1) light as that subtle or imponderable energy whereby we can see, whether science theorises about waves or particles as forming its basis;
- 2) light as a cognitive factor of the human mind. To throw light upon a problem is an oft used set phrase which implies the *bringing out* into the mind's focus of awareness, of certain fundamentals hitherto unperceived concerning a problem, its essential meaning, etc. The very basis of en-light-enment is intelligence, (from *intellegere* to discern, choose) the capacity to grasp, discern, analyse and above all synthesise. Beyond both physical and mental aspects comprised in our notion of light, is the light of wisdom which brings out the hidden meaning behind forms or phenomena familiar to us, their inner relationship, their interdependence, the ultimate oneness of all; and hidden in that light is the light of the spiritual spark which grants illumination, deep flashes of insight into the very core of life, intuition, pure knowing. This leads to the third kind of light
- 3) light as illumination: the enlightenment of the Buddha; the transfiguration of Christ.

But there is a fourth kind of light, light as a power which can be wielded by man for constructive, healing, or destructive purposes - as recent discovery has revealed.

Laser is defined in the dictionary as "a device for converting light of mixed frequencies into an intense narrow monochromatic beam of coherent light". If we take light which in action is random, i.e. going in different directions, and *polarise* it by passing it through a crystal of ruby having particular and predetermined frequency, the result will be that light bounces inside the ruby unable to get out because of a gold lining which reflects it back to the centre of the ruby crystal or rod, and thus forces it to "march in step". Light is emitted, so to speak, as a regiment of soldiers marching in step. It is this process that produces energy capable of healing or destruction, as in laser surgery or laser warfare. In the natural theatre of light, the moon's light is polarised, i.e. the sunlight is absorbed by the moon's surface which mutes it and thus polarises it. This polarisation process is, on the whole, beneficial.

Recent discovery over the past decades has brought into focus an awareness of the electro-magnetic spectrum that stretches well beyond human perception and comprehension. Energy is thus today viewed not only as fleeting in our terms of reference but also as eternal with particles lasting a thousandth of a second or prolonged beyond imagination. In our phenomenal world the reception and transmission of the electro-magnetic spectrum of light give us perception of objects, determination of their colours and realisation of the phenomenal world we live in. In terms of consciousness we have here discrimination. This spectrum stretches into the regions of the invisible of which human physical perception at least of objects and colours is a very narrow band, being likened to a human hair placed on a road a hundred miles long. But there is a supersensuous kind of perception which enables the human being to register far more than the merely physical, and here there is no telling how far, in due time of evolution, this kind of perception will extend.

Light may have many more surprises for man in the future. Perhaps one of the Vedas' "most profound secrets", namely the "mysterious connection between *svara* and light" will one day be understood. (*Svara* has been translated as "intonation" but rather means frequency. Sound and light meet in their innermost frequency, as witnessed to by the ṛṣis.)

The closer one reaches to the centre of anything, the deeper one penetrates into the realm of light, of flame, of power, into the essence of being, into the very being of life. Light thus ranges from the lowest or material to the highest or spiritual, and this because its very basis or essence is the shining forth of a particular energy which differentiates through the impact of various levels of manifestation and activities. The network of light atoms that move according to their own inherent rhythm, forming patterns of various shapes and sizes, attracting and repulsing each other, whirls in a mighty dance which the Hindus have called the dance of Śiva, each around its own core which itself is an electric charge responsible for the discharge of light. Atomic

explosion discharged a blinding light at the physical level; paralleling this, but at a different, far more subtle level, at a point of extreme tension embracing the emotional, mental and psychic planes in a human being, a blinding light is also discharged, as witnessed to by certain of the world's mystics and by St Paul on the road to Damascus. Light at the core of the atom, light at the core of the spiritual; whether blinding, dazzling, or effulgent, all descriptions of high spiritual states mention light, illumination, the thousand suns of Arjuna vision in the Bhagavad Gītā. This is the solar splendour, *sva* of the Vedas. Who can tell but that the electric power at the heart of the atom, the tremendous energy as well as the blinding light released by atomic fission, and the dazzling illumination inherent to the higher states of consciousness, are but varied expressions, at their own particular level, of one and the same *power*, embodied in the sun? The sun is the blazing reservoir of light, a light that brings to humanity knowledge, enlightenment, illumination in its deepest spiritual sense, and according to the wisdom tradition, even far more than that. Light is an attribute of consciousness and consciousness, in which we all have a share, is ultimately the focus of celestial beings. All is interlinked. From this we may draw specific conclusions.

A quick survey of light as seen in the ancient traditions leads to remarkable conclusions. The following excerpts are taken from J. Gonda's *The Vision of the Vedic Poets*:

"The religious significance of light can hardly be over-estimated, first and foremost because the light of heaven is man's salvation. That light is joy, life and welfare was clear to the poets of the ancient Babylonian Samas hymns. In the city of God is, according to the Christian Apocalypsis Pauli (ch.21), a radiant light ... It is light that reveals things as they are and thus, of all sensible things and phenomena, most nearly approximates the truth. Hence phrases such as, in Psalm 43.3 'send Thy light and Thy truth' ...

In Zoroastrianism the function of 'light' is of considerable importance. Not only are the sun and the light described as the visible form of Ahura Mazdāh (Gāthā Hapt.) and is fire, the symbol of Truth and the focal point of the god's cult, identical with his Holy Spirit, not only is he, already in the Gāthās (cf. Y.31,7), associated with light, the substance of Ohrmazd is explicitly stated to be hot and moist, bright, sweet-smelling, and light (Gr.Bund.181,6), whereas that of Ahriman is 'cold and dry, heavy, dark, and stinking'. 'Ohrmazd was on high in omniscience and goodness; for Infinite Time he was ever in the light. That light is the space and place of His; some call it the Endless Light' (Gr.Bund.2,12f.) ...

It is therefore not surprising that, also in Buddhist texts, terms for 'light' may accompany those for higher insight or knowledge, that they are not infrequently used metaphorically. The conscious recognition of the Clear Light induces an ecstatic condition of consciousness which, being characteristic of 'saints' and successful mystics, may be called illumination. Thus in Samy. Nik.36.23.24 (4.233) it reads: '... There arose in me vision, there arose in me knowledge, insight arose, wisdom arose, light arose.'

Enumerating the four sources of light, viz. the sun, the moon, fire, the light of insight, of enthusiasm (*pīti*-), of trust (*pasāda*-) and of the teaching of a Buddha the Samy.Nik.1.3.6 (1.14) considers the last to be the best..." (op.cit. p.266-8)

"Man begins in the darkness of ignorance, the unawakened consciousness, and slowly grows into the light of God-realization... He has gained access to the eternal source of 'light' which will henceforth illumine his mind ... Brahman is, indeed, according to MuUp.2.2.10 pure without stain and the light of lights (*jyotiṣām jyotiḥ*); 'the formless brahman is real; it is light' (Mait.Up.6,3; cf. also 6,17)." (ibid. p.270)

The whole chapter is of highest importance in its elucidations of light. The ultimate light is the self (*ātmaivāsya jyotir bhavati*), the *ātman* or flame-spirit. In Chānd.Up.III.13.7 "the light which shines above this heaven ... that is the same as that which is here within the person." This simple statement perfectly shows the trend of the mystic apprehension of light.

For the well known mantra, as given in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad,

"From the unreal lead me to the real,  
from darkness to light,  
from death to immortality" (I.3.28)

"darkness verily is death, the light is immortality", as Śaṅkara explained; it is "one's divine nature. Knowledge, being luminous, is called light; and it again is immortality being of an imperishable nature."

(I.3.28. p.88-9 of Swamy Madhavānanda's trans. 1941). We should, however, realise that since all is relative in our world, light in respect to the ULTIMATE SOURCE, can be regarded as darkness!

We can agree that even physically the sun is the provider of the energy needed and used by all living beings. Electricity can be traced back, for instance, to photosynthesis in fossil fuels originating from the sun. We liberate energy from burning fossil fuels whose basis is primarily derived from photo synthesis and solar energy. The latter is also liberated in the burning process of these fossil fuels; in other words, we liberate the energy initially imparted to these elements from the sun. To create anything you need energy and when you destroy something you liberate energy; this is a two-way process in which fire or solar energy is encapsulated or freed. The physical expression of our system is one manifestation of solar energy; the other facet of this same energy is what *cannot be measured, weighed and quantified*, but what gives rise to the very basis of energy.

As the life support of a whole system of planets, it is not inconceivable that the sun should have a more than physical part to play in the system - a part of which the ancient seers, such as the ṛṣis of India and the initiates of Egyptian or Chaldean temples, seem to have been fully aware, but which we completely ignore. For us there is seemingly an unbridgeable gap between the physical or material aspect and the mental and spiritual. But this gap did not exist in the minds of the ancient sages because they saw the inner links. James Lovelock, originator of the Gaia hypothesis suggested that earth is best understood as a single organism which implies that everything is inter-related in such a way as to form a wholeness. This was the insight of the ancient sages. Since the sun is the source of all physical energy in the earth's life, it seems a small stretch of the imagination to see the sun as the giver of other kinds of energy, and to see a star in the same light.

For the ṛṣis, as for the *esoteric tradition*, the sun is the giver of all energies, and in particular of that energy which we can only classify as spiritual in a broad sense, i.e. embracing the non physical, whether mental, psychic, or purely spiritual, the latter quite beyond the mind. So for the ṛṣis the sun had many facets, which to the early Western scholars, as to most of us nowadays, remained meaningless for they could not stretch their minds to beyond the immediate frontiers of the seen, seeing next to nothing beyond the giver of physical light; whereas the seers of old perceived in the sun a profound significance and a role of mighty import. Many of these insights can be traced in the Ṛgveda and will be examined in the following pages.

## PART I

Sūrya, the golden Deity, the majestic Sun drawn by his Seven Steeds in the vast expanse of space, as visualised by the poets, is not

"... little more than a part of nature, created and controlled by those spiritual powers which exist above and beyond all material phenomena."<sup>2</sup>

as Muir described him; is not just a lifeless orb or mere machine that gives us light, warmth and vitality; he is for the ṛṣis the "all beholding eye"<sup>3</sup> generated by the gods, their own insight,<sup>4</sup> by means of which the luminous deities, Mitra and Varuṇa, and others behold the infinite and the finite, view the deeds and misdeeds of humans.<sup>5</sup> The sun as Savitṛ is the stimulating power that spurs both nature and man to growth, to greater perfection of forms or - in the case of humans, to higher achievements. The sun as Sūrya is the *ātman*, the spirit of all that moves and moves not. The sun as Pūṣan is the guardian of the paths and the "liberator" of humans. The sun as *svar*, is the living embodiment of the light of illumination leading to the *highest empyrean*. The sun as Vivasvat is "father" of the human race - the first, the eternal sacrificer. Here is already a rich array of views, names, nuances, facets to the sun. Viṣṇu and Indra are also solar deities that have their part to play in the cosmic drama and Agni whose link with Sūrya is fully recognised, shines in heaven as Sūrya's resplendent light; and Soma, the thousand-eyed seer, lord of the ṛṣis, nectar of immortality, "mounts on Sūrya's chariot" (IX.75.1), makes Sūrya ascend to heaven (IX.107.7), "generates light in Sūrya" (IX.97.41).

These facets may be viewed as metaphoric, poetic expressions, not to be taken seriously; but metaphors that reveal psychic perceptions and experiences are vitally important as pointing to the outlook of the ṛṣis! As one explores the labyrinth of Vedic thought, a pattern of vast compass and deep significance emerges, a network of inter-relationships that links human and deva hosts in an inextricable wholeness of far-reaching compass, which superficial reading and loss of the value of the *sacred*, observable in translations, totally missed out.



### GOLDEN SAVITR THE STIMULATOR

As Savitr, the divine vivifying aspect of the sun stimulates all things to grow, reach maturity and fulfill their appointed task; whose ascending and descending along the dustless paths of space have been from everlasting (I.35.11); who fills the whole of Heaven and Earth, those parents of the gods, as he "fashions the holy-song" (*śloka*) which is the cosmos, in accordance with which he fulfills his cosmic task, his *dharman*. Of the three heavens in existence, two are in his lap, one is in that of Yama who presides over those who have departed to the beyond. All immortal creatures rest in Savitr as on the axle-end of a chariot (I.35.6). Supporter of heaven (IV.53.2), he is called Lord of creatures (*prajāpati*).

Savitr toils in accordance with the ṛta (VIII.86.5ab). Under his guardianship each kingdom of nature has its own domain, task, activity. The waters obey him, night comes at his bidding, he awakens all creatures and lays them all to rest (II.38.2). Savitr is the "seer", the inspired, the vibrant one (*vipra*) par excellence and as such he inspires his own priest-seers. So

"They harness their mind, they harness their visionary-insights,  
the seers of the lofty Seer, the inspired One. He alone, well versed in ordinances,  
assigns their task to the priests. Mighty be the praise-song of divine Savitr." (V.81.1)

He it is who grants to the gods immortality, the highest share - for in past ages they were not immortal but through their activity in harmony with the Law they earned their immortality. This is quite in line with the *secret doctrine*.

"But to human beings, as their portion, thou hast  
opened out successive existences." (IV.54.2)

in accordance with the great cosmic rhythm of cycles, of seasons, of day and night, birth and death, breathing in and breathing out. To Savitr, illuminator and guide, is addressed the great Hindu mantra, the *gāyatri*.

### PŪṢAN THE GOOD SHEPHERD

The Sun as Pūṣan who sweeps forth in Savitr's vivifying energy up and down for ever, is the good shepherd, the guardian of cattle, human and animal, called *son of liberation*,<sup>6</sup> *lord of the pathways* who brings travellers back home in safety, whose glowing power (*aghni*) shines in the depths, whose "prayer stimulating goad" and "heart tearing awl" (VI.53.8) make of him the divine torturer in the human conscience, but also the one who, inserted in all creatures<sup>7</sup> listens to human cries,<sup>8</sup> to those who seek his favour.<sup>9</sup> He draws or harnesses to himself the heart and mind (*manas*) of all.<sup>10</sup> Like Savitr, he stirs the visionary insight<sup>11</sup> that takes the poet to the shining heights of prayer.<sup>12</sup> Pūṣan probes the human heart, sharpens the human mind, tests us in all our secret recesses; he is asked to "sharpen us like a razor" (VIII.4.16). Sharp as the razor's edge, say the Upaniṣads, is the path of return to the Source. No wonder that Pūṣan is the divine torturer, but also the liberator (*vimocana*) who helps humanity turn away from the "two-faced evil" lurking on the pathways. Here is an example of that blending of the cosmic and the psychological so evident in certain Vedic gods. Glowing, vivifying Savitr, ecstasy-granting Soma, Pūṣan the liberator, though armed with a heart tearing awl, such aspects buried deep within the psyche, are hidden in a mythological language that could distract the attention from the aim of the poet. That Pūṣan should be called a "liberator" may strike us as odd. One is reminded of the words of the "Saviour" of the Christian era: "I am the way, the truth and the light", words that echo a very ancient *gnosis*, an insight into our own innermost recesses where is the way, the light, the goal; the secret, glowing, illuminating directive power lying buried in the psyche, for the ṛṣi: enshrined in Pūṣan, the glowing shepherd, guardian of the paths, son of liberation, *inserted in every creature*.<sup>13</sup>

### SŪRYA THE ILLUMINATOR

The sun as Sūrya is the maker of light, of luminous space<sup>14</sup> whose shimmering rays plunge, like a skin the darkness into the waters, into the deep.<sup>15</sup> He comes with his seven steeds, beholding the whole universe.<sup>16</sup> As *ātman* of the moving and the unmoving, as eye of the gods, he is their organ of perception; through that eye not only the luminous deities or Ādityas but also Indra view the world.<sup>17</sup> That Sūrya is considered the very instrument of the gods' vision and omniscience which they themselves have generated, should alert us to the meaning of his essential nature: *vision, insight, illumination, omniscience*. These are his specific attributes but these also belong to the luminous gods, though perhaps not as clearly. Sūrya, like Agni, is common to all

humans (VII.63.1) as to all gods, but not just in the physical sense that all can see him on high, but in the psychological sense as the eye of perception, outward and inward, the eye of sight and insight. Here is evidenced the fact oft noticed that the gods are cosmic principles that also manifest in human beings at the psychological and spiritual levels.

As the eye of the far-sighted gods<sup>18</sup> Sūrya partakes in their work of creation, is himself the far-sighted or wide-visioned one<sup>19</sup> whose blessing is requested, is himself the divine insight into all things, combining vision and wisdom and representing the gods' omniscience. He is the radiantly beautiful face of ṛta the Cosmic Order. We should note this combination of insight yielding vision and wisdom whose basis is intelligence, understanding, discernment. The fact that the Cosmic Order is in question more than hints at a cosmic activity embodied in the sun: he is the "face", the visible expression of "order, of the law, of truth", for these three notions are contained in the word *ṛta*. Sūrya "illuminates by means of the song born of ṛta." (X.138.2d), very esoteric words, for *song/sound* and *light* act on each other, are interlinked in the world of the ṛṣis.

"To law flow out the rivers; as truth spreads out the sun." (I.105.12)

"Let prayer issue forth from the seat of Cosmic Order as Sūrya, with his beams, releases the herds" (of the heavens). (VII.36.1)

"By ṛta (the law) have the herds (of the universe) entered the ṛta (Cosmic Order)." (IV.23.9d)

"The vibrant one who secretly does know these gods' origin and threefold hosts, Sūrya, as he beholds the true and false midst mortal men, takes note of gracious ways." (VI.51.2)

Hence the prayer to Sūrya to come and glance at us, mortals, and declare us sinless before the gods,<sup>20</sup> those followers of ṛta, who "rule over the whole world in accordance with ṛta" (V.63.7c), whose knowledge of truth and falsehood, through Sūrya, remains infallible.<sup>21</sup>

Such epithets as the "all-seeing eye" of Sūrya (*Viśvacaṣa*) which is also used for Viśvakarman the All-maker or Architect of the world, and of Soma the ecstasy granter, as wide visioned insight (*urucakṣas*) and widely observant (*vicaṣana*) significant of a limitless range of *knowing*, both in compass and in depth, illustrate, according to J. Gonda

"... the belief in an omniscience which is based essentially on the power of sight; a knowing which comes from, or is intimately connected with, an unusual and supra normal faculty of seeing ... 'Visual omniscience' is the specific attribute of deities and not, or not primarily, of deities in general, but of those gods who are somehow connected with the heavenly realms of light ... These deities are all knowing because all seeing and all seeing because they are luminous."<sup>22</sup>

The ṛṣis were "seers" whose gnosis stemmed from their insight and vision. The word *caṣas* in the above compounds has both connotations, of *eye* and *brilliance*, of *sight* and *radiance*. The adjective derived from it, *vicaṣana*, "widely observant", links shining far and wide with perceiving in depth. Like Sūrya, Savitṛ is the clear-sighted or wide-eyed one, the epithet also applying to Agni, Soma and Indra. Light, radiance, insight, knowledge, omniscience, are interlinked and denote one meaning of Sūrya.<sup>23</sup> Sūrya *knows*; he not only illuminates but through that illumination he grants understanding, insight, gnosis to his worshippers, those who meditate on him. Āditya, the sun, is said to have marked out a pathway in heaven which no deva transgresses, but "this, you mortals behold not" (I.105.16); so then, obviously this pathway refers to that inner trail of the flame-spirit, Agni/Sūrya.

Sūrya, the transcendent eye of the cosmos, emerges as the very core of that celestial light and spiritual insight which makes the human being a seer, a knower, a ṛṣi, a *svardṛś* - gazer into the solar splendour. There is here a blend of the outer and the *inner sun* or blazing light, for it is only through that inner light of psyche that one may become *svardṛś*. Whether the ṛṣis projected their illumined consciousness upon the form of the golden orb as Sūrya or Savitṛ, or the golden juice, Soma, or the fine-winged bird, *suparnaḥ*, the sun-bird or solar ray<sup>24</sup> as an image, is of far less importance than the actual insight that led them to choose such images as these; they reveal a state of soul, *état d'ame*, that has plunged in its own spiritual depths where form disappears and only flame-power and blazing splendour are left. When Bṛhaspati, the Lord of Prayer is asked for that resplendent wealth, that splendour that shines mightily, that illumines with power and excellence,<sup>25</sup> there is no doubt that this is *svar*, the sphere of solar radiance and illumination to which the seer had entrance in his moments of

ecstasy. All spiritual insights, as revealed by the mystics of all times, are accompanied by light, a tearing of the "veil", a feeling of expansion and invigoration, an infinite upliftment. Shining, seeing, and exaltation become one, give the sense of immortality, infinitude. So the Atharvaveda describes the sun as "The one eye of what exists which looks beyond the sky, the earth, the waters." (Athv. XIII.1.45)<sup>26</sup>

#### SVAR THE SOLAR SPLENDOUR; ITS SIGNIFICANCE AND WESTERN EXEGESIS

A number of words, mostly of one or two syllables, may pass by unnoticed and yet they contain an insight of profound import; these are *tat*, "That" the Vedic conception of the Absolute implied in Ṛgv.X.129; *ṛta* the Cosmic Order; *sat* being and *asat* non-being and their inter-relationship; and *svar*, with all its combinations, such as *svarvid*, *svardṛś*, *svarjit*, *caḥṣas*, etc., in which lies the mystical gnosis of the ṛṣis. However, such epithets connected with *svar* suffer a complete downgrading to the mere physical level among exegetists. This is the systematic secular degradation of religious *sacred texts* whose meaning soared far beyond the physical, to which Western scholars of a certain generation have reduced Vedic sacred texts.

This particular word, *svar*, in the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda, has been philologically established as generally meaning sun; *svar* and *sūrya* being etymologically related. It has been studied in particular by L. Renou (E.V.P. IV. and JAOS. 85.no.1. 1965. P.83-5) also Gonda and Luders in *Varuṇa*, II.p.396-401. In his article in JAOS. 85, which will be the object of the present discussion, Renou gave an excellent linguistic analysis of *svar*. He mentions the oscillation between sun and sky or heaven (French like German has only one word for these two - *ciel*) and when in connection with Agni translates *svarvid* as "he who procures the sun", which even literally is meaningless! The natural "compromise" between *svar* and *ciel*, as he sees it, has been "solar light", "or what comes to the same thing, celestial light" but there is a vast difference between celestial light in the spiritual sense and solar light always understood in the physical sense. For Renou "ciel" would merely give a better sense in some contexts: "Vedic phraseology is such that it often matters little to render (*svar*) by 'ciel' or by 'sun'" (p.84). This is where the philological and the esoteric approach clash and where one detects an incapacity to see the underlying spiritual significance of *sacred texts* among too many Western scholars. In VI.72.1.cd, addressing Indra-Soma, the poet exclaims: "You found Sūrya, you found *svar*, you destroyed all obscurities and mockeries". Here Sūrya is the *doorway* to *svar*; the solar blaze proclaims that *svar* is a state of blazing illumination, hence the coupling of the two and their close relationship. Further, the darkness is banished, all the mockeries or denigrations to which the lower mind is all too prone, are discarded.

Renou goes on: "the whole terminology associated with *svar* already implies the idea of a 'good' to be expected and so to speak to be conquered." Thus *sūryasya sātih* (the conquest of *sūrya*) leaves more chance to using the term *sūrya* than heaven, especially in compounds such as *caḥṣas (svarṣāti) svarjit, svarvid, svarmīdha*. But no one, neither Renou, nor Kuiper, nor Luders, seems to grasp what this *winning svar, finding svar, or conquering svar* signifies in a *sacred text*!

In his summing up Renou admits: "there exist two rather distinct forms of the solar notion in the RV; one more ample, more linked to varied images whose characteristic may be either naturalistic or mythological, Sūrya; the other, *svar (sūra)* more restricted, more abstract and comprising, through the primary idea of celestial light, that of a not so well defined felicity but more apt to be valued among the supreme aspirations of the Vedic poets." (op.cit.p.85)

This definition, although still vague in certain respects, comes closer to the notion of *svar* and its conquest, but fails to admit a central spiritual significance to *svar*.

Gonda, from his exhaustive examination of the word in the *Atharvaveda*, cautiously concludes that "... it would appear that the *svar* is on the one hand ... a form of 'light' and on the other hand beyond the vault of heaven: AV.4.14.3 'From the back of the earth I have ascended to the intermediate space (*antarikṣam*): from that to the sky (*divam*), from the back of the sky, of the vault of heaven I have gone to 'heaven' (*svar*), to (celestial) light (*jyotiḥ*); according to the commentary *svar* means *āditya*, 'the sun', and *jyotiḥ* the 'golden person' in that luminary."<sup>27</sup>

This verse obviously describes an "ascent in consciousness" to a state of illumined apprehension, activated by *tapas*, covering *antarikṣam, divam, and svar* translated as the "sun" and the golden "person" - rather spirit in the sun,<sup>28</sup> (no ascent to outer space) the solar blaze in its spiritual meaning being the entrance to *svar*. (cf. Chand. Up. VIII.6.5 which gives the hint.) This *antarikṣam* is "an *inner shrine*"; it is this that we must

seek" (Chānd.Up.VIII.1.1.Quoted in *Vedic Experience*, p.781). Thus when Gonda remarks that this "celestial brightness can be 'ascended' (Athv.4.11.6; 14.6), or one can go to it... (or) reach it by austerity or asceticism (*tapasā*)" etc. , these are the mystical ways of describing the strenuous efforts needed to reach the all too spiritual goal, the *ascent* to higher spheres.

Gonda goes on:

"In [Athv.] 16.9.3 ... the *sva*r to which those speaking say they have gone and the light of the sun with which they have united (*sam sūryasya jyotiṣāganma*) combine in an interesting way; whatever the relation to *sva*r and *sūrya*, those who have reached *sva*r have come into immediate contact with the light of the sun."<sup>29</sup>

The light of the sun in its *transcendental sense* is meant here, as experienced by the ṛṣi in the highest state of consciousness, wherein the spiritual state assumes a solar blaze. Another verse examined by Gonda and found "very instructive" is translated thus:

"We shall with the light (*jyotiṣa*) with which the gods ... went up to heaven (*dyām*), to the place of religious merit (*sukṛtasya lokam*), go to the place of religious merit, ascending the celestial region (*sva*r) unto the highest vault (*nākam*)." (Athv.11.1.37)

Here again is denoted an ascent from one state to another, to *sva*r and, as it seems, to an even higher state than *sva*r.<sup>30</sup> Granted that "the ideas of sun, sunlight, celestial light" are as Gonda sees it, "mixed up with those of well-being (*svasti*), good fortune, happiness ..." etc. all interlinked in the estimation of the ṛṣis, there is here a lack of understanding of *sva*r as a *spiritual state of consciousness*, comprised of bliss, radiance and a sense of immortal being. To speak of a mixing of ideas of celestial light with happiness, etc. reduces the whole impact of the verses to the rational level, which is not their level! All mystics know that entrance into the higher spheres involves *felicity* and *illumination*. *Sva*r's basic spiritual significance the rational approach can never fathom. *Tapas*, spiritual exertion, as the way to *sva*r (Rgv.X.154.2) proves its meaning of inner stages of progressive illumination as correct. To this state of bliss and effulgence to which Sūrya marked the entrance, the ṛṣi had access in his moments of ecstasy. Here could be recalled the golden "monstrance" of a full blazing sun enshrining the "consecrated host" that stands on the altar of Catholic churches, a great symbol if any, but who understands the full meaning? The esoteric tradition lurks even in some Christian practices.

The whole theme of *sva*r centres around the golden, blazing, unearthly light of *sva*r, as of the sun. Terms such as "shining", "blazing", "flashing", or derived from "glow", "radiance", etc. all qualify the *dhiḥ*, the vision translated into a eulogic hymn. Such hymns are the outcome, the "harvest" of the ṛṣis' entrance into the higher spheres of consciousness and what they reap from it. In a prayer to Mitra-Varuṇa (I.139.2) the seers claim that they saw in these gods' "seats" the "golden-one" (*hiraṇyam*)

"with our power of vision, with our mind, with our own eyes, through the eyes proper to Soma".

(Gonda's translation, *Vision*.

p.69)

Such "supranormal sight", to use Gonda's expression, is ascribed to their visionary capacity, to their mind, to their eyes and finally to Soma's eyes, i.e. "to the special visual faculty granted by Soma ... 'with the faculty of universal vision' proper to Soma" (ibid.p.69), a reference to the "thousand-eyed Soma" (IX.60.1; II.65.7.). This seership, practically only investigated and admitted by Gonda, takes the ṛṣi far beyond our earthly sphere, to that blazing domain for which we have no word, no conception (or acknowledgement among scholars), which the ṛṣis called *sva*r, the Greeks' *empyrean*, both conceptions harbouring the notion of flame. For the sun, we are told, "blazing forth *sva*r with his celestial- light (*vibrājan jyotiṣa sva*r) has reached the celestial spheres" (X.170.4). This simple verse gives the whole clue to *sva*r, to Sūrya's role in the apprehending of *sva*r, to Agni's presence as the blazing, all consuming, unconsumed eternal Flame at the core of the ṛṣis' apprehension, a cosmic vision which spells the sacredness of the R̥gveda, yet completely missed by our Western exegesis.

Even Gonda lapses at times into errors of appreciation which degrade the spiritual sense of *sva*r, even

though he does admit "Vedic *sva*r did not ... necessarily denote the sun as the celestial body ... The term may imply the celestial light as well as the bright heavenly abode". (*Loka*. p.75). But to declare that "those who see the sun" (*svardṛṣ*) are "those who are alive" (*Loka*. p.79) which is immediately taken in a

physical sense, misses the whole mystical significance and seems a complete disregard of the very important nuance of Gonda's own remark that *svardṛś* refers rather to "a seeing by means of the light of heaven". A deep esoteric meaning lurks in this word, unnoticed though it be, pointing to those whose "insight" is illumined by the inner solar blaze - of a purified psyche. Such meaning obviously goes beyond those who physically look at the sun - remembering that one cannot gaze directly at the sun!

Two examples, among others given by Gonda concerning "those who see the sun, that is those who are alive", VII.58.2, & 83.2, deserve examination. The first, extremely ambiguous, concerns the Maruts, storm gods, solar heroes, the lightning singers of the heavens (V.57.5) who are *svabhānavah*, self luminous (V.53.4; I.64.2). The verse in question mentions that each *svardṛk*, svar-gazer - sees by the light of svar, or the solar eye - fears the swiftly moving, almighty Maruts; taken literally each sun-gazer fears the Maruts as storm gods. If we took H.P.B.'s hint that the Maruts, in one of their meanings, also symbolise human passions which shake men like storms, so those who had a glimpse of *sva* and therefore of flame-power, of the spiritual realm, still fear the "storms" to which humans are prone, for the flame-power in its sweep will activate whatever it touches, the pure or the impure, wreaking havoc on the latter.

The same word, now in the plural, occurs in VII.83.2, an even more obscure verse which refers to that sphere wherein nothing dear takes place, where people or worlds and *sva*-gazers take fright and the poet asks Indra-Varuṇa "to speak for us". This is the crossing of the "great darkness" mentioned in Atharvaveda IX.5.1 where Agni is asked to conduct the departing soul to where righteous deeds have their reward, past the "great darkness". Ṛgv.VII.83.2 refers to an aspect of that so-called "underworld", the darkness which those who have experienced *scar* may still have to encounter on the way to the higher celestial spheres, and dread it. For the plunge in psyche's domain is found to be the same journey as that of the departed soul on its way to its appointed destination. This is also the discovery of the mystic.

Other problems occur in connection with *svarvat*, translated by Gonda as "possessed of sunlight" (*Loka*, p.79). When coupled with light, *jyotis*, he has "light possessed of sunlight" - too absurdly redundant. To translate *svarvaj jyotiḥ* (X.36.3) as the "full light of the sun" is extremely poor, for it fails to focus on the spiritual intent of the Sanskrit and is in such contexts meaningless. Similarly, *dymnam svarvat* (VI.19.9; 35.2) translated as "sunny splendour" absurdly reduces the whole context of the transcendent *sva* to sunny brightness! (Similarly to translate *svarvatir āpaḥ*, as Luders does as "waters equipped with the sun" is another absurdity!) That these are religious, sacred texts is, in such translations, totally forgotten. *Sva* represents nothing physical and would be better off not translated or else rendered as *empyrean*, its Greek equivalent. *Dymnam svarvat* would be better rendered as *sva*'s splendour.

Two examples from *Loka* (p.79) concerning *svarvat*, Ṛgv.V.2.11 and I.10.8, are of particular interest.

Gonda refers V.2.11 to the "conquest of water with the light of the sun", which he explains as no doubt "a repetition in phenomenal time of the god's great mythical deed", i.e. Indra's conquest of the waters. But looking more closely at the verse, the wish is to obtain the "svar-possessing waters" (*svarvatir-āpaḥ*), that is, the waters imbued with solar blaze, *solar power* - giving life, light and insight; to gain these waters of *inspiration* rather than physical waters, the poet has fashioned a new hymn to please Agni, the inner flame - so Agni will help in giving him the coveted, inspiring, *sva-empowered-waters*.

In I.10.8 Indra is asked to win for the poet the same *svarvatir āpaḥ* and to "shake" down the many "cows" (rays of light) confined in the stable which he is asked to open (v.7). In both verses these "waters" seem far more the *waves of inspiration and exaltation* surging from the depth of psyche than a recall of mytho-cosmological events of long ago; waters vibrant with the blazing power of Sūrya which lead to the prized state of consciousness of *sva*; waters imbued with the power of Soma, "the highest ṛṣi surpassing the ṛṣi" whose drops are *eloquence* and *sva*- bestowing, illuminating channels of inspiration that enthral the poet unto the higher spiritual spheres ; making him vibrate to his own inner transcendent flame. This is again and again the poet's request to the gods. The whole quest, the whole plea, the whole song about the "solar-powered waters" is directed to the conquest of *sva* with a plea for vigour, for valour: "Agni the knower procures heroic-might, procures vigour intent on immortality" (III.25.2ab) and Soma "far-seeing mind, enlightening, *sva*-bestower ... the mighty one strives after his third estate" and he also "declares his fourth estate" (IX.96.18,19), most likely corresponding to *sva*, to that fourth (or first)

dimension of Vāc and of Puruṣa hidden away in the transcendent realms. One cannot help here but recall the words of the Christian Saviour "...whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." (John iv.13-14)

The waters that quench the thirsty man have ever had a double meaning. The *svarvatīr āpaḥ* emphasise their blazing exaltation for which the ṛṣis yearned. That state of *svar*, when in the specific sense of ecstasy, was represented by Soma, elixir of life or nectar of immortality (*amṛta*). Hence the mytho-poetic language whereby Soma "mounts on Sūrya's chariot" (IX.75.1), or makes Sūrya ascend to heaven (IX.107.7), or Soma shining by means of Sūrya (IX.2.6); his "robes" are Sūrya's rays (X.86.32). Both blend in their meaning, hence Soma "generates light in Sūrya" (IX.97.41ab) and even more boldly "generates Sūrya" (IX.110.3). Such language has blinded many, like Keith, to the fact that beyond any objective expression of Soma, there is a subjective dimension which hints at an inner spiritual significance out of all relation to any physical expectation:

"Soma is thought to have been drunk when they have pressed the plant.  
The Soma whom the Brahmans know, of that no one tastes.  
No earthly born can taste of thee." (X.85.3.4)

The hints are clear: real Soma belongs to the realm of the transcendent, and only that spark of the transcendent in human beings can realise it, i.e. fully share in its gift. This is how the images connected with Sūrya as the transcendent illuminator should be taken. But even such a clear hint as "no earthly born" is disregarded! So the seers behold the "golden one", "not with visionary thought or mental insight, but with the very eyes of Soma" (I.139.2), viz., the eyes of ecstasy. So the poets exclaim:

"We have drunk Soma, we have become immortal,  
we have come to the light, we have found the gods" (VIII.48.3) -

divinity, light and immortality showing gradations in the rapture experienced. Such rapture is not sheer drunkenness as some would have it. Even the Sufi poets used the image of wine and its exhilaration to describe their exaltation. The gradations hinted at in the quote but left unexplained, could refer to the three "domains" pertaining to Soma. Thus in the following verse:

"Far-seeing mind, enlightening, *svar*-bestower, skilled in a thousand ways,  
leader of the inspired-poets, the mighty one (Soma) strives after his third estate."  
(IX.96.18)<sup>31</sup>

"The mighty one declares his fourth estate." (IX.96.19)

No doubt, these *domains* relate to states of consciousness attained by the ṛṣis, states which were to be explained in the Upaniṣads - to degrees of enlightenment on the inner path to *svar*, to supreme illumination of which Soma was the personified inspirer. The power of the word, *vāc* (Soma gives eloquence),<sup>32</sup> the vision or revelation that ensues, the ecstasy, in short Soma

"opens up, as it were, an unfailling fountain-spring as beverage for man." (IX.110.5)

these are steps in an inner progression during which Soma, the celestial catalyst,

"effects union and release for our help" (IX.84.2c)

union with that loftier state of consciousness called *svar* to which the inner solar blaze was the doorway. These may be taken as surmises, but in the light of the evidence building up from the many hints in the hymns, and the very mystical trend of the verses, they are extremely plausible. In placing the eye with the sun, as one poet says (IX.10.8), Soma makes human sight, or should one say *insight*, equivalent to Sūrya's all seeing gaze, a very powerful image. Soma, Sūrya, Agni and *svar* are all interlinked in a far reaching, transcendental journey that took the ṛṣi, through the power of *brahman*, to the splendour of a supreme vision - the all blazing state of *svar*. This is the psycho-spiritual content of the Ṛgveda. To deny it as some have done shows sheer ignorance.

#### THE CONQUEST OF SVAR: ITS MYSTICAL MEANING

Glimpses into the religio-psycho-spiritual world of the ṛṣis through their prayers and eulogies and mythological language of assaults on mountain rocks - what we would term a no-man's-land - in order to gain *svar*, usually through rending the rock by means of their chants, etc. bear a spiritual message out of all relation to Kuiper's argument in his "Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest" (I.I.J. 1960 p.217-81) concerning a socio-religious

activity of sun-racing in Ṛgvedic times. Enquiring into the

"religious significance of these 'races that had the sun as their prize',  
of this 'acquiring of the sun'" (op.cit. p.220)

Kuiper relates it to the winter solstice and the anxiety and darkness it generates; such rituals, he maintains, having been inaugurated to assist Indra in his fight against death and darkness. Such supposed races, which look far more like chanting dynamics as part of the ṛṣis' *tapas* in order to break through the "inner darkness" which guards the threshold on the way to the higher spheres, would as such embody a seed of spiritual truth. Taken as mere "sun-racing", "sun-finding", etc. in the physical sense, the idea shows a complete devaluation of the import of *svar*, whereas the word used is *svar*, not Sūrya, which however is also sacred. Thus inspired (*viprāḥ*) Kuśikas priests "longing for the sun" (III.30.20 *svaryavaḥ*), as Kuiper translates, for the reader merely means that the sun had stopped shining for a long time, so little is there any inkling of the sun's spiritual meaning. Similarly the Aśvins' "sun -finding chariot laden with riches" (VII.67.3), as many other verses, all use the word *svar*, not Sūrya. Admittedly there are cases, where the meaning of *svar* merges with that of the sun as in V.45.1: "Svar has risen and uncovered those-herded together". This is where mystical discrimination is required! But even here, the second pada mentioning the "human door" being opened by the deva - Sūrya - implies a play upon both meanings: the rising sun illumines the outer landscape, the inner sun which leads to the transcendent illumines the psyche's space, the human mind being the first "door" to be opened on the beyond.

*Svar* is not easy to attain; it requires a hundred-fold help from Indra, in combats which have *svar* as their prize (*svarmīlheṣu* I.130.8) - difficult to understand when one has no experience of the spiritual life; or again "men call upon Indra in the 'tumult of battle', in the conquest of *svar*" (I.63.6, *arṇasatau svarmīlhe*; also VIII.68.5). One easily recalls here the Christian "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence"! It also did in Vedic times. So the poet asks Soma to "bring hither that resplendent courage *svar*-finding" (IX.106.4 *svarvidam*). Or again this plea to Indra "I implore of thee that excellent heroic-power, that *brahman*, for sake of insight" (VIII.3.9) (*purvacittaye*, meaning wisdom, understanding, before hand), or for assistance in the conquest of *svar* (IV.16.9). *Svar* is wealth but not in the one sense that we only know. To Soma is asked:

"Make us more excellent" IX.4.1); "Win light, win *svar* and all felicity" (IX.4.2).

Seen in this light the combat for *svar* loses its secular colouring given by Kuiper and remains in harmony with the tone of sacred texts. Even the ṛṣis of earlier times found it difficult to break through the "doorway" as told in JUB. IV.14. 5ff. and turned to Indra for help (see ch.4). What is *that svar* which Indra is related to have won as a result of his enkindling himself to the highest degree through his *tapas*, i.e. his spiritual exertion (X.167.1), but an exalted state of consciousness gained by means of *tapas*, requiring inner effort, struggle, perseverance, self-kindling, indeed courage, valour. This again is where our Western scholars fail utterly to grasp the significance of that conquest of *svar*, well encapsulated in the following simple but all telling verse:

"Gazing upon the loftier light beyond the darkness, we have  
reached Sūrya, divine among divinities, loftiest light. " (I.50.10)

This is no physical pretence at reaching Sūrya as a result of a sun-race to bring back the "disappeared" physical sun. Neither Kuiper nor Renou mentions the above mystical verse which proclaims in forceful terms the ṛṣis' entrance into the solar blaze state of consciousness. This is proof enough of the ṛṣis' mystical authenticity, many such experiences being of a blazing quality. Thus Arjuna's vision of the Lord Kṛṣṇa:

"If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze out together in the sky,  
That might resemble the glory of that Mahātman". (Bh.Gītā 11.12)

Or again St Paul struck blind because of too much blaze in his encounter with the Christ on the way to Damascus. There are many such records in the annals of mysticism. In Ṛgv.I.50.5 Sūrya, as deity, "turns towards" i.e. points to *celestial svar*, a prelude to verse 10 where Sūrya is absorbed in *svar*, *loftiest light*. This soul illumination is very close to that other mystical experience of the ṛṣi expressed in slightly different terms:

"I have known this mighty Celestial-man (puruṣa) *refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness*;  
only by knowing him does one overcome death. No other way is there to go." (Yjv.31.18)

This is perhaps an even clearer message concerning the blazing encounter with the flame-spirit which takes us beyond death, hence the ṛṣis' repeated references to immortality. But these verses are eschewed from exegesis! This "gateway" is also an early pointer to that other essentially spiritual message of the Atharvaveda which

leads directly to what Hillebrandt recognised as the "loftiest conception formulated by Hinduism" - the *ātman/brahman* of the Upaniṣads:

"Desireless, wise, immortal, self-existent, contented with the essence,  
lacking nothing is he; one fears not death who has known him,  
the *ātman*, serene, ageless, youthful." (Athv.X.8.44)

The continuity of the esoteric tradition from the four Vedas to the Upaniṣads is here fully vindicated.

Again Ṛgv.I.146.4cd (quoted in ch.4 pt. 2), shows us the poets longing in their heart and gazing towards the ocean; and "to these Sūrya was made manifest for men". This gazing implies the process of meditation into one's own inner depths, into psyche's rather fluidic depths - at first entrance - and going beyond the threshold, reaching right into that highest state so longed for by the ṛṣis, *svāra*. Evidently this could not be detected by any scholar with as only tools, philology and the rational approach. This is again where philology and mere logic fail to fathom the meaning of *sacred texts*, and what more than one generation of Western scholars has omitted to take into account and gone astray. Here the word used is Sūrya, the deity that guides the ṛṣi to the higher state, as he is the illuminator who reflects *svāra*. But the mentioning of the sun being manifested to the poets for the sake of others, to show "men" (accusative) the way to *svāra*, the fourth state to which the sun, the inner blaze, is the herald, reveals the task of the ṛṣis. A whole gnosis is contained in the above verse.

The great injunction to the poets again reveals the same quest, the same plea:

"Heed the *brahman*; be invigorated by the songs; make the sun manifest". (VI.17.3)

This is certainly not the solar orb out in the sky but the inner sun, the flame-power. One notes from the above verse that part of the ṛṣis' exertion was finding the right word of power, the *brahman*, the right frequency (as is recounted in JUB.IV.14. 5ff.) which literally is not conducive to sun-racing. It is a form of *tapas* typical of the ṛṣis. As stated in VIII.3.13: in praising Indra's mighty power those chanting attained to *svāra* (*svāra gr̥ṇanta ānaśuḥ*). Also, by such means the poets kindle Agni (X.118.19) - a meaningless statement for most unless one realises that Agni, the numinous flame resting in the hidden spot of the heart *cakra*, is meant, a fact constantly ignored. This chanting is done in full concentration, in full exertion of the heart, i.e. of feeling, mind, psyche, the integrated human being, in full throated cadence, which means the chanting gives out the *resonance* of the person's inner truth, inner quest, in harmony with that of the flame-spirit, for the "essence of *puruṣa is vāc*" (Chānd.Up.I.1). Herein lies the spiritual significance of the chanting exertion and the role of Agni in finding the path to the word of power, *brahman*, (VII.13.3), as well as that of Soma the catalyst who grants eloquence, both Agni and Soma raising man to exaltation.

In this all too obvious context of a mystical quest, sun-racing as an explanation of the struggle to attain to *svāra* appears paltry, far-fetched, besides the point, even absurd. Not only is the mystical element eschewed, but the sacredness of the ṛṣis' prayer and mental attitude once again by-passed, and a physical substitute is installed to over-ride any spiritual meaning, for even socio-religious rituals which could represent some spiritual intent, could never imply the mystical core-meaning of *sun-* and *svāra*-finding.

Gonda, however, touched on the essential import of the Vedic *svarga-loka* (a term undeniably related to *svāra*) which he recognised as "no Garden of Eden before the Fall, no 'place' where to return to innocence" - *svarga* being used but once in the Ṛgveda (X.95.18) though far more in the *Atharvaveda*. (*Loka*. p.73) The idea *svarga* expressed, being for Gonda, "a modification of the central idea conveyed by *svāra* which ... stood for 'the sun, the light of heaven'ö. Thus "Athv. 4.14.3 'I have gone to *svāra*, to light (*jyotiḥ*)"; etc. (ibid.p.74-5) . What *svarga* "does ... stand for, is Vedic man's desire to live in a pure, strong and perfect 'sphere' or 'world'... a sphere or condition of 'sanctity'" (ibid. p.73) implying establishing on earth the ṛṣis' vision.

Thus Sūrya as all beholding Eye, or insight which makes him a *knower*; as stimulator and vivifier, controller of the world's rhythms; *ātman* of what moves and moves not; lord of the paths and good shepherd inserted in every human heart which he tortures and liberates; the illuminator showing the way to the heights of ecstasy, of solar splendour enshrined in the human psyche; these are, in summary, the Solar Deity's attributes revealing the quality of the ṛṣis' mind, their reading into psyche's labyrinth, uncovering snippets of the *secret doctrine*. These many facets that earn Sūrya many names, many virtues, many tasks and activities, should make us pause and consider the breadth and depth of the ṛṣis' understanding of their true sun, *satyaṃ sūryam*, the truth for which they searched and of which Sūrya was the all blazing pointer. Consider that all seeing Eye



from whom human deeds and misdeeds may not be hidden, that great stimulator without which life could not be, that good shepherd that guides his flock even in the beyond and hides in every creature; and *svar*, that glorious illumination that made the gods and the sīs "sun-eyed", exalted seers into the very being of life; these are insights into the deeper recesses of the human psyche where the latter extends and merges into the infinite. There can be no seeing of anything outwardly that is not already present inwardly.

Noticeable in these facets of the solar deity is the overlapping and indeed fusion of characteristics which are ascribed to different deities and yet are all part of the one solar god, "god among the gods, light supernal". The play of light and shade blurs the outlines of each of the gods that merge into each other and yet emerge unique and not to be confused. Sūrya, *ātman* and lord of what moves and is stable (I.115.1) fosters the visionary hymn (*dhiyamjinvan*) whilst Pūṣan, our guardian safeguards our well-being (I.89.5). Savitr who fills the whole of Heaven and Earth, ascends and descends on the everlasting upward and downward paths, also merges into Pūṣan who guides humans to the heights of luminous riches, to Soma's hiding place, to Soma's illumination, to Soma with whom he is identified! Like Agni and Pūṣan, Soma is *svar*-finder; he "makes all blessings flow". Agni whose beautiful face in the heavens is Sūrya, the omniscient eye of the gods, Agni is consumer of oblation and kindler of thought to ever greater heights, whilst Soma, the consumed is catalyst to greater expansions of consciousness. Though the poet salutes the light of Sūrya as the face of Agni in heaven, Agni and not Sūrya is always the messenger of the gods to men, and Sūrya and not Agni is always the eye whereby the gods look upon all creation. Agni is the high priest who transmutes by his fire and transfers the oblation to the gods, while Soma is the royal response as the exalted vision of godhood, of illumination, of ecstasy. Truly all the gods are expressions of one divine power they preserve within their innermost heart.

But Sūrya holds another facet, ambivalent and obscure in some sense, needing investigation.

#### VIVASVAT, MARTANDA AND SELF-SACRIFICE

With Vivasvat the shining one, we enter the world of myth, enlarged and worked upon by the later tradition, indirectly giving out certain secret teachings of the *dvijās* or "twice-born". One may delve into this "repository", yet the intellect alone will never solve its riddles, for this is psyche's domain, the expression of its own drama, and psyche speaks in riddles. Even the myth-teller may not have realised the core-meaning. In myths, especially the later myths, the gods are more or less anthropomorphised, they become projections of our own variegated, all too human facets, our weaknesses, our failures but also our aspirations and achievements, our own lowliness and sometimes our grandeur, our endless quest for something beyond ourselves. He who sees nothing in myth but a *lie*, simply because the *reality* of myth is of an altogether different dimension than that of the physical plane, shuts his ears and mind to the call of his own inner life.

Vivasvat's myth concerns the origin of the human race, sacrifice, and mortality and immortality. Indeed doubt has been cast upon the immortality of Vivasvat, although there is no specific verse to this effect in the Ṛgveda, but only a curious myth wherein Martanda, our sun under another name, is cast away by his mother Aditi (infinite space), and then

"Martanda she again brought forth for the sake of birth and death". (Ṛgv.X.72.8-9)

The Maitri Upaniṣad states:

"This embodied Time is the great ocean of creatures. In it abides he who is called Savitr, from whom, indeed, are begotten moon, stars, planets, the year ... So one should reverence the sun as a name of Time. Some say: 'Brahma is the sun.' ... Viṣṇu, Prajāpati, ... everyone whatsoever is the Lord (*prabhu*), the Witness, who shines in yonder orb." (Maitri Up.VI.16)

Here, as in the Ṛgvedic myth, reference is made to the appearance and disappearance of the sun in the cycles of manifestation and non-manifestation, symbolised by day and night: the generation of time and its cycles.

Tradition has it that Vivasvat was the primeval, celestial sacrificer with whom the human sacrificer was soon to be identified. He is also the father of Manu, the first man of our own humanity in this particular cycle, and also the father of Yama, "the first of mortals to die" (Athv.XVIII.3.13).<sup>33</sup> Nowhere do the devas avoid being pinned down to particular roles with specific individualities more than in those facets of SŪRYA-SAVITR-SOMA-VIVASVAT and the GANDHARVA, enigmatic creature who has taxed the mind of scholars no end! All these facets that represent individual gods in their own right, seem to delight in merging into and

emerging from each other, to the great annoyance of our separative minds that delight in putting everything into neat pigeon-holes! In X.10.4 , Yama's father is the gandharva in the Waters of space, in X.39.12 he is the cause of night and day, hence the sun; in IX.85.12

"Standing erect over the heavenly vault, surveying all his forms,  
his splendour with brilliant incandescence shining out,  
unsullied, he has illumined both world parents".

In X.123 he merges into the *seer* (*vena*), whether ṛṣi, or all seeing sun, or even Soma, for he is identified with Soma<sup>34</sup> over whom he keeps watch, Soma "co-dweller with" Vivasvat.<sup>35</sup> Allusions to Vivasvat in the Ṛgveda centre often on his "seat": singers glorify Indra's feats in Vivasvat's "seat" (III.34.7); this is the sacrificial altar whose priestly sacrificer blends with his celestial prototype, Vivasvat.<sup>36</sup> Agni is Vivasvat's messenger (X.21.5) who knows heaven's innermost secrets for he comes from Vivasvat<sup>37</sup> on whom the worshippers concentrate their mind to send their aspirations to the gods (I.139.1). This activity occurs at the altar.

Only two enigmatic verses in the Ṛgveda hint at a particular legend which, if the later tradition had remained silent, would be meaningless. We are first told that Tvaṣṭṛ, Nature's artisan, is giving his daughter in marriage to great Vivasvat; but she vanishes while being conveyed to her dwelling (X.17.1&2). The gods hide the immortal lady from mortals and leave her substitute with Vivasvat (X.17.1&2). Part of the rest of the hymn is a funeral invocation to Pūṣan, to Agni, to Savitṛ, etc.

The tale is more fully told in the *Bṛhaddevatā* (VI.163-VII.6) and in the *Purāṇas*. The names are changed, Saraṇyū becomes Sanjñā, "consciousness", daughter of Viśvakarma, the All-Maker, identified with Tvaṣṭṛ, Vivasvat is Sūrya. Unable to bear Vivasvat's too great effulgence she left him her *chhāyā*, shadow and fled to the forest to practise devotions. Sūrya found and brought her back. Then

"Viśvakarma, placed the luminary on his lathe [sic] and cut away an eighth of his effulgence, trimming him in every part except the feet. The fragments that were cut off fell blazing to the earth, and from them Viśvakarma formed the discus of Viṣṇu, the trident of Śiva ... and the weapons of the other gods." (J. Dowson, *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, p.311)

This deliberate curtailing of Sūrya's power which lies in his effulgence proclaims a willing sacrifice whereby Sūrya submits to the exigencies of a higher Will and Law, that of the All-Maker, Viśvakarma, by accepting to limit himself to the exigencies of a lower state of being, our space time world, for the sake of psyche, that spark in us which harbours consciousness. This is indeed the tale of *psyche*, whose spiritual apex or spirit, dwells in psyche, but who through her age-old descent into denser realms of manifestation, is losing the power to face the flame-spirit's effulgence as such. Hence the sacrifice of Vivasvat.

#### THE "MYSTERIES", their VEDIC EQUIVALENT; THE ĀKHYĀNA AND PĀRIPLAVA

Were the "mysteries" or dramatised teachings prevalent in very ancient India? The question is debatable but very little trace is left in the tradition, although the *ākhyāna* and the *pāriplava* are sufficiently recorded to point that way. Certain *ākhyānas*, tales or legends found in the Ṛgveda, couched in dialogue form between two or three speakers, sometimes in their barest outlines, sometimes seemingly in far fuller form, which were later amplified and/or transformed in the *Purāṇas* or the *Mahābhārata*, have given rise to the problem of their relation to the main body of the Ṛgvedic ritual which is liturgical. What place did they have in this body, what was their import, what their significance? Such are the dialogues between Yama and his twin sister Yamī concerning union between brother and sister, and between Purūravas and Urvaśī, mortal man and immortal woman; the tale of Saramā, Indra's hound sent in search of the whereabouts of Indra's treasure, or the hiding and finding of Agni, or Soma, etc. Scholars have advanced various theories.

The case of the legend of Purūravas and Urvaśī bears investigating in this context for, apart from its several meanings and final focus on *fire*, it shows how deeply wrapped up in various versions and veils or "blinds" the core-meaning of such legends could be, and how little of this has transpired through the many attempts at probing this particular legend, that it still appears pointless to most, although some significance has been detected. Superficially the legend seems to concern the unstable relationship between two beings of a different class or origin, a non-human or immortal who has the capacity to appear in human form and disappear at will, and the mortal limited in his capacities. Ṛgv.X.95 takes us right into the middle of a dialogue

between Purūravas the mortal king and Urvaśī the immortal nymph. References to the lightning flash and the bleating of sheep put into the mouth of Purūravas presuppose the tale told in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XI.5.1-17), but taken for granted in the Ṛgveda. (Geldner listed some eight different versions of which the Śat.Br. is the earliest.) Urvaśī consented to being Purūrava's spouse on condition she never saw him naked; but after a long time, the gandharvas to whose class she belonged, conspired to have her back. Through a trick to steal one of the sheep she had tied up to her bed by night, they managed to make Purūravas spring up in pursuit of the thief, whereupon the gandharvas produced a lightning flash. Urvaśī saw him naked, and immediately vanished. Subsequently she appeared to Purūravas with her nymphs swimming in a pond and the dialogue recorded in the Ṛgveda shows Purūravas wanting to have Urvaśī back, she, dismissing him. Somewhat relenting, she admonishes him "do not die", as he threatens to lie in the lap of Nirṛti, Dissolution, and promises to bring him his son. That is all, and it may give rise to questions such as why was it included in a liturgical collection?

D. Kosambi, in his article on "Urvaśī and Purūravas",<sup>38</sup> claims that its inclusion in the Ṛgveda could only have been for "some very marked significance or utility which was lost after the composition of the particular verses". He sees in X.95 a pointer to an ancient human sacrifice wherein Purūravas is fated "to be sacrificed after having begotten a son ..." on Urvaśī, and remarks that Urvaśī's words "thou dost not die" are "given in almost identical terms to the sacrificed, cooked and eaten horse in Ṛgv.I.162.21". This is plausible enough but it does not touch the core-meaning left out in the Ṛgvedic hymn, but hinted at in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa's version.

R. Goldman,<sup>39</sup> on the other hand, identified immortal Urvaśī with Vāc, the divine word, thereby lifting the whole hymn from that of a mere quarrel between two lovers, to the level of an allegory concerning the *union* of seer-priest with *vāc*, the gift of inspiration/eloquence. This also is plausible to anyone analysing the dialogues, though what their fundamental drive is remains a riddle. The "sacred fire" may well have been at the core-meaning, and R. Goldman more than toys with the idea:

"That the union of Purūravas and Urvaśī was associated in the priestly mind *with the production of the sacred fire is unequivocally attested* by the versions of the story given at the Kāthaka and Kapiṣṭhala Samhitās (8.10 & 7.6) and the Śatapatha Br. (11.5.1-17). Both versions have the abandoned Purūravas and his son, Āyu, kindling a special fire by means of the two kindling sticks. In the first, Purūravas begets offspring by means of that fire and in the second he attains the state of a Gandharva through the fire and so becomes reunited with Urvaśī." (op.cit.p.289 italics my own)

Through the interaction of the ṛṣi and *vāc* the production of the fire of eloquence/ inspiration/exaltation is brought about, whose offspring is seen in the invocations to the gods. This already points to the inner fire of *tapas*. As Dirghātamas, the ṛṣi of the most mystical Ṛgvedic hymn I.164, tells us:

"When the first-born of ṛta came to me, then of this Vāc I first obtained a share." (I.164.27)

The first born of ṛta is Agni who, when inwardly kindled, grants intuitive perceptions and visionary insights which the poet expresses through the inspired word, *vāc*. This theme lies at the back of the poets' chants which they offer to the fire-deity. Hence the interlinkedness of fire, *vāc*, and vision and their import to the seers. But, if so, and as Goldman wonders, why wrap up the whole meaning in such veils? His answer is merely that the ṛṣis loved a riddle - an easy, but unsatisfactory way out. The ṛṣis were not tricksters.

The lightning flash and the vanishing away of Urvaśī recalls a Chinese legend of the humble cobbler who loves the spirit of the lightning who, in the shape of a woman, consents to live with him provided he never enquires into her past. From time to time she disappears but is always back and in due time a child is born. Prodded by his own sister, the cobbler finally agrees to try to find out who his wife is, and follows her as she once again disappears. A storm breaks out and he is confronted by the fury of the lightning flashes in whose very centre he recognises his wife. He is not destroyed but back home, he realises that he has lost his wife for ever as well as their child, the only memory of their passage being the pairs of wooden shoes he had cut out for them as a gift of love, now left on the doorstep.

The two legends may seem different: in the case of Urvaśī, she accepts the human condition, but refuses to see its nakedness or lowliness, its incapacity to transmute itself from mortal to immortal; in the case of the Chinese legend, the immortal accepts the human condition but no probing into her own nature. The gap between both conditions is acknowledged and no attempt can be made to transgress each his own status.

The two, immortal and mortal, may live in amity, recognise their differences, but cannot step beyond certain boundaries. This is the status of soul and personality, both different and yet both necessary to each other for their growth to maturity, and at times the lower is allowed a deeper glimpse into the higher. Here, the core-meaning of both legends centres on the *flame-power* which the human being has sooner or later to face within himself and conquer or lose; for that flame, takes him to the *ātman*, his very Self. The lightning flash (allegorically) reveals certain mysteries within the human which the cobbler was not ready to face, but was allowed for a while to live beside it in its human aspect. Purūravas is also allowed a time of co-living, but when he loses the gift, he pursues the quest and, because of his love and perseverance, is accorded the knowledge of the secret of the *transmuting fire*. Details of this transmutation are not given in any versions.

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa version, the gandharvas grant a boon to Purūravas who asks to be one of them so as to be re-united to Urvaṣī. So they give him a vessel full of "heavenly fire" which he decides to leave in the forest whilst he first brings his son to the city. (Similarly in the Babylonian tale, Gilgamesh leaves the plant of life he had gained after much travail, by the side of the pool where he decides to bathe, only to find a serpent emerging from the water and snatching the plant away). In Purūravas' case, when back, the fire has disappeared and in its place had grown an *aśvattha* tree, the holy fig tree of wisdom. Appealing once again to the gandharvas, these give him directions for sacrificing that concern the upper *pramantha* stick and the lower *araṇi*, both made of *aśvattha*, by the friction of which fire is produced and by offering which fire he would become a gandharva. This has been taken in its literal, physical sense - Jean Varenne for instance even believing that the legend is told in the Brāhmaṇa only to justify the use of the two wooden sticks for the kindling of the ritual fire; whereas the ritual Vedic way of kindling fire was practised long before the time of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa!

Three times on his appeal to them the gandharvas give Purūravas explanations for making the fire and finally admit: this is all "occult language", viz., "blinds", hiding something. Finally, from the last directives given, he simply makes the two fire sticks as required, offers up the fire thus kindled and becomes a gandharva. The hidden meaning is still kept secret in spite of all the directions. It is connected, H.P.B. tells us, with the *sacred fire* "primevally one" which "was made threefold (*tridhā*) in our present Manvantara, by (Purūravas) the Son of Iḷā (Vāc) ... the wife and daughter of Vaivasvata Manu" (S.D.I.p.523).<sup>40</sup> The kindling of the ritual fire is the outer reflection of the arousal of the inner sacred fire in the human being through the practice of *tapas*. The two fire sticks from the tree of wisdom represent the two inner cords, *iḍā* -negative, and *piṅgalā* - positive, whose activity can only be aroused through a life of altruism and *tapas*, hence the symbol of the *aśvattha*, the wisdom tree. The friction between the two sticks is parallel to, indeed an image of, the interaction between the two fires in the two inner cords which H.P.B. calls the "vital airs", also positive and negative, by means of which the sacred inner fire of the human being is ignited. But this igniting has to do with the will:

"It is the pure *ākāśa* that passes up *suṣumnā*; its two aspects flow in *iḍā* and *piṅgalā*. These are the three vital airs, and are symbolized by the Brahmanical thread. They are ruled by the will. Will and desire are the higher and lower aspects of one and the same thing. Hence the importance of the purity of the canals..." (E.W. p.422)

"*Iḍā* and *piṅgalā* play along the curved wall of the cord in which is *suṣumnā*. They are semi-material, positive and negative, sun and moon, and start into action the free and spiritual current of *suṣumnā* ... By concentration on *iḍā* and *piṅgalā* is generated the 'sacred fire'." (E.W. p.429)

This is the Naciketas fire of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad, which the boy Naciketas had started to kindle in himself by his spontaneous renunciation of worldly attractions; the "fire by which the heaven dwellers attain immortality" which Naciketas enquired of Yama, the Lord of death (Kaṭha Up.I.13):

"Know that that fire, the means of the attainment of unending being,  
the support or basis of all the worlds is hidden in the cave of the heart." (Kaṭha Up.I.14)

H.P.B.'s explanation ought to give at least a clue as to the meaning of it all. This sacred fire is that by which "the transmutation of the mortal or leaden personal self into the immortal or golden Higher Self can be brought about here and now" as Śrī Krishna Prem puts it. Then does Yama, in the story, tell the boy Naciketas how to build the *altar* for this fire, with what bricks it should be made, how many, how they should be arranged, etc. Obviously blinds are heaped upon blinds to trip the unwary, for these are no bricks but qualities, principles,

powers to be inbuilt and offered up upon the *altar* of life where all egoism is to be burnt off in the fire of altruism, of sacrifice. The real meaning once again is withdrawn, for the sacred fire is too dangerous to be played with. As Śrī Krishna Prem emphasises:

"The Sacred Fire, for all their talk about its 'gentle natural warmth', can also manifest as destructively as the lightning flash, the *vajra* or thunderbolt of Indra with which it is in fact connected. He who would discover it before he is ready to hold in himself its tremendous power, he who out of curiosity or to gratify base desire including the desire for prolongation of mere personal life, should succeed in awakening it would be as utterly destroyed as would he who should stand in the path of the lightning; for though it is the Universal Medicine, yet it

can

kill as readily as it can cure. *It is for this reason that such secrecy about it has always been maintained.*"<sup>41</sup>

### THE ĀKHYĀNAS AND PĀRIPLAVA

The whole subject of the *ākhyānas* concerns the present study only in so far as it affords at least some evidence for the existence of remnants of certain ancient doctrines imparted by word of mouth and probably enacted by dramatic miming for the edification of those being initiated. The last is of course only a surmise based upon examples taken from other countries, primarily Egypt and Greece. These teachings, as presented, were in later times out of context and more or less veiled, soon to disappear from the tradition, leaving behind but scattered hints and legends difficult to piece together or dig out as to their real meaning. That the Ṛgveda is full of such hints and imagery with double or triple meaning, the present study has endeavoured to show, as in the following verses:

"Ready is thy filter, Lord of prayer; supreme, thou pervadest each and every limb.

The cold, unripened vessel cannot receive that; only vessels made ready receive that."(IX.83.1)

"Bounteous Soma favoured us with his light whereby our forefathers of old,

knowing the stages, svar-finders, burnt-through (to) the rock, (to) the cows."(IX.97.39cd)

A great deal of controversy took place among early 20th century scholars concerning the "dramatic elements in Vedic literature" which some thought could be traced to the Vedic *ākhyānas*. However, the outer presentation was fastened upon with no consequence to the substance of the dialogues.<sup>42</sup> Though certain dialogues - the basic material for drama - are preserved in the Ṛgveda, Keith points out that

"... the tradition of the ritual literature did not know what to make of the dialogues of the Ṛgveda ... Yaska and Śaunaka in the fifth century B.C. were at variance as to whether the hymn X.95 [Purūravas & Urvaśī] was a dialogue, as the former held, or a mere legend, as the latter believed. In the commentary of Sāyaṇa we find that the tradition was unable to ascribe any ritual use for nearly all the hymns [with dialogues] ..." (*Sanskrit Drama*, p.15)

Keith admitted that during Ṛgvedic times there could have been religious, dramatic spectacles, "in which the priests assumed the roles of gods and sages in order to imitate on earth the events of the heavens" but found

"Professor von Schroeder's elaborate theory that the dialogue hymns, and also certain monologues ... are relics of Vedic mysteries, an inheritance in germ from Indo-European times" rather

preposterous (ibid.p.16) In his review of L. von Schroeder's *Mysterium und Mimus im Ṛgveda* he makes it plain that

"Indian tradition when it does exist is unsatisfactory enough; but when it does not, in a case like the present, the assumption of a dramatic use of the hymns becomes very bold, unless

there

is much stronger evidence than any thing adduced by Professor von Schroeder." (*J.R.A.S.*

1909.

p.203)

Stronger evidence can lie only in the understanding of the inner *meaning* of the dialogues which none of the scholars of Keith's type, could pretend to have. Keith dismissed the dialogues as "secular or quasi-secular". Superficially, the dialogues as transmitted in the Ṛgveda may appear so, but as the legends demonstrate they involve far more than what is transcribed. There is nothing "secular" in the kindling of

the *sacred fire* and that is the whole gist of Purūravas' s endeavour which does not even appear in the Ṛgvedic hymn. For Keith, "illegitimate" would be any suggestion that these dialogues could have represented the remnants of certain archaic teachings couched in dramatic forms and enshrined in "mere legends", so old that none of the commentators, uninitiated that they obviously were, of a millenium later, could understand them and place them into their correct category. "Illegitimate" is far too peremptory for acceptance, but Keith could not envisage wisdom teachings among *primitives*. I beg leave to disagree fundamentally. The story of Śunaḥśepa could prove the point. It could have been handed down orally long before it was entered in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. Keith believed that no one "will uphold the Aitareya legend [vii.13 seq.] of Śunaḥśepa as a primitive *ākhyāna*", the form of presentation could be more recent, but the core-meaning, - sacrifice, would be very ancient. That the so called "genre" disappears, may have simply been due to the withdrawal of the "mysteries" or secret teachings *as a body* - which occurred all over the world around the Christian era.

Turning to the *pāriplava* or "revolving cycles of legends"<sup>43</sup> we find important lacunae here as well, even though a great deal of information was given in the Brāhmaṇas. As shown in Eggeling's Introduction to vol.44 of the *Sacred Books of the East*, certain items of the Aśvamedha or Horse sacrifice ceremonial "are altogether" ignored. One of these concerns

"... the so-called 'revolving legend' (XIII.4.3,1 seq.) related to the Hotṛi [priest], in a ten days' cycle all the year round ... it even remains uncertain whether any legend connected with the respective deity (chosen for each successive day) was actually related" etc. (op.cit.p.xxxi)

The *pāriplava* told at the great horse sacrifice which lasted a whole year, repeated at certain intervals during the year whilst the horse was allowed to roam freely, certainly had a teaching purpose. There were 36 courses of 10 days narration of 10 *ākhyānas*. On each of the ten days the priest would recite verses from one of the Vedas, from the "traditions" (*itihāsa*), and from ancient histories (*purāṇa*), to different groups of the community assembled for the purpose of edification. A complete plan of the ten days, with the texts used, the head or the king present, the subject and the type of audience, is given in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII.4.3. This shows plainly that a grand reunion of particular groups of the community did take place, that teachings were given not only to Brahmins but also to non Brahmins, but the content of the teachings, what viewpoint was taken, etc. all this remains unknown. However, the tale of the sacrifice of Śunaḥśepa,<sup>44</sup> the child substituted for the king's son who should have been sacrificed, was told at the *Rājasūya* sacrifice and has survived in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* - surely an example of the kind of teaching legend that went on, for inspite of Keith's cursory dismissal of it as making no sense, it has profound meaning as revealed by Panikkar.

#### VIŚVAKARMAN ACCORDING TO *THE SECRET DOCTRINE*

What Viśvakarman, the All Creator, the lofty Overseer of this world and the "Father of the Eye" or visionary insight meant to the ṛṣis may be glimpsed in two hymns of the Ṛgveda, (X.81 & 82). In the last two verses of X.81 is found succinctly expressed the doctrine (outlined in chapter 8) whereby sacrifice is a limitation for greater expansion and a making sacred of what is limited; hence the descent into the tomb of matter but to rise triumphant over its shackles. Sacrifice is at the root of the Vedic insight as also of many of the ancient religions as of Buddhism and Christianity. Unfortunately it was badly misunderstood again and again. The two Ṛgvedic verses run thus:

"Those highest and lowest and midmost realms, O Viśvakarman, and those here, open thou to thy friends loyal to the sacrificial rite, sacrifice thyself for thine own exaltation.

Exalted by the sacrifice, O Viśvakarman, offer up for thyself heaven and earth" (X.81.5,6).

H.P.B.remarks on the meaning of Vivasvat/Viśvakarman's sacrifice, recalling that "... Viśvakarman, the creative power ... 'sacrifices himself to himself' ... and that it is he who ties (the Sun) Sūrya, his son-in-law, on his lath - in the exoteric allegory; on the Svastika, in the esoteric tradition, as on earth he is the Hierophant-Initiator, and cuts away a portion of his brightness ... " (S.D.II. p.559)

This myth, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, concerns the "Self" or higher Self, the *ātman* which is, in the Bṛhad. Upaniṣad (II.5.15), called "the Lord of all things" and in whom "all selves are contained". This Self was symbolised by the *sun* because of its dazzling splendour and overlordship of all things. In the dramatic enactment of the spirit descending into the tomb of matter, the hierophant represented Viśvakarman, the initiate Sūrya. The latter

"... appeared as put on his trial, Viśvakarman, the hierophant, cutting off seven of his beams, and replacing them with a crown of brambles, when the 'sun' became Vikartana,<sup>45</sup> shorn of his beams or rays. After that, the sun - enacted by a neophyte ready to be initiated - was made to descend into Pātāla, the nether regions, on a trial of Tantalus. Coming out of it triumphant, he emerged from this region ... to re-become Karmacaṣin, witness of the karma of men, and arose once more triumphant in all the glory of his regeneration ..." (E.W. p.226)

This is a very ancient initiation tradition; it may be that its Christian dramatic re-enactment was deliberately made public to impress the human mind with the gravity of the soul's pilgrimage and its trials. The "root and seed of all future initiate-saviours" is called in the Ṛgveda, in the first stage

"... Viśvakarman, the 'Father' principle 'beyond the comprehension of mortals'; in the *second* stage Sūrya, the 'Son', who offers himself as a sacrifice to himself; in the third, the initiate, who sacrifices his *physical* to his *spiritual* Self. It is in Viśvakarman, the 'omnific' who becomes (mystically) Vikartana, the 'sun shorn of his beams', who suffers for his too ardent nature, and then becomes glorified (by purification), that the keynote of the initiation into the greatest mystery of Nature was struck ..." (op.cit. p.131)

In her explanation H.P.B. does not hesitate to merge Viśvakarman with Vivasvat, the All-maker and the Sun, Father and son-in-law of the original myth; this is somewhat confusing, but just as they are merged in Ṛgv.X.170.4 where Sūrya, after being described as having gone to the luminous sphere of heaven, shining forth *svar* with his light, is addressed as Viśvakarman. The above quotation gives us a glimpse of the descent of *puṛuṣa* or spirit into the tomb of matter for the purpose of transforming the latter.

Seven of the sun's beams are shorn, seven radiating fields of light taken as veils of different subtlety or density, as in certain teachings, veils that shroud the inner being, veils that, enmeshed more and more in the tomb of dense matter, lose their power and effulgence which no longer hold sway; that which was the crown of glory becomes, for the inner being, the crown of thorns that has to be fully accepted: a death and a becoming, a transformation for further transmutation; for a greater achievement. The whole imagery holds a profound significance for us humans. A similar glimpse, though through a different image, is given us in a Ṛgvedic verse:

"Dark the descent; golden the birds; robed in the waters they fly to heaven, whence they return from the abode of Cosmic Order; thence is the earth soaked with their chrism." (I.164.47)

The "golden birds", symbol of spiritual entities, veiled in the "waters" or *ākāśa*, come down in darkest matter, but to fly back whence they came - the heart of Cosmic Order - and return, permeating earth with their very essence. The word *ghee*, (*ghṛta*), translated as chrism, (following R. Panikkar) that unction used for blessing, is said by one of the ṛṣis, Vamadeva, to have as secret name, *amṛta*, nectar of immortality. The action of the "birds" brings down this blessing. In the cow which represents Nature and the wellspring of inspiration, has been placed the threefold ghee (IV.58.4), but it is hidden by obstructing forces. Sūrya generated one aspect of the ghee, Indra a second, the *seer* a third. The gods, like human beings, have their part to play in the bringing forth out of the depths of the ocean of life, of toil, exertion, failures and successes, the nectar of life. These are the ṛṣis' insights into the secret lore that generally escape the reader of the Vedic hymns, and even have been denied existence by some scholars.

Significantly enough, H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* gave out what she knew of

"the last of the solar priests in Europe ... the Imperial Initiate, Julian, now called the Apostate.

He

tried to benefit the world by revealing at least a portion of the great mystery of the ... 'threefold' (sun), and *he died* ...

'There are three in one' he said of the sun ...

the first is the universal cause of all, Sovereign Good and perfection;

the second Power is paramount Intelligence, having dominion over all reasonable beings ...

the third is the visible sun.

The pure energy of solar intelligence proceeds from the luminous seat occupied by our sun in the centre of heaven, that pure energy being the Logos of our system.

The 'Mysterious World Spirit produces all through the sun and never operates through any other medium', says Hermes Trismegistus. For it *is in* the sun more than in any other heavenly body that the (unknown) Power placed the seat of its habitation."

"Philolaus the Pythagorean explains and completes Trismegistus by saying:

'The sun is a mirror of fire, the splendour of whose flames by their reflection in that mirror (the Sun) is poured upon us, and that splendour we call image.'

It is evident that Philolaus referred to the central spiritual Sun, whose beams and effulgence are only mirrored by our central star, the sun." (E.W. p.184-5)

The sun, accordingly, both acts as a vivifying and light agency and as a veil for a Central Spiritual Sun, the *Logos*, whose effulgence, even greater than that of our visible sun, would or might blaze our planetary system out of existence!

That the ṛṣis were aware of a central, ultimate Reality is evident from the references to That, *tat*, which remained nameless, to the Unborn *aja*, to that One, *tad ekam*; but that One is stepped down more or less to our level of comprehension in the personified great deities, Varuṇa, Sūrya, Agni, Indra, etc.

Such views as are given out in *The Secret Doctrine* into the mystery of the sun, so out of relation to the mechanistic, lifeless conception of current thought, may raise many an eyebrow and put the lid more firmly on the scepticism of the rationalists. How can we accept the sun as the hearth of intelligence, as the governing principle of our little universe, even if the visible sun be but an effulgent image of a mightier principle behind it? Yet to the mystical inner eye, light and consciousness are inextricably linked and form a living centre of power, which in human beings cause that flash of understanding that deepens into the light of true knowledge to finally lead to enlightenment, to wisdom. To penetrate deeper and deeper into any living object, is to reach out to the core of light of which that particular object is but the form, to the very core of flame-power. Even before that core is reached, one encounters some kind of sensitivity, awareness, consciousness. Why should the sun and its planets be devoid of this essential core? The seemingly strange claims made by the Ancients concerning the sun find more than an echo in the Vedas, indeed find a confirmation in the study of Sūrya-Savitr-Pūṣan-Soma-svar, all facets of the one Life-giving illuminator, as seen by the ṛṣis; behind the phenomenon, claims the wisdom tradition, always lies the *noumenon*, a living intelligence, far reaching in its influence or not according to conditions and evolution, but a centre of intelligent life which is light, consciousness, and in the sun's case, sheds its radiance and subtle influence far and wide on all around.

The three aspects enshrined in AGNI, SŪRYA and SOMA seem to be delineating three stages in a progressive enlightenment, each expanding to a greater and deeper spiritual awareness until rapture is reached, and a state of wholeness supervenes which, in a refrain from a Rgvedic hymn, admits: "we choose freedom and wholeness" (X.100). These stages can be glimpsed in verses from three of the Vedas:

"Behold this highpriest, foremost, this light immortal among mortals ... A steady light has been placed to look on; swiftest is the mind amidst flying creatures. My ears open out to listen, my eyes to see this light placed in my heart." (R̥gv.VI. 9. 4, 5,6)

"Let us meditate upon that celestial splendour of divine Savitr;  
so may he inspire our prayers. (R̥gv.III. 62.10)

"Having received from my father the perception of ṛta, I was born like a sun" (R̥gv.VIII.6.10)

"Up out of darkness, have we, ascending the highest firmament,  
gone to the sun, god among the gods, highest light." (Athv.VII.53.7)

"I have known this mighty Heavenly- Man refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness;  
only by knowing him does one overcome death; no other way is there to go." (Yjv.31.18)

These are not senseless expressions of ecstatic seers, but they voice a whole doctrine based upon a



mystical apprehension and seership which formed the Vedic revelation or *śruti*, till now hardly admitted by Western exegesis, and first studied by J.Gonda; which developed the insight of the solar splendour as the all-knower into the *puruṣa*, or the *ātman*, the *cosmic, spiritual principle* present in human beings. Perhaps understanding Vedic insights may somewhat open our mind to what the last of the solar priests in Europe, Julian the Apostate, meant in revealing certain aspects of the threefold solar deity. Perhaps also, our sun is far more than a mere material orb of glowing gases; perhaps also these glowing gases and dangerous electrical pulsations may give us an inkling of what *ākāśa* is really like, or only give us a reflection of it, a mirror we cannot even stare at!

"The Seer beholds that Being hidden in mystery, in whom all find a single home;  
in That all this unites, from That all issues forth;  
He, omnipresent, is warp and woof midst created things." (Yjv.V.5.32.8)

### **SĀRYA, THE LIFE GIVING ILLUMINATOR. PART I.**

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Cf. Gonda (*Vision*): "It is worth emphasizing that the belief in a light which, being suprahuman in origin and penetrating into the heart of the inspired poets, illumined their mind, was the complement of the conviction that these poets owe their praeternormal knowledge and their religious and poetical inspiration to 'visions', that they 'saw' the truth about the deeds and the power of the gods which they formulated in their hymns." (p.272)
- <sup>2</sup> J. Muir. O.S.T. vol.V. p.159. London, 1868.
- <sup>3</sup> *Viśvacakṣas*, I.50.2.
- <sup>4</sup> Cf. I.115.1; 50.6; VII.76.1; X.37.1.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. V.62.8; VI.51.2.
- <sup>6</sup> *vimuco napāt*. cf. I.42.1; VI.55.1; VIII.4.16.
- <sup>7</sup> *viśve arpitaḥ* VI.58.2.
- <sup>8</sup> VI.54.8; X.26.8c.
- <sup>9</sup> VI.53.9. Cf. VI.55.3.
- <sup>10</sup> I.138.1.
- <sup>11</sup> II.40.6; I.89.5.
- <sup>12</sup> VI.49.8.
- <sup>13</sup> For a profound examination of Pūṣan see S. Kramrisch, "Pūṣan", *J.A.O.S.* 81, 1961.
- <sup>14</sup> *Viśvadarśato jyotiskṛd* I.50.4.
- <sup>15</sup> IV.13.4ab.
- <sup>16</sup> Cf. IV.13.3&4.
- <sup>17</sup> VII.98.6.
- <sup>18</sup> *urucakṣaḥ* VIII.101.2.
- <sup>19</sup> VII.35.8; 63.4.
- <sup>20</sup> Cf. I.123.3 where Savitr̥ is asked to "declare us sinless before Sūrya."
- <sup>21</sup> VIII.18.15; cf. VI.51.1 *caḥsur adabdhā*.
- <sup>22</sup> *Vision*, p.193.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. IV.53.2. Gonda remarks: "The relation between supranormal insight and knowledge and sight or light may also be illustrated by the belief that the sun - the father of the gift of visionary speech and recitation (RV 3.53.15) - is the organ of sight of the gods (7.76.1; 77.3; 98.6). Hence also the conviction that not only the gods themselves (I.89.7; 7.66.10) but all divine beings are *suracakṣuḥ* 'sun-eyed' (I.16.1; the Ṛbhus in I.110.4). The Indians were not alone in this belief. Among the Greeks, as among the ancient Egyptians and Babylonians the sun was an eye, the eye of heaven, of a god, or of the universe, which nothing escapes and no one can deceive." (*Vision*, p.274) What is missing here is the admission that the Sun-eye can only radiate its light from a centre or focus of spiritual power, cosmic or, as in the human

being, microcosmic. Hence the sacredness of the sun. With reference to III.53.15, Sasarpārī, an epithet of Vāc, is the daughter of Sūrya, who restored to Viśvamitra his power of eloquence. Here again the connection between light and sound is marked. She spreads glory among the gods and the human races.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. X.114.4; 177.1&2; I.139.2.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. II.23.15.

<sup>26</sup> See also Ṛgv. I.164.1.31; III.38.6; IV.5.3; X.124.9; 177; 181.3.

<sup>27</sup> See for example Bṛhad. Up. II.3.3; J. Gonda, *Loka*, p.76.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Ṛgv. I.50.10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. p.76. On this page and following pages Gonda enumerates various verses with *sva*r meaning heaven, celestial light, or "light" as "heaven on earth".

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Athv.IV.11.6; VI.31.1; XI.1.37, etc.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. IX.111.2; 73.8b. The seer-poets drink Soma for illumination, for *sva*r: "O Pavamāna (Soma), brightly shine thy sap bestowing skill, a light for all to see *sva*r" (IX.61.18) - a prayer addressed to Soma shows the trend of the poet's thought. By means of Soma's exhilarating nectar the poet's eyes open to the higher states of awareness. There is no need of Soma to see the sun in the sky, but the solar illumination is an inner apprehension which Soma helps to bring about. Soma's drops are said to arouse intuitive perception, they are *svarvidah* (IX.107.14; 23; IX. 21.1, etc.)

<sup>32</sup> A verse quoted earlier encapsulates this: "Proclaim three *light*-projecting words (that) milk the honey-yielding udder" (VII.101.1) - the Soma inspired vision, or the intuitive insight.

<sup>33</sup> Does this imply that there were men before Yama who were not mortal? Are the Aśvins prototypes of that race of men before Yama who did not die, but withdrew from this earth, or faded into their descendants? An answer to this question would be interesting as it could then be related to *The Secret Doctrine* where a whole history of humanity is expounded according to the esoteric tradition, of which a few myths, worldwide, still bear some traces.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. IX.85.12; 86.36.

<sup>35</sup> IX.26.4 *saṁvasānam vivaśvataḥ*.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. I.53.1; IX. 66.8.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. IV.7.4; V.11.3.

<sup>38</sup> In *Myth and Reality*, pp.42ff.

<sup>39</sup> R. Goldman: "Mortal Man and Immortal Woman; an interpretation of three ākhyāna hymns of the Ṛg Veda", *Journal of Oriental Institute of Baroda* 18:4 (June 1969) p.273-303.

<sup>40</sup> H.P.B. here explains: "Every fire has a distinct function and meaning in the worlds of the physical and the spiritual. It has ... in its *essential* nature a corresponding relation to one of the human psychic faculties, besides its well determined chemical and physical potencies when coming in contact with the *terrestrially* differentiated matter." (S.D. I.p.521) The threefold fire is explained in the *Purāṇas* as electric, solar and fire by friction. Thus, "*Pāvaka* is electric fire, or *Vaidyuta*; *Pavamāna*, the fire produced by friction, (or *Nirmathya*); and *Śuci* is Solar (or *Saurya*) fire" (*Vāyu P.*) (ibid. p.521) - these three being the sons of Abhimānin, Agni, eldest son of Brahmā.and Svāhā.

<sup>41</sup> *Yoga of Kāṭhopanishad*, p.33, italics my own. H.P.B. enjoins: "Learn first how to produce the 'Sacred Fire', spoken of in the *Purāṇas*. The forty-nine fires are all states of *kuṇḍalini*, to be produced in ourselves by the friction of the triad." (E.W. p.427). H.P.B. enumerates the *śaktis* in *The Secret Doctrine*, vol.I.p.292-93.

<sup>42</sup> For a survey of the arguments one may consult "The Vedic ākhyāna and the Indian drama" by A.B. Keith, in *J.R.A.S.* 1911. M. Bloomfield in his "Contributions to the interpretation of the Veda" (*ZDMG.* Leipzig, 1894 pp.541ff) gave a scholarly exegesis of one of the most intractable *ākhyānas* in the Ṛgveda, X.102, expressing a standpoint totally different from that of Geldner and others. This field is wide open to controversy.

<sup>43</sup> For an excellent summary of the subject see R.D. Karmakar, "The Pāriplava (revolving cycle of legends) of the aśvamedha" in *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute*, vol.33, 1952, pp.26-40.

<sup>44</sup>The legend of Śunaḥṣepa is given in Aitareya Brāhmaṇa VII.13, some of which verses, though not the

story, are found in the Ṛgveda. Not understood by the early scholars, it had to wait until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century for a profound exploration of its essential meaning in R. Panikkar's exegesis in *Myth, Faith, Hermeneutics*, 1983. The original intent was the consecration of the child by sacrificing it as a return gift to Varuṇa. This never occurred, as in due time it was transformed into a consecration and apotheosis of life itself, and the child substitute, through his own exalting efforts, was made the high-priest of the sacrifice. Here is spelled out the meaning of *sacred*, as setting apart, which lies at the core of the *universal puruṣa* sacrificed that the world might be. The subject of sacrifice which underlies the ancient tradition will be examined in ch.8.

<sup>45</sup> According to Dowson, *Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*, "the names and epithets of the sun are numberless. He is Savitr 'the nourisher'; Vivasvat 'the brilliant'; Bhāskara, 'light-maker'; Dina-kara, 'day-maker'; Arha-pati 'lord of day'; Loka-cakṣuḥ, 'eye of the world'; karma-sākṣi, 'witness of the deeds (of men)'; graha-rāja, 'king of the constellations'; Gabhastimān 'possessed of rays'; Sahasrakiraṇa, 'having a thousand rays'; Vikartana, (sic) 'shorn of his beams' (by Viśvakarma); Mārtaṇḍa, 'descended from Mṛtaṇḍa', etc." (p.311)

## PART II

### THE SEVEN SOLAR RAYS

Sūrya is drawn by seven horses, or his chariot is thus drawn. So the poets describe the appearance of the sun and its solar rays, mentioning these as in passing, with hardly any hint as to a particular significance to these steeds, save for five verses to be examined herewith. Nor are names given in the Ṛgveda to the rays whose names are found in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, equated to the seven metres of the Vedas 46). Knowing that the Vedic metres had for the ṛṣis a profound esoteric meaning connected with the cosmos and its fashioning, this equation is of great significance: seven rays and seven metres, light and sound, radiant matter (ākāśa) and vibration; ākāśa and sound being one according to the śruti.

Thus the seven original sounds or notes which form the chromatic scale develop into the seven metres of the Vedas whose specific vibrations were conducive to various states of consciousness. These vibrations, at the level of light, express themselves visibly through the seven cosmic rays of Sūrya. Does this equation of the rays with the metres imply that the Vedic patriarchs were aware of the "mystical properties" of the solar rays and how to benefit from them? Enough evidence in the Ṛgveda proclaims their knowledge of sound and its powers and effect as light, 47) and their handing down this knowledge kept secret from all except the ṛṣis, or *twice born* or Brahmins 48). Such gnosis, traditional among the descendants of the patriarchs referred to as our forefathers, is stated to have been *discovered* as "the hidden light" which "with effective mantras brought forth the dawn" (VII.76.4cd). Similarly those patriarchs "found the light and expressed it by means of hymns" (IV.1.14 *vidanta jyotis cakṛpanta dhībhih*) thereby making "for us a way to lofty heaven" (*divo bṛhato* I.71.2c). Their vision is recognised as being "ancestral" (III.39.2).

That a secret gnosis existed is attested to by numerous references to Agni the "knower of all inspired wisdom" (III.1.18 *viśvāni kāvyāni vidvān*) such as those "secret words" (*ninya vācānsi*) whispered to Agni by the poet (IV.3.16), or that great intuition (*mahyam ... maṇṣām*) declared to the poet by Agni (IV.5.3); or the "hidden names of the gods" being made apparent by Soma (IX.95.2) in the state of exaltation; or the cows' secret name which Soma discovers "laid secretly away" (IX.87.3) etc. All these are mystical statements. Since the name was considered the key to the essence of the thing or being, it was deemed to yield its discoverer a

certain power over the thing, person or deva; whether in India or Egypt or elsewhere, the true name was kept secret.

Seven strong steeds bear Sūrya, the "world's beholder" (IV.13.3; cf.V.45.9&10); Indra yokes the seven reined chariot (VI.44.24); Agni protects the "circuit of Sūrya", protects the "seven-headed in the centre" (III.5.5), Sūrya's seven horses or rays, but also perhaps the seven planets, with Sūrya in the centre 49). The question remains open whether these seven heads mean seven rays as well as seven openings to other levels of subtle matter (the sevenfold foundation of the universe VIII.40.5, etc). In I.164.2 the *one-wheeled chariot*, three-naved, ageless and unobstructable "whom the seven yoke" is said to be "drawn by the one steed with seven names" and there within this wheel "all the worlds take their stand". Here the steed with seven names could be the sun with his seven rays and the one wheeled chariot in which are all the worlds could be his solar system. H.P.B. explained

"It is on account of his septenary nature that the Sun is spoken of by the ancients as one who is driven by seven horses equal to the metres of the Vedas; or, again, that though he is identified with the SEVEN 'Gana' (classes of being) in his orb, he is distinct from them, as he is indeed; as also that he has SEVEN RAYS" (S.D.I. p.290. "Extracts from a Private Commentary.") - the septenary nature referring to the seven differentiated levels of all pervading *ākāśa*, hence also to the seven rays, each with its own frequency.

Among the numerous references to Sūrya's seven rays, all more or less descriptive of his appearance, five verses especially arouse suspicion about a hidden meaning. The first two of these run thus:

"With the seven rays of Sūrya, the pious one has milked " abundant nurture and vigour seven-graded." (VIII.72.16)

"These indeed are Sūrya's rays by means of which our forefathers were in communion." (I.109.7)

In both these verses the sun's rays are claimed as a *means* towards an end; they are *tools* used for an ulterior purpose which is mentioned in I.109.7. Their inner or "mystical property", to quote H.P.B.'s qualification, (she does not mention these verses) must be in question. Both verses are also in line with another verse where the path of *ṛta* is sustained "by means of rays" (I.136.2), though here those rays seem rather to be woven of the *ṛṣis'* thought, even though aligned to the solar rays, thus:

"The path of *ṛta* [both Cosmic Order and ritual as mirror] has been sustained

by means of rays, the Eye of the gracious-Lord (Bhaga), by means of rays". (I.136.2ab)

The path laid out by *ṛta*, maintained by the "rays" sent out by the worshippers' invocations, chants, hymnal prayers, make a subtle link in the *ākāśa* between the centre of their world - the altar - the centre of their psyche as the directive intelligence, and the centre of our universe - the Eye of Bhaga, who in V.82.3, is identified with Savitr, another aspect of Sūrya. The rays here are those intangible filaments woven of human thought, feeling, imagination, vision and vibration, which the *ṛṣis* recognised as binding the human to the celestial world. Are these thought-produced rays, rising to the Solar Eye, deemed to be *influenced* by, or merging with, the sun's rays? Such is possible, since by their means the patriarchs were able to unite in communion (I.109.7). That the *ṛṣis* considered they wove a link by means of their ritual with the devas is evident in the following two very revealing stanzas, as translated by Griffith:

"The sacrifice drawn out with threads on every side, stretched by a hundred sacred ministers and one, this do these fathers weave who hitherward are come;

they sit besides the warp and cry: weave forth, weave back.

The Man extends it and the Man unbinds it; even to this vault of heaven

hath he outspun it. These pegs are fastened to the seat of worship;

they made the *Sāma* hymns their weaving-shuttles." (X.130.1-2)

The *sāma* vibrations are obviously the link between the lower and the higher. By the power of their *luminous* chanting, the *ṛṣis* entered subtler realms where they encountered the devas. They used their *glowing hymn* as a vehicle (*ratha* chariot) for raising their consciousness beyond the thrall of the physical senses. 50). But in VIII.72.16, it is not those rays of thought and vibrations of chants that are in question, but the very rays of Sūrya, by which means, it is plainly said, vigour and sustenance in seven grades are *milked*. Again in I.109.7 by means of those rays the patriarchs are able to gather together in communion; the latter implies a coming

together on a higher level of consciousness, the word *sapitvā* meaning *union, communion*, of several people for a common soul-purpose - a curious enough thought, were it not that an investigation into the background of such statements, reveals the fundamental *tapas* practices of the ṛṣis, and their claim to an *awakening* to a higher level of awareness; e.g. in IV.1.18 where they awaken to the possession of a "heaven-bestowed jewel", jewel having very often in the Ṛgveda a spiritual connotation; or in I.164.21 where "the lordly herdsman of the whole universe, the enlightened one, has entered into me, the simple"; or in I.50.10 where they have reached out to Sūrya beyond the darkness, etc. If mystical statements are acceptable among Christians, why not among the ṛṣis of the Ṛgveda who left us a legacy of mystical insights - even though so utterly misunderstood or denied? The Ṛgveda is far from being such a *worldly* book as has been made out through lack of understanding.

What did the poet mean by "milking nurture and vigour seven graded", by means of solar rays? These are evidently viewed as having a specific quality and effect on the poets. Is it the energy needed to force entrance into the differentiated levels of the beyond which themselves open out to the matrix of space. The *mystical properties* of the solar rays are definitely hinted at in VIII.72.16, implying a hidden lore of solar influences known to the ṛṣis' mystical insight, but quite beyond the orbit of our rational minds and so ignored.

The next two verses to be examined come from one hymn (VII.60) where Sūrya, in the first two verses, is said to arise sinless (*anāgā*) 51) meaning never transgressing ṛta - to behold mortals' good and evil deeds, and he is asked to speak the truth (*satyam*) to Mitra-Varuṇa. In verses 3 and 4 (examined herewith) two simple words, superficially insignificant, yet full of secret significance, stand out: *ghee* and *honey*:

"From their abode He (Sūrya) has yoked his seven fawn-coloured-steeds  
who, abounding in ghee, convey Sūrya". (VII.60.3ab)

"Your spotted honey-rich steeds have risen; to the  
resplendent ocean has Sūrya mounted." (ibid.4ab)

Ghee is made of the essence of butter which is the cream of milk - the gift of the cow, symbol of Aditi/Vāc, of the singing fiery-mist, *ākāśa*. Ghee is offered into the fire to feed Agni's flames which send the offering to the devas. In ghee is Agni said to reside, it is his sphere (*dhāma* II.3.11). The "golden birds" (I.164.47) referred to earlier, also circling up to heaven and back to earth, besprinkle the earth with their ghee evolved out of their own substance, out of their living. The ṛṣis' ghee-sprinkling-songs are offered to the *dityas* (II.27.1); this ghee is the outer presentation to Agni of the very essence of the seer's soul-activity. Heaven and Earth, the great Parents, also feed humans with their milk full of ghee which the poets kiss with their visionary songs, in the gandharva's immovable abode (I.22.14) - the human heart, psyche, where the link resonates, also reflected in the altar. Ghee, the richest part of the cow's gift, brought to its quintessence by human action, has a secret meaning as revealed by the ṛṣi Vamadeva:

"From the ocean uprises the honeyed wave; with the stalk of Soma  
it becomes the elixir of life (*amṛta*) which is the secret name of ghee.  
tongue of the gods, navel of immortality." (IV.58)

"The whole universe lies in the splendour, 52) within the ocean, within the heart,  
within the life-span. That honeyed wave of thine, we would obtain, that is brought  
to the face of the waters, in their coming together." (IV.58.1; 11)

In these mystical stanzas, the honeyed wave of inspiration/illumination emerges from supra-conscious levels and descends to the very depth of psyche to be received by the open mind and finally expressed in rhythmic vibrations. Ghee concerns the quintessence of life, vision, ecstasy, the touch of the eternal, whose name is *amṛta*. That the seven horses or rays of Sūrya are said to abound in ghee is most suggestive of that gift of illumination which the mystical qualities of the solar rays would vouchsafe, which finally take the ṛṣi to the solar splendour, to the transcendent. One needs to get into the spirit of these images to grasp their meaning, and, as shown above, the Ṛgveda does at times give the key to their secret sense. Such ordinary words with a hidden sense usually help to solve many a puzzle, and here the connection between thoughts woven into rays reaching out to the higher spheres and the rays of solar light is implied.

*Madhu*, honey, another such highly charged mystical term imperceptible to philology, centres around *wisdom*. Agni whose honeyed tongue (I.60.3), however starkly opposite to anything one imagines of fire, bespeaks "much wisdom" (III.5.6); so does Soma, and other devas; thus the twin Aśvins, harbingers of light, at early dawn circle around the heavens with their honey-hued chariot laden with honey. *Svar-finders*

(*svarvidā*), of profound insight (*gambhīracetasā* VIII.8.2), honey-drinkers, honey-bestowers, honey-sprayers, the Aśvins' intimate link with honey, the essence of sustenance, symbol of strength, vigour, life and wisdom, makes them most beloved protectors of mankind. All-knowing (*viśvedasā*), they are asked to besprinkle the offering with honey (*madhvā* I.47.4), to besprinkle the seers' power (*kṣātra*) with honey and ghee and promote their word (*brahman*) among men, hence to stimulate their vision. So the thought of Sūrya's seven horses as rich in honey (VII.60.4ab) again revolves around the notion of the seven rays possessing particular qualities symbolised in honey. Are the Aśvins considered harbingers of the mystic properties of the solar rays? The Aśvins are not only gods of light but also of healing, fertility and agriculture, divine physicians and teachers of human beings, who were once human, now considered saviours whose celestial honey is sweet, nourishing and healing. The sap of their riches which they fetch out of the *celestial waters* (I.181.1), from the *ocean*, or from heaven, they bring together with the solar rays (I.47.6&7) to the morning offering. Through the ship of the poets' thoughts (I.46.7 *nāvā matīnām*) they come to the altar. Water, ocean and heaven, usually interpreted literally, imply two or three degrees of different levels of celestial spheres ranging through the depths of space, mirrored in psyche, plus the solar rays, evoking infinitude.

Concerning these rays H.P.B. explains:

"The totality of the Seven Rays spread through the Solar system constitutes" the basis of ether, the fifth terrestrial element, in which basis "light, heat, electricity, etc ... the forces of orthodox science - correlate to produce their terrestrial effects. As psychic and spiritual effects, they emanate from, and have their origin in, the supra-solar Upādhi (basis) in the ether of the occultist - or Ākāśa." (S.D.I.p.515) *Ākāśa* the noumenon of ether, in its seven gradations, is space, the *plenum* wherein the drama of creation is played; hence the correlation of the range of the solar rays and *ākāśa* in its higher levels and ether in its lower levels. From such visioning in the inner reaches of space, the ṛṣis gathered their knowledge of the mystical properties of the solar rays. It all sounds preposterous to our narrow-minded outlook, but the inroads of mystical insight are far beyond the grasp of the rational mind which simply and point blank dismisses them as impossible.

The last verse of the five investigated runs thus:

"On he flows (Soma), king of all *svar*-seers, roaring forth the vision of ṛta, surpassing the ṛṣi, he who is rubbed with Sūrya's arrow, father of thoughts of unattainable wisdom." (IX.76.4ab)

Here is hinted at the intimate connection between Soma, Sūrya, the vision of ṛta and of *svar* and the ṛṣi. But what is that beam of Sūrya called arrow *asira* with which Soma is "rubbed", or "cleaned" or "purified" etc. - several meanings of the verb *mṛj*? One can here recall that Soma is a moon plant, it could have ripened under the waxing moon during which time the moon received a greater measure of that special beam called *suṣumna* which it reflects on earth during those two weeks, thereby influencing plants and human beings to a greater extent. Soma's influence involves vision and wisdom and its exhilaration is enhanced by Sūrya's beam. One may surmise that this "arrow" is Sūrya's "special beam" whose secret nature the ṛṣis knew, but which is lost to later generations.

H.P.B. explains the seven rays thus:

"The names of the Seven Rays - which are *Suṣumna*, *Harikeśa*, *Viśvakarman*, *Viśvatryarcās*, *Sarīnaddha*, *Sarvāvasu* and *Svarāj*, - are all mystical, and each has its distinct application in a distinct state of consciousness, for occult purposes. The *Suṣumna*, which, as said in the Nirukta (11.6) is only to light up the moon, is the ray nevertheless cherished by the initiated yogins." (S.D.I.p.515 fn)

Yaska's remark reveals him as neither a mystic nor an initiated yogi.

Some data can be gathered on the *suṣumna* ray in symbolic form in the Ṛgveda, or more straightforwardly in the Upaniṣads and yoga texts. Two factors lead to specific conclusions: one concerns that enigmatic figure, the *gandharva* whose final meaning has not been fathomed by exegesists, who may be closely associated with that solar ray, could even be the noumenon behind the ray; the second concerns the knowledge of Yoga in Vedic times until recently denied a priori to the ṛṣis, in spite of the evidence of *tapas* in the Ṛgveda.

It is here, in yoga, in that mystical understanding of the human anatomy and constitution, that figures that counterpart of the solar ray in the human being, the *suṣumnā* as the central channel that links the lowest to the highest, the man to the solar deity. Note the feminine ending for the *suṣumnā* as the human counterpart to

the *suṣumna*, masculine, as the solar ray.

#### THE GANDHARVA

The Gandharva belongs to a particular class of beings later known as genii of the waters, heavenly and terrestrial, in folklore becoming the heavenly musicians, for their bond with the "word" transformed them into musicians. The gandharva's three particular aspects associate him with *solar fire*, with the *soma ambrosia*, and with *vāc*, the fashioning word. In the Ṛgveda the gandharva is assimilated in his appearance to the intangible, iridescent rainbow spanning the veil of clouds, hence Sāyaṇa's identification of him with the rainbow. But he is, for the ṛṣis, not just a ribbon of multi-colours across the sky, but a celestial entity capable of revealing hidden truths to humans and gods. Merged into the ascending sun, the "celestial gandharva of the waters" (IX.86.36) fuses into Soma whose abode he guards (IX.83.4) in high luminous heaven. Sun, Soma, gandharva, *svar*, ṛṣi blend, each reflecting the other whilst they melt into each other in a kaleidoscopic vision. The gandharva opens the secret door to the core of the psyche through the power of resonance; he reveals the knowledge hidden in the "ocean of the heart", whence flashes insight into the real and the unreal:

"Let Viśvavasu (the all beneficent), the celestial gandharva, measurer of the sphere, sing to us, that verily we may know what is true, what untrue; so may he enhance our visions." (X.139.5)

In a great hymn of the Yajurveda the gandharva rises to his full stature:

"Let the gandharva who knows the Eternal  
speak of that station which is parted yet wrapped in mystery.  
Three steps of That are in mystery hidden;  
He who knows them shall be the father's father ...  
Having encompassed all creatures, encompassed all worlds,  
Encompassed all the regions and directions,  
And approached the First-born of Eternal Order,  
He with the Self entered into the Self ... (Yjv.32.11. A.C.Bose trans.)

Several tasks are ascribed to him: unveiling certain secrets to devas and men; revealing the divine presence, the mystery of mysteries; emitting the sound in the womb without which no new life can be born.

"The wise-seers behold with their heart, with their mind,  
the flying-bird anointed with the magic of the celestial-spirit (*asurasya*);  
within the ocean, the inspired-poets observe him;  
the wise-ones yearn for the source of his rays.  
The flying-bird bears the word in the mind which the gandharva  
pronounces within the womb. That intuition resplendent with blazing-light  
the inspired-poets safeguard in the seat of Order." (X.177.1-2)

The "wise-seer" (*vipaścit*) who "vibrates" in harmony with the ṛta; the "inspired-poet" (*kavi*) whose utterances uplift the heart, and the devoted worshipper (*vedhasāh*), each of these is an aspect of the ṛṣi as he appears in his visionary state, as he perceives inwardly the "flying-bird". Who is that flying-bird whose "rays" are sought by the worshippers? Is it the inner sun whose rays lead the poet to the essence of being, the spirit discovered in the ocean of the inner space which Gonda rightly equates with the heart? (Really the heart *cakra*) For Gonda, the "bird is the inner light of the visionary illumination and perception" (*Vision*. p.277). But it could also be viewed as the spiritual spark that is to incarnate and bears the creative word, the specific note which the gandharva is to sound in the womb to give the impetus to a new life to be born on the earthly plane. The gandharva knows secrets of life which he is said to impart to women.

May the gandharva knowing the immortal proclaim that  
highest presence of the divine power that is in secret.  
(Athv.2.1.2. Gonda's translation. Notes on Names; p.90)

Such highly mystical verses cannot be ignored under the plea that they are senseless to us! Nor are they superficial claims of poetic exaltation, but claims based upon the seers' inner perceptions. Such soaring to heights we cannot follow spells out some of the deepest insights of psyche now forgotten or denied.

H.P.B. assesses the gandharva in the following terms:

"The gandharva of the *Veda* is the deity who knows and reveals the secrets of heaven and divine

truths to mortals. *Cosmically* - the Gandharvas are the aggregate powers of the solar fire, and constitute its Forces; *psychically* - the intelligence residing in the *Susumna*, Solar ray, the highest of the *seven* rays; *mystically* - the occult force in the Soma (the moon, or lunar plant) and the drink made of it; *physically* - the phenomenal, and *spiritually*, the noumenal causes of *Sound* and the Voice of Nature..." (S.D. I. p.523 fn)

"... while the *Gandharva* of the Ṛg-Veda may there be made to personify the fire of the Sun, the *Gandharva devas* are entities both of a physical and psychic character ... if ever unravelled, the theogony of the Vedic Gods will reveal fathomless mysteries of Creation and being." (S.D.II.p.585)

There is here revealed not only an insight into ancient cosmology but also into certain meanings of the gandharvas such as is beyond our Western exegesists. But, that *sacred texts* have their spiritual dimension should be, at least, taken into account. The greatest obstacle will be the understanding of the solar ray as having intelligence! In a cosmos made devoid of intelligence except for our humanity, this appears simply absurd! But this only concerns our present mentality which will perhaps be an absurdity to those coming after us! One may understand that the solar ray is not just a physical phenomenon, but one that harbours within itself a *noumenon*, a spiritual centre of quickening power beyond human present perception or understanding. Also one may recall that *Universal* intelligence means that intelligence pervades the whole cosmos, just as when monotheists say that God is omnipresent, they mean that God is everywhere. Intelligence is present everywhere through the many centres, *the living foci of creative activity* formed by the hosts of celestial beings and their quickening influence, from the highest to the lowest in the scale of evolution. Our sun is thus considered one such vast centre and its radiating rays the ultimate expression or energies on the physical plane, of celestial beings. Such a view gives a completely different perspective to the cosmos. Those quickening centres, just like love, will, purpose, etc. cannot in themselves be measured, weighed or quantified. This view goes beyond proof or disproof, for it pertains to psyche's domain usually rejected and therefore ignored. But it is that dimension which the ṛṣis fathomed through their *dhīh* and *tapas*, to which they, like the mystics of all races and times, have borne witness, of which they sung in their hymns, and which we should at least acknowledge.

Addressing the "celestial gandharva" and "lord of the world", the seer exclaimed:

"Thee I yoke by means of the word-of-power" (*brahman*). (Athv.II.2.1)

This kind of "yoking" has been derided as giving man power over the devas. What kind of gods could these be if man can rule them? There lurks here a misapprehension of the role of the devas and their position which the ṛṣis considered rather in terms of "brotherhood" - (VIII.83.8 born in the same mother's womb; VIII.27.14 for of one spirit are the devas with mortal man; cf.also X.89.8c - those who infringe the divine statutes "injure as it were a friend") - rather than overlords (with the exception of Varuṇa). To be able to yoke the gandharva implies that the initiated ṛṣi knew his own and the gandharva's resonance, could attune himself to the celestial spirit, to create links or perform some spiritual task. This implies a training, a life of *tapas*, an adherence to the norms of ṛta, a purpose to fulfill, such as bringing certain devas to the ritual performance to link the celestial to the human at the altar. Such knowledge could never fall into the hands of the non-initiated, at least in Ṛgvedic times. *Discord* in humans prevents linking with the harmonious devas, (cf.X.71) it only attracts low entities. For the devas are *law-abiding*, *born-in-law*, they foster law, hate falsehood etc. (Cf VII.66.13ab; X.92.4; I.90.6.ab; VII.61.5cd; IX.73.6d); in this respect they are superior to humans.

Indra we are told in Ṛgv.VIII.77.5 "pierced through the gandharva in the fathomless realm of space", a very strange, yet symbolic admission; he did this "for the sake of increasing the word-of-power". Word, or sound/vibration and gandharva are very closely linked, (as already mentioned) for the latter sounds the word of power, the life-giving word in the womb of the mother-to-be. Indra, who "assuredly is mind" (Śat. Br. XII.9.1.13), pierces through the solar ray, thereby opening a channel for the word-of-power to reach its target, making a path for man to higher realms, to *svar*. His weapon, the thunderbolt, is identified with Soma (IX.77.1) and in the Soma exaltation he fulfills his purpose, to reach the highest heaven. It is an opening inwardly in the psyche and outwardly in the depth of space, subjectively and objectively, linking the human to the celestial. Recalling an image from the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (II.2.3) one could venture to think that the ray when pierced becomes the arrow that sends the word to its target, the highest centre, out there in transcendence, and through psyche to the divine spark or *ātman* in immanence. For Indra conquered *svar* through the power of his *tapas* (X.167.1d), which seems to be forgotten, and found *amṛta* hidden in the third sphere of heaven in the



threefold splendour (VI.44.23).

This interpretation which takes into consideration soul experiences as subject of *sacred texts*, differs considerably from Sāyaṇa's mere physical interpretation of the intangible gandharva as the rain-cloud which Indra shattered, thereby releasing the rain. Sāyaṇa's remarkable lack of spiritual inkling totally ignored the much deeper significance of the gandharva. Behind such mythical and mystical verses lies a forgotten gnosis that demands to be recognised and understood for it concerns the *human psyche*, its link with the cosmic powers, its capacity to tune into and to interpret those powers.

It becomes evident from the above discussion that the gandharva, in one of his many aspects, could personify the *quickenning power* of the solar *susumna* ray, as it radiates from the sun out to the earth and is reflected in that counterpart of it found in the subtler human constitution. The rainbow in this case is a very apt image of the gandharva's intangible, kaleidoscopic nature and its linking the spiritual to the earthly. Can we deny that there is something here which, though generally beyond our present mental grasp, was real enough to the seers of the Vedic hymns? When the human being sounds his truthful note through his harmonious living with all and with himself, he discovers the gandharva within himself, perhaps in the guise of the secret resonance of the *sacred fire* that reveals to him divine truths. (IV.5.3) - the "all knower" (*viśvavid*) the "messenger of truthful speech" (*satyavācam* VII.2.3) who "knows all wisdom" (III.1.18d. cf. IV.6.1cd), the flame divine.

## YOGA

The second factor to be examined is the knowledge now gathered under the broad term of yoga. One meets here, perhaps for the first time, in outline, that subtler counterpart to the physical body which the seers viewed as informing and giving it its vigour, as made up of a network of innumerable channels of psychical energy called *nāḍi* underlying the nervous system which they feed. The whole doctrine appears succinctly in the Upaniṣads and is presupposed in the Vedas. Each of the *nāḍis* was found to vibrate at a particular pitch, hence to emit its own note, which in concert with all other notes emit chords forming the human sounding board, part of the grand sounding board of nature. Hence the inner resonance of psyche to its environment, and the specific note, harmonious or discordant, sounded mostly unknowingly by humans as they live. These are subtleties that now escape us through our total ignorance of psyche, of our inner being, but they were known to the ṛṣis.

The science of union with the higher and subtler inner flame-power which constitutes the core of Yoga, may have been set down in writing in later ages, but the lore of its secret powers or *siddhis* was definitely known to the ṛṣis, for it is these *siddhis* plus *vidyā* that made them ṛṣis. As previously mentioned, some Ṛgvedic verses hint at a "succession" or *paramparā*, thus:

"Not breaking the links, let us, seeking help, follow after the powers of our forefathers" (I.109.3ab)  
(*śakti* is the word used here for powers or capabilities)

"We speak by-reason-of our descent (birth) from the ancient Sire" (I.87.5a)

i.e. Soma the inspirer and giver of enlightenment and eloquence. The ṛṣi here makes plain his heritage. He also admits that the insight that brings illumination makes him like a sun, vibrant and blazing:

"Having received from my father the intuitive-perception of ṛta, I was born like a sun". (VIII.6.10)

In the past Western scholars have ignorantly denied that yoga was known to the ṛṣis. This is totally belied by certain *key words* that yield key concepts of yoga which can be traced right back to the Ṛgveda. (1) One such highly important word is *tapas* examined in ch.4. (2) What takes the place of the *niyamas* or rules of observances is the ritual of the sacrificial offering, during which the poet's vision converted into a hymn is offered, epitomising the action of give and take, the balance between the inflow and the outflow of life. The rites of purification and sacrifice implying participation and sharing and thereby social integration, mirroring the Cosmic Order, paved the way to individual discipline, purification and devotion. The latter, again usually denied to the Ṛgveda because supposedly not fitting with a mechanical ritual, although mechanical ritual is just not Ṛgvedic, is fully present in hymns to Indra, Agni and Varuṇa 53). (3) *Mind control and meditation*, (visual, mantric, and absorption in mind and heart) the crux of yoga. Here the great pool of knowledge of Gonda's *Vision of the Vedic Poets* can serve as a sure basis to opening our understanding to Vedic insights. A whole chapter in my *The Vedas; Hamony, Meditation and Fulfilment* is devoted to the subject of meditation

as found in the Ṛgveda and how it had been treated by Western exegesis. Further, in *Notes on Names and the Name of God* (p.91) Gonda refers to an ancient belief:

"That man who duly directs his concentrated thought towards the name of a god evokes the god.  
Thus it reads RV 4.39.4: ... 'we have directed our concentrated thought towards the auspicious (gracious) name of the Maruts, while being intent on coming into mental contact with them'."

This is quite an admission of meditation which was the basic practice in *tapas*. Graphic images are used such as vultures circling round their prey for days (I.88.4), the prey turning out to be that vision-inspired thought (*imam dhiyam*) which favours the making of the *brahman*, the right evocative word. (Cf. X.183.1&2 where the intensive absorption of one person is witnessed by the other, and vice versa). Visioning, brooding, meditating, communion with celestial beings are recorded e.g. X.136, where the *siddhis* are mentioned (54). Many expressions involving *dīdhyanāḥ*, such as *manasā dīdhyanāḥ*, as found e.g. in Ṛgv.X.181.3 or VII.90.5 with the added *satya* truthful, implying a truly reflecting mind, or *ṛju dīdhyanāḥ* which Gonda translates as "having the right visionary insight" (*Vision*, p.206) point to the complete concentration of the mind (55), whether devic or human. A study of Gonda's book is very revealing of the ṛṣis' perception and mental absorption. To deny the ṛṣis the knowledge of what yoga really involves is the nadir of ignorance!

Two more points remain: (4) The knowledge of *mantra yoga* obviously dates back to the Ṛgveda, if not much earlier. This has been examined in ch.5. (5) Culmination in higher states of consciousness, ecstasy, revealing certain mysteries, universal or human, all spelled out in the Ṛgveda. Examples have been given:

"There, is the lordly herdsman of the whole universe, the enlightened one,  
who has entered into me, the simple." (I.164.21.cd)

"We have drunk Soma, we have become immortal; we have gone to the light ... " etc. (VIII. 48.3)

These fundamental points, for which relevant verses have already been examined, prove that the essence of yoga as *concentration*, *meditation* and *samādhi* or perfect absorption or *enstasy*, plus ecstasy, plus *knowledge of the secret fire*, its arousal and powers, and of the *power of vibration/frequency*, its intimate link with light, the *wielding of the mantras*, plus insights into the human psyche's action, all these formed the *sacred gnosis* of the ṛṣis - indeed the background of the Ṛgveda - long before it was systematised in writing.

One may surmise that the solar *suṣumna*, when fully activated and *reflected* in a prepared human being, effects upon the meditating mind an alteration of consciousness - enhanced through the moon's action in polarising and reflecting the ray back on earth and thus on human beings. The ancient gnosis of the *suṣumna*, so briefly alluded to in the Ṛgveda (more will be discussed in ch.7) is more expounded in the Upaniṣads, for instance:

"There is an artery, called *suṣumna*, leading upwards, conveying the breath,  
piercing through the palate. Through it, by joining (yuj) the breath, the syllable  
Om, and the mind, one may go aloft... Thence he goes to selflessness.  
Because of selflessness, one becomes a non-experiencer of pleasure  
and pain; he obtains the absolute unity (*kevalatva*). For thus has it been said;  
After having first caused to stand still  
the breath that has been restrained, then,  
having crossed beyond the limited, with the unlimited  
one may at last have union in the head. (Maitri Up.VI. 21) 56)

This is the essence of certain yoga techniques which show how old was this gnosis. The unfortunate word "artery" chosen to translate *nāḍī*, misleads the reader into believing that it refers to the physical arterial system, which it does not. But what else could a translator who knew nothing of the subtler counterpart to the human body do when faced with apparently nonsensical statements? This again demonstrates that philology alone cannot solve the puzzles of sacred texts. These need the esoteric key. Śrī Krishna Prem insisted:

"... the real *nāḍī* system with all its associated "lotuses" or chakras is fundamentally a psychic system. The 'subtle channels' are the network of paths along which psychic and not physical energy is organised and transmitted..." (*Yoga of the Kathopanishad*. p.256)

According to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad:

"But when he thus departs from this body, then he *ascends upward with these very rays of the sun*. With the thought of Om, verily, he passes up..." (VIII.6.5)

How can we deny that "these very rays of the sun" with which he ascends are the same rays mentioned in that enigmatic Ṛgvedic verse previously quoted:

"*These indeed are Sūrya's rays by means of which our forefathers were in communion*". (I.109.7)

The ṛṣi here uses these rays to enter into communion with his peers in the higher spheres; in the Upaniṣads the ṛṣis openly explain that they use these to pass beyond the gates of death to the beyond - the meaning is similar. How can we claim a gap in gnosis between Ṛgveda and Upaniṣad? The Chāndogya goes on:

"As quickly as one could direct his mind to it, he comes to the sun. That verily, indeed is the world-door, an entrance for knowers, a stopping for non-knowers." (VIII.6.5) 57)

The sun as "world-door" means entrance into higher spheres for those awakened to the spiritual dimensions, the "knowers", but a "stopping" for the ignorant who cannot pass beyond their earthly consciousness. He who can "ascend upward with these very rays of the sun" reaches *svar*, hence the ṛṣis' *communion* with his peers, which verse parallels the Upaniṣadic statement. From the sacrificial worship to the Eye of heaven (Sūrya cf.X.130.1.2), he who wove his rays of thought would merge these rays with Sūrya's beams, through knowledge of their frequencies and the result would be a higher state of consciousness. Even verse VIII.72.16 could benefit from the Chāndogya elucidation:

"With the seven rays of Sūrya, the pious one has milked abundant nurture and vigour seven-graded."

In this respect, are H.P.B.'s words so preposterous - that each of the rays in its mystical significance "has its distinct application in a distinct state of consciousness"? Words revealing a profound inkling of Vedic gnosis.

Further, since the *light* of the *word*, or of the three words (identified with the three Vedas) "milks the honey-yielding udder" of the heavenly sphere, the fountain of illumination (cf.VII.101.1), it is not difficult to perceive that the knowledge of the frequency of the word and of the Vedic metres, would allow the ṛṣis to resonate to the frequency of light and of the solar rays; through such means they came to their own perception of a world of living energies interacting ceaselessly. Can we not glimpse in their ascribing to the sun a highly important, dynamic, psycho-spiritual role, that all embracing focus of life which determines our own span of life and vitality, which feeds our own aspirations towards higher achievement and illumination, our search for spiritual truth, and from which we derive whatever insight we may be capable of? For the human being, according to the ṛṣi, was a creature in whom dwelled the opposites, in whom "both immortality and death are set together, in whom the ocean and the rivers are set together." (Athv.X.7.15)

## **PART II . THE SEVEN SOLAR RAYS.**

### **FOOTNOTES**

46. *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Vol. 2.2.8. p.239. London, 1865. The better known Vedic metres are *gāyatrī*, *br̥hati*, *uṣṇīḥ*, *triṣṭubh*, *jaḡatī*, *virāj*.

47. See for instance my *The Vedas*, pp.62-80.

48. Cf. Ṛgv.I.109.3; IX.10.9; III.39.2, etc

49. The seven-headed praise-song claimed by a patriarch, *arkaṃ sapta-īrṣāṇām* Ṛgv.X.67.1; cf. VIII.51.4.

50. Cf. "For Agni the knower-of-births... shall we fashion this praise, as it were a chariot" (I. 94.1). Agni himself is considered the charioteer (IV.10.2) that takes men's offerings to the devas; he is also the "charioteer of the transcendent" (I.77.3).

51. *Anāgas*, as in the case of any of the devas, means that like Sūrya or Uṣas (I.123.9) none ever really transgresses the cosmic order or law; our word sin or sinless, loaded with Christian concepts and taboos, is really out of place here! In VII.63.2 Sūrya is said not to infringe the common law (*samānaṃ na pramināti dhāma*) i.e the universal statute. Sin results from doing violence to or transgressing the universal laws. The many laws among humans may ultimately fuse in the supreme cosmic law of harmony, "a constant, inner adjustment of all parts to achieve a balance, the mirror of Cosmic Order... Law and truth find their meeting point in their ultimate basis, harmony..." (*Vision Of Cosmic Order*, p.148)

52. The word *dhāman* used here has many facets of meaning, as previously discussed, and is translated in this particular verse by Gonda as "divine power"; I have chosen "splendour" because the essence of ghee is deemed,

by the ṛṣis, to be a numinous quality, best expressed as splendour. See Gonda's *Dhāman* for all its occurrences and meanings.

53. See my paper "Bhakti and the Ṛgveda - does it appear there or not?" 1993. *Durham Indological Series*.3.

54. See *A Reappraisal Of Yoga*. (Feuerstein and Miller). Ch.5.

55. Perhaps the best example of the ṛṣis' mastery of their mind and capacity to tune into the higher dimensions of consciousness and receive their flashes of insight, intuition, revelation, and verbally express these, is given us in Gonda's explanatory translation of Ṛgv. VIII.59.6. He remarks that "... as stated by Renou the first half of the stanza refers to three stages of the activities of the seer-poet-eulogist who converts the inspiration received into the actuality of the liturgical word; 'O Indra and Varuṇa, when you gave in the beginning, to the seers inspiratory thought, thought as realized in speech (*vāco matim*) knowledge as heard and transmitted by poets, eulogists, priests, I perceived by means of the internal heat of ecstasy (*tapasā*) over which places those who have received (the) visions ... performing worship, emitted them.'" (op.cit.p.211) This explanatory translation reveals quite an insight in the mental process and psychical sight of the ṛṣis. Translated more succinctly, yet still somewhat discursively, we would have: "O Indra-Varuṇa, when in the beginning you vouchsafed on the ṛṣis insight (*manīṣām*), thought verbally expressive (*vāco matim*) and revelation (*śrutam* = heard), I perceived by means of *tapas*, over which sacred-spots the sages uttered these as they performed their worship". There is a suspicion here that the word *sthānāni*, which Gonda renders as "places" which externalises the idea, should have an internal significance, here a state or condition of mind (one of the meanings given by Monier Williams) which would imply the activating of the *cakras* or force centres through *tapas*, which produces flashes of insight, etc. This would be in accordance with the poets' practice of *tapas*. That "*tāni chandāmsi*" is read instead of "*yāni sthānāni*" in Khila I.6.6 would confirm this. For significantly, each force centre is known for producing its own keynote, its own vibration. Here lurks another proof of the ṛṣis' knowledge of yoga.

56. In a note to the Maitri Upaniṣad the *suṣumnā* is said to be "so described but not so designated, in Chāndogya 8.6.6 and Kaṭha 6.16." It is also hinted at in Taittirīya 1.6 and Praśna 3.7.

57. The Upaniṣad explains how through the *suṣumnā* one reaches the highest state:

"There are a hundred and one arteries [*nāḍis*] of the heart;  
one of these passes up to the crown of the head.

Going up by it, one goes to immortality.

The others are for departing in various directions". (Chānd. Up. VIII.6.6)

## CHAPTER 7

### THE SHINING ONES AND THE LIVINGNESS AND ORGANISATION OF SPACE

#### INTRODUCTION

When we turn to the organisation of space and the role of its denizens as it appears in the various pantheons, we enter the domain of spiritual entities, an order of beings far closer to the all-enveloping Universal Harmony than our humanity is. This is reflected much better in the earlier pantheons of the Ancients than in the later which, through the human loss of contact with the world beyond the senses, became projected as mirrors of our own petty human society (e.g. the Greco-Roman, Teutonic etc). All the creative gods, as *The Secret Doctrine* points out, "begin at the secondary stage of cosmic evolution" (S.D.I. p.427). This is substantiated in the R̥gveda, the Egyptian Heliopolitan and Hermopolitan cosmogonies, the Babylonian, the Norse, the Greek, etc. One gathers that these creative gods are the energising, radiating Intelligences that, through the inherent directive power of the *word* and the momentum of the *flame*, inherent to their being, join the process of unfoldment and become the activators in the moulding of universes, starry galaxies, solar systems, planets, our earth. These are the Dhyāni Chohans of *The Secret Doctrine*, the Vedic asuras and devas, the Old Testament Elōhīm, the Zoroastrians' Amesha Spentas, etc. They are primarily centres of consciousness pouring out their radiating energies as they resonate to the *word* that vibrates in the cosmos as in their very being.

#### CELESTIAL BEINGS AND PHYSICAL ATOMS

The tradition of celestial beings or angelic hosts, whether called gods, devas, *neter*, *igigi* or *anunnaki*, or daemons, archangels and angels, spans millennia of human history and prehistory. This is unfortunately a subject that falls prey to all sorts of infamy and ridicule, sending ripples of mockery from cynical, unimaginative minds that cannot conceive of or accept anything other than what is alone perceptible to them. For such minds the whole of ancient humanity is branded at best naive, and its mythologies the acme of human aberration. Perhaps future humanity will also brand us thus, though for other reasons, notably our pathetic desecration of all in favour of mere chance and the testimony of our most unreliable senses. Nevertheless, in any inquiry into the history of *revelation*, *seership* and *gnosis*, all of which come within the field of the *psycho-spiritual nature* of humanity, the study of the ancient gods, the dwellers in spatial depths unperceived by us, does admit of a rational, objective approach and consideration.

In this respect it might be instructive to cast a glance at our most unreliable senses and their very narrowly grounded testimonies; how these senses can give us but a very small and erroneous view of physical Reality; and then review some of the ancient pantheons, what they can and do teach us, their reflection of the human psyche's search for an answer to its many questions, their broad compass, their imaginative soaring. The result is quite amazing and rich in the glimpses it allows in human awareness, perspicacity, insight and loftiness.

For the Ancients, of whatever race or nation, space was sacred, not because they peopled it with imaginary beings - as we interpret their pantheons - but because their visionary insight took them to various dimensions of the mansions of space, all as equally alive with beings as our own - an insight which we deny them since ours is atrophied. M. Eliade in his study, *The Sacred and the Profane*, brings it home to us how wide is the gulf between what he calls "religious" man, whom I would rather call man in tune with the infinite, for whom the world is *sacred*, and modern man who (with notable exceptions) has lost all sense of the sacredness of nature and cosmos since the industrial revolution, and indeed has lost all sense of the livingness of Nature and of space itself. The two standpoints are irreconcilable. In all archaic societies, as M. Eliade shows, space as we know it becomes sacred through "consecration"; for through consecration man was deemed to reproduce the work of the gods. It is through the *sacred* that what we call the real becomes manifested.<sup>1</sup>

To the eye of vision, space is the aggregate of atomic lives from the subtlest to the densest level; hence

the void is the plenum for therein are found the noumena of all lives, all forms, all things. That which is void to perception, whether physical or mental perception, is the source of all fullness, all differentiations and modifications, all manifestations. Many theories have been evolved on that basis, arguing on a variety of distinctions, but all are rooted in the ancient vision that from the void of all forms emerges the fullness of all forms and all distinctions.

No one has ever seen an atom <sup>2</sup>, yet the existence of atoms is believed in because they are deemed essential to the *theoretical* working of the universe.

"The *indivisibility* of the atom was at one time a fact of *necessity* for Science, if the concept of materialism was not to fall apart. Professor Butleroff in the 19th century wrote that an atom '... is, we are answered by Science, the limited division of substance, the indivisible particle of matter. To admit the divisibility of the atom, amounts to an admission of an infinite divisibility of substance, which is equivalent to reducing substance to *nihil*, a nothingness. Owing to a feeling of self-preservation alone, materialism cannot admit infinite divisibility; otherwise, it would have to bid farewell for-ever to its basic principle and thus sign its own death-warrant."

(Scientific Letters. Quoted in *The Secret Doctrine*.I. p.519)

Since the 19th century many death blows have been dealt to these materialistic ideas and now the atom has been so divided that only energy is left. And what is energy? Energy is ultimately the activity of mind whether celestial, human or sub-human; energy is work, we are told, but who does the work? For Professor Butleroff the atom *is* elastic. And as H.P.B. pointed out

"... infinite divisibility of atoms resolves matter into simple centres of force, i.e. precludes the possibility of conceiving matter as an *objective* substance ... It is on the doctrine of the illusive nature of matter, and the infinite divisibility of the atom, that the whole science of Occultism is built. It opens limitless horizons to *substance* informed by the divine breath of its soul in every possible state of tenuity..."

(S.D.I.p.519-20)

The extreme unreliability of our senses is a well known fact, disregarded by those who decree that only matter is real. Furthermore, the human eye has a retina around which are housed light-sensitive rods or cones. Each grouping of these receives a different wave-length of electro-magnetic energy in the form of *photons* (which are units of electro-magnetic energy) thus enabling the eye to receive different colours and from this different sensations of the reception of photons. Photons give stimulus which, passed on to the brain, construct a three dimensional hologram of what is out in the environment. Recent theories have it that the retina of the eye is rather like a computer and the three dimensional image is constructed on its surface rather than in the brain itself. Under this view, information is received and decoded directly at retinal level. Whether at retinal or brain level, what we see in our environment thus depends upon the absorption and reflection of light units in the form of photons, the result being our own construction. It should also be remembered that terrestrial dust plays a part in our reception of light, without which dust we would not be able to see objects around corners and would be restricted to a straight-line tunnel vision. It is photons bouncing off or reflected from dust particles that allow us to see three dimensional terrain. It follows that the senses construct a picture of what is in the environment but not exactly what is really there. What the bee perceives, or the snake or the dog or the goldfish, etc. is quite different from what the human eye perceives. Sense reality is very much open to question. It depends on what one is.

Moreover the human physical vision is sandwiched between the -5 and -6 mark on the electro-magnetic spectrum, a millionth of a particle, or much faster, of the total electromagnetic spectrum available! Those optical instruments that enable us to see into the infra red and ultra violet spectrum do so very crudely in connection with the available field and even then there is a problem with human sense perception and *interpretation* of what is seen. If we cannot pick up with our senses anything but a mere slice of physical reality in spite of all the most refined instruments, how can we claim to know the ultimate in sensuous reality? Since these senses are far from accurate how can we claim that the only reality is that given by our senses? There are millions of units of electro-magnetic energy that stretch for miles in either direction of the electro-magnetic spectrum, and we as humans, are tied specifically in our senses to a razor-blade edge of that total spectrum. This all means in fact that at the physical level we know next to nothing of sensuous reality! Our environment is obviously full of objects and entities independent of us, but whether we see them correctly is open to the

gravest doubt. Similarly, whether those whose sense extensions in an inner dimension have endowed them with visionary powers such as *seership*, clairvoyance, etc. see correctly is also open to the gravest doubt. They see something, just as we see something and both construct something. The only basis on which we can rely in both cases of physical and super-sensuous perception is that there is a counterpart to what we see; only, that counterpart may be quite different from what we think or imagine it is. To deny anything other than matter is very foolish.

Has anyone ever seen a spiritual entity? Apparently yes, the old scriptures and the Old Testament are full of testimonies to this effect. For the gods, it is said, communicate their messages to mortals by means of several ways, through the lifting of the *mind-heart*, through direct vision, through epiphany, through the oracle, through the dream. Thus Utnapishtim, the much older Noah of Babylon, who survived the flood and became immortal, grasped the meaning of his visions and dreams and thereby "opened his ear to his God"; his Lord Ea speaks to him. "To the very holy, to Utnapishtim I sent dreams and he heard the secrets of the gods", says Ea. God speaking through dreams is referred to many times in the Old Testament. Thus in Job: "For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed. Then He openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction." (Job 33:14). (Cf. Numbers 12.6; Ps. 89.20; Daniel 2.19:4.7ff; ) We may mistake such messages as coming from God, instead of from our own psyche, nevertheless such messages are real and come from what to us is the *beyond*.

Far from being a subject for derision, the livingness of space and its dwellers, as reflected in the many pantheons of the Ancients, show us how the human mind has envisaged the various aspects of that universal power that must be at the very core of space; from space's ceaseless pulsations emanate the millions of galaxies forming our stupendous, infinite universe, and the millions of beings, spiritual with tenuous forms or more and more material, that live and have their being in these. The human viewpoint concerning both the celestial hosts and their ultimate Source or Deity, changes its form of apprehension and presentation in the course of the ages: it does so according to its racial or national idiosyncracies. As Iamblicus pertinently observed with respect to meaningful dreams,

"Dreams are sent by Deity but each living soul shapes them; their nature is of God for God grants it; but the appearance, the distinctive form, that is human creation." (Polemonis, *Declamationes*

1873. p.51)

Similarly space as the *plenum* during the periods of manifestation, must have a reality of its own, with living powers as foci of activity, *noumena* behind all phenomena; but we give them the shape, colour and activities we know of in our own space-time world. The reality may be quite different and beyond our mental grasp. Beyond our physical perception stretches an infinity of unknown dimensions in space and time which some scientists have begun to suspect. Three only are perceptible to man. Even our perception of space is in the process of changing. Euclidian geometry does not apply to spatial dimensions. Perhaps also the behaviour of atomic particles will have to suffer drastic revision to fit closer to a reality hitherto inconceivable. So we *have clothed the gods* - or spiritual entities, whatever these be - *with the fabric of our own mental garment and thereby reveal ourselves to ourselves*. This is highly important to realise. A study of the gods reflects the endeavours, searches, and sometimes vagaries of the human mind, but also at times, the sense of higher truth, righteousness, the lofty aspiration of psyche and its far-reaching vision.

## PART I THE ANCIENT PANTHEONS: THEIR VARIATIONS THROUGH THE MILLENNIA

***H.P.B.'s statement - which can be substantiated by looking at the pantheons themselves - is here to the point and should be recalled:***

"... no Cosmogony, the world over, with the sole exception of the Christian [and the Muslim] has ever attributed to the One Highest cause, the UNIVERSAL Deific Principle, the immediate creation of our Earth, man, or anything connected with these. This statement holds as good for the Hebrew or Chaldean *Kabbalah* as it does for *Genesis*, had the latter ever been thoroughly understood and ... correctly translated.

Everywhere there is either a LOGOS - a 'Light shining in DARKNESS' truly - or the Architect of the Worlds is *esoterically* a plural number." (S.D.I.p.439-40)

Thus "In the cosmogonies of all the (ancient) nations, it is the 'Architects' synthesized by the Demiourgos (in the Bible the Elōhīm, a plural word), who fashion Kosmos out of Chaos, and who are the collective *Theos*, 'male-female', Spirit and matter." (S.D.I.p.346)

These H.P.B. calls the movers or runners, "the *theoi* (from *thein* 'to run'), who do the work of formation, the 'Messengers' of the manvantaric law, who have now become in Christianity the 'messengers..." (S.D.I.p.346)

The *Ultimate Source* of the creator gods, however played down or passed over in silence out of reverence through the ages, was still *implied*. The R̥gveda gave a *positive affirmation* of It in X.129, or this verse:

"Earlier than the heavens, earlier than this earth,  
earlier than the gods and the asuras, THAT indeed is." (X.82.5ab)  
or "The gods appeared later by this world'creation." (X.129.6)

Hesiod, says H.P.B. "... begins his *Theogony* with: 'Chaos of all things was the first generated', thus allowing the inference that its cause or producer must be passed over in reverential silence. Homer in his poems ascends no higher than *Night*, whom he represents Zeus as reverencing ... Homer ... is not only silent with respect to the first principle, but likewise with respect to those two principles immediately posterior to the first, *Aether* and *Chaos* of Orpheus and Hesiod, and the bound and infinity of Pythagoras and Plato" etc. (S.D.I.p.425-26)

This is most striking but is usually disregarded! M. Eliade, in his *Patterns in Comparative Religions* confirms the above in his remark on

"the pre-Zarathustra notion of Ahura Mazda as *deus otiosus* who does not create directly, but through the *spenta mainyu* (Yast.44.7), that is, through the intermediary of a 'good spirit' rather like the demiurge that accompanies the Supreme Being of the sky in primitive religions" - who performs the work of creation (op.cit. p.74).

The sky supreme gods generally remain aloof from human toil and anguish (ibid. p.38ff). The inactive deity, in so far as our terrestrial world is concerned, seems to be the prehistoric transformation of the Absolute as conceived by the initiated, that is, beyond any need to create, beyond attributes, the *nirguna brahman* of the Hindus, the That of the R̥gveda. This prehistoric transformation of the Absolute into the *deus otiosus* of so many "primitive" societies, could be the mythological reflection of that transcendental sovereignty ascribed to the ONE "whose shadow is death, whose shadow is immortality" (R̥gv.X.121.2).

But this also occurred in less "primitive" societies. Thus Babylonian Anu "God of the heavens", delegates his power to Enlil to rule over the heavens and earth and fix the destinies of humans, Enlil and Ea being the more active gods of the supreme Babylonian trinity: Anu, Enlil, Ea.

"Therefore, all the creative gods, or *personal* Deities", writes H.P.B.

"begin at the secondary stage of Cosmic evolution." (S.D.I.p.427)

None of the ancient gods, however much anthropomorphised, could degrade the idea of the Eternal Source of all, since they were considered below that Source, and since silence was imposed upon the latter by those who knew the *gnosis*, and thus no comparison could be made, no speculation, no theorising, no distortion, no derision.

"The ancients taught the *auto-generation*, so to speak, of the Gods: the one divine essence, *unmanifested*, perpetually begetting a second-self, *manifested*, which second-self, androgynous in its nature, *gives birth in an immaculate way*, to everything macro- and micro- cosmical in this universe." (S.D.I.p.398) (For a "modern gloss" to the Old Commentaries, see S.D.II.p.33-34.)

The auto-generation of the gods is mentioned in R̥gv. X.129.6;72.6;63.2 etc. and Athv. X.7.25.

At a first glance at the ancient pantheons one notes numerous categories of gods just as there are of angels in the latest dispensation, as well as of lower spirits, all performing particular tasks, functions, creative actions inherent to their nature. Noticeable at first sight is the fundamental difference between the older gods and the angels of the past two millennia, the former being creative in their work, regents and judges in their particular spheres, the latter ministers subservient to the One God. One also notes the growing predominance of gods as rulers as against goddesses and their hegemony of bygone times. It seems that much earlier on, in dim



prehistory, it was usually a Mother Goddess that enfolded all, gave birth to all and took all back into her fold. Vestiges of this outlook remain in Egypt in the goddess Neith; in the Vedic Aditi who also is all that has been, is and will be; in the Sumerian Nammu who personified the Cosmic Waters, all pointing to the original doctrine of the Virgin Matrix of Cosmos, as indicated in *The Secret Doctrine* where spatial depth or *mūlaprakṛti* is termed the primordial Mother "whose heart had not yet opened for the One Ray to enter" (Stanza of Dzyan 2:4).

As the authors of the *Myth of the Goddess* conjecture

"It is most likely that in Sumeria a prior goddess tradition descending from Neolithic times was continually overlaid and reinterpreted by the tradition of male gods which the various newcomers brought with them. This would explain why there seem to be two 'layers' of mythology: an older one, where the goddess is primary; and a newer one, where the god begins to dominate ... (op.cit. p.182ff)

The authors see in the complex and full stature of Inanna, the Mother Goddess of southern Sumeria, Queen of heaven and earth, whose cult lasted some 4000 years, later to be merged in Ishtar of Babylon<sup>3</sup>, the important fact that

"... in the Bronze Age nature was not yet split off from spirit. The life of the earth and everything she produced was sacred. Plant and animal, sexuality and fertility were all the epiphanies, or the 'showing forth', of the being of the goddess ... One divine life was incarnate in the life of each and all, one mother was the source of everything ... " (ibid. p.196)

Full male predominance appears in the Vedic pantheon where, for instance, however lofty Aditi looms on detailed scrutiny, the role of ruler, intercessor and law enforcer devolves far more on to her sons the Ādityas who receive the prayers, praises and share in the offering. Aditi remains in the background even though prayers are addressed to her and her sovereign titles are mentioned; Uṣas, Dawn, has no part in the ritual, and those goddesses that do are quite secondary. Even Sarasvatī, though the promoter of the inner vision, rich in "regenerative power" (*vājinīvatī*), equally recognised as the slayer of the Obstructor Vṛtra (VI.61.7) and compared to Indra, is the recipient of very few hymns. The same applies to Vāc; however great her cosmic action as the underlying all pervading vibration that fashions all things, she does not seem to have received any offering, any prayer. On the other hand, there are signs of invocations to Ṛta (IV.3.9), an abstract idea, and of Ṛta being put on a par with the devas (X.66.4). One observes a definite switch over to the male activity. The prowess of the warrior god Indra assumes more importance, the might of the all pervading Agni, constructive and destructive, Sūrya-Savitṛ, lord of life and light, the majesty of the mysterious Varuṇa, the healing and helpful travelling Aśvins, and Soma the lord of eloquence and the inner eye-opener, these loom larger and larger on the horizon of the poet-priests.

### EMANATION OF THE GODS AND THEIR MEANS OF RULERSHIP

Each of the ancient pantheons reflects the society that gave it form and the gods have fundamentally similar characteristics and tasks to perform, though the apportioning of both these makes them outwardly very dissimilar. They also differ in the way they are thought to emanate to manifestation. But even here can be found profound similarities of conceptions as to emanation and archetypal images that harp back to a secret doctrine. Only a few pantheons will be studied, mainly those better known because opened out for us through scholarly research. All the gods, whether one or many, emerge from a state of incommensurable darkness imaged as the profound *waters of space* or the *serpent of eternity*. Thus in the book of *Sarparājñī*: "In the beginning before the Mother became Father-Mother, the fiery dragon moved in the infinitudes alone." (*Aitareya Br.* V.ch.4 Haug.trans. Quoted in S.D. I.p.74)

In the Heliopolitan tale of creation, the creator-god Atum emerges from the depth of the Waters of Space, personified in Nun, to start on his demiurgic task. From the Old Kingdom to the age of the *Coffin Texts* many texts have come down to us showing various ways of apprehending the beginnings of manifestation. A primeval serpent does figure in some texts, "the Serpent in the primeval darkness" the serpent that arose in the midst of the Waters of the "Abyss"<sup>4</sup>. As stated by R.T. Rundle Clark in his *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*

"In one sense he is the Atum figure of Heliopolis ... In another he is the serpent whose coils delimit the creation - the outer coils of the serpent are the limits of the world. God is the serpent but he is also in the centre of the coils, where he devises the Logos, the creative Word which lays down the laws of what is to be made." (op.cit.p.51)

This resembles the image of Śeṣa Ananta, the serpent of eternity on which lies Viṣṇu during *pralaya*, an image harping back to a great archetype expressive of the eternity of the essence of matter, i.e. *ākāśa*, symbolised in the coils of the serpent out of which the creative, active Deity emerges during the phases of activity. Here again we note one of the tenets of *The Secret Doctrine*. This whole Egyptian mythology, so pregnant with esoteric meaning, and full of archetypal images, is well explained with a depth of insight rare amidst scholars in the above mentioned book. The author, however, goes on

"Primordial Ocean, Primeval Waters, Abyss - there is no agreement whether the original state should be described as one or many." (op.cit. p.54)

It is rather that the priests tried to express through various word images a state of undifferentiation difficult to describe. Certain phrases that have come down to us show this:

"In the infinity, the nothingness, the nowhere and the dark (C.T. spell 76, refrain. Ibid. p.54)

"where the Universal Lord dwelt when he was in the infinity, the nothingness and the listlessness." (C.T.V.116b. ibid.p.55)

"When the Waters spoke to Infinity, Nothingness, Nowhere and Darkness." (C.T.II. 79. ibid. p.55)

In the Hermopolitan version, the Waters separated into 4 beings, entities of the slime, which describe darkness, infinity, listlessness and motion, the last being that which will change the status quo and will eventually become the great god Amun of the 18th dynasty. This last point - motion - is one of the essential principles laid down by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*.

In the Egyptian primordial unfolding of cosmos out of chaos there is no aggressive act to demarcate one state of being from another, as appears in the Indra/Vṛtra saga or in the Marduk/Tiamat tale.

The images are in some sense similar, for they belong to archetypes sunk deep in the human psyche; only the way of envisaging their meaning and the activity they depict may change. The idea of eternal struggle, however, is present in the Egyptian conception as appears in the *Book of Am Dwat* where the now all supreme solar Deity has to overcome the serpent Apophis, obstructor to the march of cosmos. This is a daily occurrence, implying the constant conflict of the forces of light and order against the forces of darkness and chaos. This idea of repeated effort to keep the norms of cosmos appears in the Ṛgveda where, although Indra's slaying of Vṛtra occurred in the past and as a result unfolded a new dispensation, the poets still invite Indra in the present to slay Vṛtra: "let us both slay Vṛtra" (X.124.6); "go forward ... slay Vṛtra" (I.80.3); "Indra, ascend thy car to smite down Vṛtra" (VI.44.15;18.9). Is this an invitation to re-enact the primordial deed at the altar, or a psychological hint as to a perpetual struggle for humanity against the forces of disorder, hence evil? or both? Similarly, Marduk, the new Babylonian demiurge who conquers chaos and establishes a new world order, is quite comparable to Indra:

"When he is angered no god can resist his wrath,  
Before the sharp blade of his sword the gods flee.  
Terrible master, without rival among the great gods!  
In the tempest his weapons flash,  
In his flames steep mountains are overthrown."

These words, written of Marduk, could easily apply to Indra. Marduk, like Indra, conquers the mighty dragon, in Marduk's case, Tiamat who, from originally personifying the Waters of space that gave birth to the universes, then came to be identified with evil chaotic elements that had to be subdued ere creation could begin. Chaos, as in the Vedic Indra/Vṛtra myth, now losing its original meaning of matrix of all seeds, needed the organising of a master mind and this was interpreted as a struggle between the dragon obstructor in both the Vṛtra and the Tiamat myths where that obstructor is conquered by the new Organising Power. The root of the archetype that subsequently gave us the image of St Michael and St George vanquishing the dragon, lies far back in the depths of the psyche, brought out in the mythology of India, Egypt, Babylonia, and other lands.

The birth of the devas, in the Ṛgveda, is far from being as detailed as the birth of certain Egyptian gods in the *Coffin Texts*. But hints are given:

"The birth of the devas! Let us now joyfully proclaim it that in the ages yet to come it may be visioned in these exalting utterances." (X.72.1)

This birth occurred

"when unfurled the mighty waters that generated the universal matrix ... thence was that one life-breath of the gods evolved." (X.121.7)

The one life-breath *asur ekaḥ* being evolved (*sam vṛt*), the verb *vṛt* meaning to roll out or unfold from within, thus tallies with *The Secret Doctrine's* remark on "the auto-generation of the gods".

Again,

"What is that seed primeval which the billowy-deeps conceived wherein all the gods appeared together?" (X.82.5)

"In yon billowy-deeps you gods stood closely-clasped; then from you as though from dancers, hot dust was whirled away." (X.72.6)

The devas, in this theogony, appear as luminaries whirling in a cosmic dance as they take shape in and fashion the depths of the heavenly spaces. They seem to emerge together (closely clasped) from the ocean of space, but as some other verses point out, there is a sequence in time in their coming into being. Thus

"In the gods' mansion stood the foremost, and from their separation came the later." (X.27.23ab)

"Homage to the mighty, homage to the smaller (gods) homage to the younger, homage to the elder (gods)." (I.27.13ab)

All the gods, self-emanated in this pantheon, would be as seeds lying latent in the Cosmic Waters, to be re-awakened at the dawn of a new age, quite in harmony with the Stanzas of Dzyan that purport to unfold an age old *secret doctrine*. Moreover, "from their separation" indicates, as one could surmise, a further unfolding, perhaps on different planes of manifestation.

As to the gods' *means of rulership*, again the outer descriptions differ, but the underlying meaning is similar. Thus, as observed by E. Hornung, in his deeply thought out study, *Conceptions of God in ancient Egypt*:

"The creator god has at his disposal three special powers that help him to plan and execute his work of creation: Sia, 'percipience' in planning the work; Hu, creative 'utterance'; Hike, the 'magic' that brings the world into being out of the creative word. All three occur as divine beings in human form, as when they accompany the sun god in his journey across the sky and through the underworld." (op.cit.p.76)

In this particular instance a comparison with the Vedic gods and their rulership is most instructive; we find similarities of functions but differences in the assigning of tasks and their description. Thus "planning" is implied in the blueprint of *ṛta*, for at the loftiest level, *ṛta* becomes the One Supreme Law from which all other laws derive, and accounts for the orderliness of universal unfoldment as described in some Ṛgvedic verses already quoted. Everything unfolds in accordance with that original blueprint conceived in the blazing *tapas* of the One. "Percipience" belongs to all the luminous gods, the Ādityas, to Varuṇa par excellence and to Sūrya who represents the insight generated by the gods themselves, by means of which they behold all things, the infinite and the finite, the deeds and misdeeds of humanity. "Creative utterance" is fully embodied in Vāc with a whole esoteric doctrine of which little has seeped through, but which we can be sure was similar to that known to the Egyptian temple priests and which they concealed in the term "justified of voice". "Magic" has its counter part in *māyā*, one of which meaning refers to the occult knowledge of the manipulation of hidden energies, used by the great Asuras, such as Mitra-Varuṇa, to create, measure, organise, establish the ordered universe.

Ṛta is born of the blazing *tapas* of Deity in the Ṛgveda; Maat is the daughter of the all-effulgent solar Deity in Egypt. Both emerge from that blazing spiritual hearth which to the Ancients best described Deity, and both represent the Supreme Law in accordance with which men should live. Pharaoh lives on Maat whom he offers to the deities as a token of his abiding by the law in his righteous rulership; thereby he embodies for the people the ideal of justice and truth. Law and order, rhythm and successive cycles of time, each bringing their particular fruition, are part of the Cosmic Order. This was noted by all ancient peoples. Hence Maat is seen at

the helm of the solar bark as it travels the heavenly spaces. The gods "live on Maat", so should men; Pharaoh speaks Maat for she is Truth, so should men. For the Ṛgveda, "heaven, the wide expanse of earth, profound obeisance and more wondrous adoration" (X.92.4ab) fall under the domain of *ṛta*. This hints quite clearly that the norms of the Cosmic Order, in the Vedic as in the Egyptian vision, should be reflected in the socio-ethical-religious communities of humanity. The very last hymn of the Ṛgveda enjoins people to

"Gather together, converse together. Your minds be of one accord,  
Just as in harmony the gods of old took their ritual shares of oblation!  
United be your counsel, united your assembly, united your spirit and thoughts!  
A single plan do I lay before you; a single oblation do I offer!  
United your resolve, united your hearts, may your spirits be at one,  
That you may long together dwell in unity and concord."

(X.191. 2,3,4 as rendered by R. Panikkar in *The Vedic Experience*. p.854. cf. Athv.III.30.1-3)

Justice among human beings can only be established when each one acts in harmony with the other and with the whole of which each is an integral part, when right human relationship settles on a basis of fairness and brotherhood, hence harmony. (cf. X.191; Athv.VII.12.1-3; XIX.51.1; Yjv.22.22;6.31). Through aligning themselves to the norms of Order human beings achieve their destined goal and integrate in the Cosmic Order, (cf.I.90.6;IV.23.8; etc.) just as the gods who are true to law, who are cherishers of the *ṛta* (*ṛtasṛṣah*) and true (*satyaḥ*) have succeeded in doing so in past aeons. These are teachings of the gnosis which demand deep pondering. We are still very far from having reached this simple goal. The gods themselves were not always immortal but won their immortality (Śat.Br.XI.2.3.6). Were the gods human prior to becoming devas? This is not mentioned, but it is a *secret doctrine* tenet which concerns the cyclic manifestation of all creatures along the ladder of evolution.

### COSMIC ORDER AND DESTINY

The grand vision of *ṛta* was to be split up into two distinct aspects, *karma*, the law of cause and effect, action and reaction, and *dharma*, our duty whether social, ethical or religious, that which calls us to perform certain actions to achieve our potential to the full, our vocation in life in the broader sense of the word; these two became the great philosophical cornerstones of Hinduism, indeed its gift to human thought. *Ṛta* is fundamentally the law of adjustment; it is so obvious in the balance of nature. Adjusting the tension of polar opposites within any order, natural, human, or universal, implies the constant restoration to the cosmic equilibrium or harmony of what had strayed too far away. This is *karma*, which is inherent to *ṛta*<sup>5</sup>. But *ṛta* which, as well as the settled order of things, is the law of *becoming*, of *transformation* by means of which all unfolds, adjusts and evolves, the movement of each and all towards a particular end already outlined in the blueprint of the harmony, implies *destiny*: the destiny of all, however hidden from human eyes, is governed by one Law, the law that brings all either *back* or *forward* to harmony, order, togetherness and final oneness - however disruptive humanity may be in this respect as in most respects. All come from the ONE as adumbrations and return to the ONE in full consciousness.

In the Babylonian conception the gods held the *Tablets of Fate*, which signified their godly omnipotence. They ruled the destiny of human beings somewhat like the Greek idea which was finally dramatised by the poet-dramatists to the point that made man emerge a shackled being, without freedom of choice, a pawn in the hands of the gods. According to the Babylonian tale the Tablets were once stolen by the storm god Zu, creating pandemonium in the pantheon, but were recovered by the ascending god, Marduk. They were originally in the guardianship of Enlil, thereby signifying his supreme sovereignty, which then passed on to Marduk after the latter's triumph over Tiamat. Similarly, Varuṇa's hegemony passed on to Indra after the latter's conquest of the dragon Vṛtra. Different cycles have their different emphasis as they reflect different aspects of the human mind, and so different gods to rule the world.

There is no image, in connection with the Ṛgvedic *ṛta*, so striking and concrete as the Tablets of Destiny. The one abstract, impersonal, *eternal Law of laws*, to which all, even the highest gods are subservient, in accordance with which all either live and perform their various tasks, such as the gods, or will eventually do so, such as humans, the most recalcitrant, unruly and offensive of cosmic denizens, has its imprint in every

facet of manifestation; all this marks destiny. The signature of this one law, its symbol, is mirrored in the majestic, ordered driving around the heavens of the starry galaxies. Everything moves in stately order. The gods of the Ṛgveda find *ṛta*, they reflect it in their very core as they govern their particular spheres in accordance with its *statutes*, branded as these are in the gods' innermost being.

They do not create it; they cannot; hence it is beyond their power to meddle with or change the LAW, they are its guardians and their very activities constitute its statutes:

"The gods follow the ordained ways of ṛta." (I.65.3b; cf.V.67.3)

"Serving the ṛta, by means of ṛta, they (Mitra-Varuṇa) have attained to powerful might." (V.68.4)

"Custodians of ṛta, O you whose statutes are true, you ascend on your chariot in the loftiest heaven.

O Mitra-Varuṇa, versed-in-the-wisdom of your law, through the magic of the asura, you protect the ordinances. By means of ṛta you rule over the whole world." (V.63.1ab&7abc)

The Law is the imprint on manifestation of That which sustains all, hence the all powerful WILL sensed behind the universal movement and the Tablets of Fate are aspects of the One Divine Law, as registered by humanity - in short Vedic *ṛta*. Here again we have to recognize the Ṛgveda's close agreement with *The Secret Doctrine*, for *ṛta* is the Law of laws. The Ādityas are *ṛta*-visioned (*ṛta dhītayah*), they reflect in their mind the original blueprint of *ṛta* and establish it (they "measure" it out) in our space-time dimension. This accomplishment of the law manifests in the socio-ethical norms taught by the sages to be implemented by human beings. Hence human social order should be a mirror of cosmic order. This is expressed in a great hymn of the Atharvaveda where the seer sings

"The union of hearts and minds and freedom from hate I'll bring you.

Delight in one another as the cow in the calf that she has borne.

Let son be loyal to father, and of one mind with his mother;

let wife speak to husband words that are honey-sweet and gentle ...

I will make the prayer for that concord among men at home

by which devas do not separate nor even hate one another ...".

(Athv.III.30.1,2,4,6. A.C. Bose trans. Cf Ṛgv. X.191)

"Where spiritual and ruling powers move together in unison,

that world shall I know as holy where dwell the shining ones

together with the Flame-divine." (Yjv.vs. 20.25)

It can be seen how such a law of harmony can lead all humans, in due course of time, through good-will, togetherness, consideration for others' well-being, to a destined fulfilment and a flowering of all inherent faculties that spell concord with the Cosmic Order. All this is succinctly expressed in one of the most beautiful verses of the Atharvaveda:

"Vast truth, mighty order, consecration, contemplative exertion (*tapas*),

prayer (*brahman*), sacrificial offering, these uphold the earth." (Athv.XII.1.1)

In the Egyptian version more than traces of similar ideas are found not only in the goddess Maat, but *destiny* and *karma* lurk behind the 42 assessors that stand before the deceased as he reaches the appointed judgment hall. There Thoth awaits by the scales on which the heart of the deceased is to be weighed against the feather of Maat, his future depending on the result. It is the task of Thoth to watch and record this weighing and its verdict.

These are facets, expressed in different images, of a very ancient inkling on the part of humanity as to a cosmic order, a harmony and justice to which all subscribe willy nilly, that includes a destiny, a purpose and a fulfilment, that contrast starkly with some modern philosophy ending in the absurd and despair. Behind the *Tablets of Destiny*, or the little word *ṛta* that spells the mightiest Cosmic Order ever visioned by human mind, behind the frail, beautiful, but powerful Goddess Maat, Truth-Justice-Order-Righteousness, lurks a grand philosophy of eternal movement and stability, of godly achievement, of human endeavour, conflict, aspiration and vision; man's intuition of certain deep realities of the spirit which he projected in the colourful dynamism of the pantheons. Behind destiny and the weighing of the heart, perhaps also lurks that mysterious order of the *Lipikas*, to which *The Secret Doctrine* introduces us, that mysterious order (from Sanskrit *lipi* to write), of

what seem to be very high Dhyan Chohans, of whom very little is said, the Recorders of the Karmic Ledger who "belong to the most occult portion of cosmogenesis".

"Of its highest grade one thing only is taught: the Lipikas are connected with Karma - being its Recorders. (The symbol for Sacred and Secret Knowledge was universally in antiquity a Tree, by which a Scripture or a Record was also meant. Hence the word Lipikas, the 'Writers' or scribes: the 'Dragons', symbols of wisdom, who guard the Trees of Knowledge ..." (S.D.I.p.128 fn)

"The forty-two 'Assessors' who stand in the region of *Amenti* as the accusers of the Soul before *Osiris*, belong to the same class of deities as the Lipikas, and might stand paralleled, were not the Egyptian gods so little understood in their esoteric meaning..." (S.D.I.p.104-05)

The Hindu *Citra-Gupta* reads out the record of every soul from his register *Agrasamdhānī*, kept by Yama.

## DARKNESS AND THE SKY GODS

Certain words in the Ancient Wisdom are like multi-storied buildings. One has to intuit which level of meaning applies in each particular case. Such is the word *darkness* which, by the way, shows how close is the language of myth to that of mysticism. In *The Secret Doctrine* it is stated that the only way man can describe the Absolute is by the concept of darkness by which is meant absolute light - for "darkness, in its radical, metaphysical basis, is subjective and absolute light" (S.D.I.p.70) - since by his very constitution man is incapable of soaring to the acme of the transcendent, or as H.P.B. put it, unable "to raise the veil that shrouds the majesty of the Absolute" (S.D.I.p.51). In this respect, Christian mystics use the word *darkness* with a similar meaning, thus Dionysius referring to God as "the Super-essential Darkness", Ruysbroeck explaining how the soul must lose itself "in a waylessness and a darkness" for "in the abyss of this darkness, in which the loving spirit has died to itself, there begin the manifestation of God and eternal life" (*The Adornment of the Spiritual Marriage* ch.1) and Gregory of Nyssa pointing, in his writings, to John the Evangelist as having "penetrated into this luminous darkness" (quoted in *From Glory to Glory*. p.18); whilst for St John of the Cross "the sublime grandeur of Divine Wisdom ... transcends the capacity of the soul and is therefore darkness to it". (From *The Dark Night of the Soul*. pt.2.bk.1.ch.5). H.P.B. in referring to the Absolute as Darkness is well in the tradition of the Christian mystics - but she only transcribed the statements of Eastern mystics.

At another level, darkness is the matrix wherein seethe all the seeds of life which in due time will germinate and bring forth universes with their creatures: the dark space, the dark soil, the dark womb, these express the potential for creativity, for life. At another level, and indeed in line with all these aspects, is the darkness of the inner silence that stands guard upon the threshold of a far deeper illumination - the dazzling sun of the mystic looming out of the darkness which made the ṛṣi exclaim:

"Gazing upon the loftier light beyond the darkness, we have reached  
Sūrya, divine among divinities, supernal light." (Ṛgv.I.50.10)

From this dark inner silence Isaiah exclaimed

"And I will give thee the treasures of darkness  
and the hidden riches of secret places." (Isaiah 45:3 )

Finally, in an altogether different order of apprehension, darkness for many represents the abode of evil as against that of good. The same word used in two opposite meanings is one of the paradoxes of the human psyche, indeed of the universe whose fabric is woven on the warp of two opposite polarities. It is therefore not surprising that the dark vault of the heavenly valleys studded with myriads of galaxies of strange configuration, out of which the stars seem to emerge and into which they disappear, should have evoked in ancient Egypt the figure of a great goddess, Nut, the sky goddess who swallows the sun at night but to give birth to it at dawn. This is perhaps a relic of a very ancient belief when sky and space were one and embraced the universes as the overwhelming divine matrix, hence the Mother Goddess, and certainly not, as M. Eliade claims in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (p.242) that it is a mere "chance of grammar that the Egyptians had a goddess, Nut, to represent the sky (the word for sky was feminine) and a god, Geb, for the earth", there being far more to these gods and goddesses than a mere chance of grammar. Nut is the Great Mother<sup>6</sup> who takes the dead back into herself, as painted on some sarcophagi, and who swallows all the stars and sun and brings them back to life the next dawn. The division between space and time and heaven and earth is marked in the Egyptian pantheon

in the gods Shu as against Nut, and Nut as against Geb, Father Earth, impregnator of nature, with his goose on his head as indicator of time, the marching of the seasons, of all natural processes, of the stars, of the cycles; earth in Egyptian thought being the very embodiment of change, hence movement of time<sup>7</sup>, the "moving image of eternity". Even after the great Gods usurped the prerogative of the Great Mother, the "weavers of destiny" remained goddesses.

Vedic Dyaus, could like his sky peers elsewhere, have lost his transcendent sovereignty, to Varuṇa for instance, but was Dyaus really ever supreme? Ṛgv.VI.20.2 mentioning that even like the might of Dyaus, all asura power was granted by the gods to Indra, is no real proof.

Dyaus is, in the Ṛgveda, usually coupled to Pṛthivī. There is no myth concerning their primeval separation, such as we encounter in ancient Egypt with Nut and Geb (Heaven and Earth), separated by Shu who represents space and indeed the *word*; or among the Maoris with Rangī and Papa, or among the Greeks with Ouranos and Gaea. One can find a detailed enumeration in M. Eliade's *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, of so many sky and earth couples from Indonesia to Micronesia, from Borneo to the Celebes, to Africa, to the Americas, to their equivalent in the Hittite version, and the Chinese and the Japanese. Everywhere the sky and earth couples are present pointing to another of those remnants of a *secret doctrine* tenet, however disfigured by human fancy, but nevertheless still implying that once the One Divine Source has sent its Ray into manifestation, then the two polarities inherent to the One separate in order to create the worlds. These can only manifest as a result of the interaction of light and dark, or love and hatred as Empedocles put it, meaning attraction and repulsion, or Day and Night of Parmenides; or as one might add as the centrifugal and the centripetal force. But only Vedic Dyaus and Pṛthivī have retained in their name the original esoteric meaning of the couple. Thus *dyaus*, from verbal root *div*, to shine or illumine, points to spirit, and *pṛthivī* which really means the broad, not necessarily our earth, comes from *prath*, to expand; matter, in philosophy, meaning extension. Originally these two polarities were merged; and it is their differentiation that brought about the formation of our worlds.

In most cosmogonies these two are called Father and Mother. In Egypt, the original Sky, Nut, and Earth, Geb, had parents, Shu and Tefnut; similarly Dyaus and Pṛthivī have prior to themselves Aditi and Dakṣa, and even *sat* and *asat*.

"Of one common origin and one home" (I.159.4) are said to be Dyaus and Pṛthivī  
 "born of old, the parents spreading round co-dwell in one mansion,  
 in the womb of ṛta." (X.65.8ab)

Their separation accelerates the process of unfoldment; as spiritual and material fields for growth they still remain coupled to each other though separated as sky and earth, taken as concrete symbols of some intangible reality; the interaction of spirit and matter and vice versa giving rise to fields of activity, of evolution, for countless beings and kingdoms as here on earth, human, animal, godly etc. Hence they are considered the immediate *parents* of all things here below, and are even said to give birth to the gods who, in their turn, further differentiate, shape, mould and transform these realms of life into two distinct spheres of manifestation (*rodasī, rajasī*) or receptacles (*camvā, or dhiṣaṇā*), and thereby "give birth" to Heaven and Earth. As such, they are already three removes from the central Cause, recalling H.P.B.'s explanation that the Ancients bypassed the Supreme Cause - *Genesis* referring immediately to light and heaven and earth, but in the Ṛgveda this progressive unfoldment is evident.

As already mentioned, the hegemony of the more ancient higher deities passed to more dynamic, active demiurges, closer to the human mind. Hence the rise of such gods as Marduk of Babylon who fashions the universe from the remains of Tiamat now become monster of chaos, as well as creates the basis of human institutions; the rise of Indra who similarly slays the Obstructor Vṛtra, opens up pathways where there were none, etc.; hence Jehovah the jealous God, Lord of hosts who takes his chosen people to the promised land and does not hesitate to have the indigenous people massacred! But even these gods passed away from the human mind, except for some Jewish believers, and Christian Jehovah Witnesses. Out of the ashes of past sky gods, demiurges, solar deities, etc. surged forth the monotheistic Deity of Christianity and Islam, aloof and transcendent, yet full of compassion and merciful to men, the Father in heaven; among the believing masses conceived as intruding in human affairs, as watching all human deeds and thoughts, but among the rational or scientifically minded, as completely irrelevant.

### THE GODS, OMNISCIENCE AND WISDOM

In all the pantheons *omniscience* has a supreme place, for this too, like the *Tablets of destiny*, marks the sovereignty of the gods. In this particular case, it is not just the attribute of one god, but is shared by some gods. This entails another glance from different viewpoints into the labyrinth of godly hegemony.

#### ENLIL

In the Babylonian pantheon, Enlil's omniscience, related as it is to his nature as wind, penetrates every realm of life, like the wind, whereas his Vedic counterpart, Vāyu, the wind, however all penetrating, is not looked upon in terms of all knowing, but rather of *all mover* and *life (prāṇa)* bearing. Enlil, although representing the wind and not the whole encompassing heavenly vault as Vedic Varuṇa does with his thousands of spies as the stars, is one from whose vision none may escape, whose net encompasses heaven and earth, whose "seeing eyes never weary", who "knows the hearts of the gods" and of humans - all these being essential characteristics of wise, omniscient Varuṇa whose divine insight fathoms the most secret recesses of our human heart. But who could compare Enlil to Varuṇa, each god's presentation is so widely different. Yet their perception, insight, knowledge, build up a picture of omniscience and wisdom, a mirror of the psyche's own "percipience" projected into the arena of celestial beings.

"The word of Enlil is a breath of wind, the eye sees it not.

His word is a deluge which advances and has no rival.

His word above the slumbering skies makes the earth to slumber.

His word when it comes in humility destroys the country.

His word when it comes in majesty overwhelms houses and brings weeping to the land.

At his word the heavens on high are stilled." (Quoted in *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology*. 1979. P.55)

Such is the majesty of Enlil whose weapon is the *amaru*, the deluge and it was he who sent down the hurricane as the deluge to destroy humanity! Enlil knows the hearts of humans for he blows through them, in a twinkle weighs them out, determines their destiny. But he saved righteous Utnapishtim.

#### EA

Ea, god of the Waters, whose name means "House of the Water", reveals his wisdom through his possession of the highest secrets. He is "he who understands everything", but such understanding does not depend on *vision*, as with the luminous Vedic gods, especially the Ādityas, but on *hearing*, for hearing and understanding have an intimate link which we often ignore. He who hears well, understands and becomes wise. For to *understand* is to be able to probe to the very heart of life. But Ea was also at times called "Lord of the Sacred Eye", "he whom nothing escapes", the *eye* of insight thus also being an attribute of his. Unlike his counterpart of Greek mythology, Poseidon, Ea is not god of all "waters", but of the *Apsu*, generally taken to mean fresh water which fertilised the rivers, lakes, etc. of earth. But the fact that these "waters" which "spread abundance and happiness over the earth" were "also the *source of all knowledge and wisdom*" as we are told in the *New Larousse Encyclopedia of Mythology* (p.56), surely gives us a hint that here is another example of the dual, sometimes triple meaning of specific words, and *water*, as we have already seen, is one of these. The Waters here are not half anthropomorphised into goddesses as in the Ṛgveda, or into a very ancient Father figure such as Nun in Egyptian mythology; but they have a deep esoteric meaning which has little to do with literal waters whether fresh or salty, as all interpreters would take it. Every word of importance in the ancient sacred texts has several levels of meaning, only the last or lowest level being the literal. "Water" apart from its other meanings which include the emotional level in human beings and the feminine aspect in nature, means *Wisdom* and *Life*.

#### THE WATERS

The Waters in the Ṛgveda "listen as they flow along; they know the origin of heaven and earth." (VII.34.2) and "the seven flowing Rivers of heaven, [are] thoughtful knowers of the law ..." (I.72.8)



Why are such gods as the Babylonian Ea, or such goddesses as the Vedic *ōpaḥ* thought of in terms of *knowing*, of *understanding*? Why are the waters *solar powered*? The very fabric of cosmos is palpitating with intelligence, with lives, with some kind of awareness, hence with some kind of knowledge.<sup>8</sup>

That which is at the origin of all must know the origin of all! Hence the *waters* know. Sound being the attribute of *ākāśa*, *listening* and *hearing* are not out of place in Ṛgvedic verse VII.34.2. The gods' form is of that very essence from which derives fire, the spark of life, of intelligence, of action. So the divine waters being *ākāśa* which is also the *word*, (the primordial vibration), like fresh waters, constantly renew themselves as the *word*, the eternal sound *akṣara* that echoes unto infinity. The Babylonian Ea is likewise the very spirit of *ākāśa*, of the *Apsu*, hence his knowledge, his insight, his omniscience.

H.P.B. has for this a very pertinent remark:

"For ages the watery abyss - which, with the nations that preceded the later Babylonians, was the abode of the 'great mother', (the terrestrial post-type of the 'great mother chaos' in heaven), the parent of Ea (Wisdom), himself the early prototype of Ōannēs, the man-Fish of the Babylonians - for ages, then, the 'Abyss' or *Chaos* was the abode of wisdom and not of evil." (S.D.II.p.503)

The image of the abyss of seething waters harbouring myriads of latent lives encountered in most ancient cosmogonies - their usual depicting of space - has been one of psyche's most powerful and disturbing projections upon the screen of cosmos and our mental mirror. The *waters of space* and the *matrix of life* are *one* both in the mythological and the psychological sense: that inner sense whereby they also express psyche's own seething depths whence arise ideas manifesting as all engulfing forces that drive humans to constructive or destructive activities, to good or evil deeds; to the cream of experience through mature insight, understanding, the wisdom of the ages; or to the nadir of bestiality, cruelty, or madness - depending on the filter of the mind and the bend of the personality. H.P.B. reminds us how

"... Odin got his wisdom, power, and knowledge, by sitting at the feet of Mimir, the thrice-wise *Jotunn*, who passed his life by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, the crystalline waters of which increased his knowledge daily. Mimir 'drew the highest knowledge from the fountain, because the world was born of water; hence primeval wisdom was to be found in that mysterious element'. The eye which Odin had to pledge to acquire that knowledge may be 'the Sun, which enlightens and penetrates all things; his other eye being the moon, whose reflection gazes out of the deep, and which at last, when setting, sinks into the ocean'."

(From W. Wagner, *Asgard and the Gods*, 1887. p.86. Quoted in S.D. I. p.402)

H.P.B. goes on:

"But it is something more, besides this. Loki, the fire-god, is said to have hidden in the water, as well as in the moon, the light-giver, whose reflection he found therein; and this belief that the fire finds refuge in the water was not limited to the old Scandinavians. It was shared by all nations ..." (ibid.p.402)

Indeed one finds it in the Ṛgveda as Agni hiding in the waters, as Sūrya hidden in the ocean(X.72.7). Note the fire hiding in the moon whose reflection is found in the water. Is this a hint of the sacred solar fire reflected by the moon into the "waters" - in the waters of space wherein is *amṛta* (I. 23.19), wherein is healing balm? In the inner waters of psyche wherein hides the sun, *ātman* of all things? that sun discovered as "the loftiest light beyond the darkness" (I.50.10) which "mortals behold not" (I.105.16), the innermost hearth "of what moves and moves not" (I.115.1)?

When we view these ideas in their inner significance we might grasp why *wisdom* was conceived as inherent to the "waters" - those crystalline waters that mirror one's self - and why H.P.B. states:

"... Space in its abstract sense, was called 'the realm of divine knowledge' and by the *Chaldees* or Initiates *Ab Soo* [= *Apsu*], the habitat (or Father, i.e. the source) of knowledge, because it is in space that dwell the intelligent Powers which *invisibly* rule the Universe." (S.D.II.p.502)

and these Intelligences are the foci of consciousness and light. So the Fish God Ōannēs emerges from those depths of ocean-surges to teach wisdom and the arts of civilization to infant humanity, and Dumuzi/Tammuz, the son-consort of Inanna/Ishtar is said to have been portrayed sometime as a fishgod and to be the "True Son of the Deep", "the source of wisdom"; and "Ea, the God of Wisdom, is the 'Sublime Fish' (S.D.II.p.495.fn.) and "the incognizable infinite Deity" (S.D.II.p.53). Simple but meaningful images.

## SHAMASH AND SŪRYA

But wisdom and its prerogative omniscience also belong, in the ancient pantheons, to the Solar Deity. Shamash, the Babylonian Sun god, like his Vedic counterpart, Sūrya, is also omniscient; and this knowledge, like the latter's knowledge, is based on his power of seeing all, therefore he "knows all things". He is shown as part of the triad of celestial luminaries, the other two being the moon or Sin and the planet Venus or Ishtar. He is symbolised by a flaming wheel, his ideogram being originally a disc emerging from the two mountains of the eastern horizon, reminiscent of the Egyptian hieroglyph of the sun emerging from the horizon flanked by two lions, for two lions also guard the gates of the east in the Babylonian iconography. He is represented as a king seated on his throne, often with undulating rays emerging from his shoulders. It is Shamash who dictates to Hammurabi his famed Code of Laws. For Shamash is the Light of lights who lights the world, the depths and the heights, who lights the Igigi or celestial deities, and the Anunnaki or earthly, watery and infernal deities. He drives away the darkness, shortens or lengthens the days, he gives life, directs the worlds of humans and gods. His rays that herald the day are like a net in which the evil doers get enmeshed. He is thus the supreme judge, for like Vedic Varuṇa, he sees the deeds and misdeeds of humans, hence is the "Lord of Judgment", "Father of justice and righteousness", "Sublime judge of the Anunnaki", his temple being called "House of the Judge of the World". He causes justice to shine as he tramples iniquity under his foot.

A somewhat similar idea of judgment lurks in certain verses of the Ṛgveda in connection with Sūrya, but judgment is not emphasised. Thus Sūrya is enjoined to "declare us sinless" (VII.62.2cd) before the great gods, for he sees into the human heart, and his other aspect, Savitṛ is called "father of truth" (X.36.13) through whose vitalisation men are declared sinless in the sight of Aditi (V.82.6). Shamash is also, like Apollo, the god of oracles, prophecies, soothsaying. He reads into the future, he is lord of seership. In spite of so many heavy tasks attributed to him, he was not the peer of the moon (his number being 20 and the moon's 30). The Babylonians furthermore made him the son of the moon, Sin.

M. Eliade, through his research into sun worship throughout the world, came to the conclusion that solar worship became dominant only in certain parts of the world such as Egypt, Asia, early Europe, Peru, Mexico, where political organisation went hand in hand with religion.

"It could be said that where 'history is on the march' thanks to kings, heroes, or empires, the sun is supreme."

This however is a purely exoteric opinion, the solar deity's "predominance" depending on the presence of *centres of initiation* in specific cities of ancient civilizations - some being more "on the march" - with a difference - than others. Through the many "primitive" cultures which he surveys, he notes a

"... transfer of the sky god's attributes, to the sungod and an amalgamation of the Supreme Being with the sungod." (*Patterns in Comparative Religion*, p.124)

the sun god being more concretely present to the human mind. He remarks very appropriately that

"... unlike other nature hierophanies, such as the moon or water, the sacred meaning expressed in the sun is not always clear to the modern Western mind. Or, more precisely, what *is* clear, and therefore easily grasped, in any sun hierophany is most often only what remains after a long process of rationalization has worn it away and it is brought to us, without our realizing it, by way of language, custom and culture ...

The orientation of intellectual activity from Aristotle onwards has done much to blunt our receptiveness towards the totality of sun hierophanies" (*ibid.* p.125)

and indeed our feeling for the sacred significance of the sun, as of other expressions of Nature. What M. Eliade calls the *exclusive primacy of reason*, or the most *corrosive rationalism*, has taken the life out of space and thereby out of the sun, in spite of the "important astronomical and biological function that the last few centuries have discovered in the sun". The failure of earlier Western Vedic scholars to see in Sūrya such significance as the ṛṣis intuited, their complete unawareness that, at least for the ṛṣis, if not for themselves, the sun might be the one fundamental expression of certain spiritual powers.

Is the Greek tale of Helios - also like Shamash and Sūrya, an all-seer, hence an all-knower - of having been drowned by Titans and yet raised to the sky, a Greek version of that most ancient tale told in the Ṛgveda whereby the sun "concealed in the ocean" is brought forth by the gods after they have "filled the worlds" (X.72.7) or "replenished the worlds"? (replenished with creatures?) And what is that "true sun" said to be

"lying in darkness" (III.39.5; cf.I.130.3) which Indra finds, that "which lay deeply concealed in the waters" (ibid.6) which Indra holds in his right hand? Such tales of the hidden sun contain various levels of meaning and thus of interpretation and refer to different aspects of the sun's significance and of our own consciousness. At the cosmic level, is the sun hiding or seemingly drowned in the ocean, a veiled poetic allusion to *pralaya*, to the cessation of all activity in cosmos for an aeon, applying to our solar system? Is the true sun that Indra seeks and finds lying in the darkness that state of *sva* which at last illumines the inner darkness of the searching mind? And again, what is that which is deeply concealed in the waters? What waters? "In the Waters is immortality, in the waters is healing balm." (I.23.9) Can these be not only the "waters of space" (*ākāśa*) but also those of the unconscious, those formless masses of darkness heaving within us, behind and within which may appear the pearl of great prize we seek externally to no avail?

We touch here another of those mysteries so deeply anchored in the psyche that reason has tried in vain to fathom out: light embraced by darkness, the sun hidden in the netherworld, Apollo, the solar god, the god of brightness, of reason, but also of oracles and prophecy whose incantatory language emerged from the depths, in the dead of night, within a cave that opened into the world beyond, into the world of the dead, the journey through death and resurrection into another dimension of consciousness. For the Greeks had a deep measure of esoteric understanding (till now little recognised). Apollo, their bright god, was also the god of "lair and incubation", strange epithets for a god of light, yet descriptive enough, for it is only through the descent into the innermost depths of darkness and of silence, of that nurturing silence that allows the inner, transformative and transcending powers to emerge to consciousness, to take hold of our being to reveal what *is*, that one can ascend to the height of the solar splendour, *sva*. Once we have plunged into that critical state, that zero-point whence "they unharness the horses of Sūrya" (Ṛgv.V.62.1), can we face, behold and grasp the inner sun of truth emerging from the embrace of night. So Vasiṣṭha who, going in the presence of Varuṇa, contemplates the face of fire, asks to be taken to the darkness "to see the marvel, *sva* in the rock" (VII.88.2.); quite extraordinary that the word *andha* can mean either darkness or the Soma plant which grants ecstasy! As well explained by P. Kingsley in his *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*, the "underworld" far from being the habitat of "darkness and death",

"... only seems like that from a distance. In reality it's the supreme place of paradox where all the opposites meet. Right at the roots of western as well as eastern mythology there's the idea that the sun comes out of the underworld and goes back to the underworld every night. It belongs to the underworld. That's where it has its home; where its children come from. The source of light is at home in the darkness."

"To reach there, where every direction is available and everything merges with its opposite, you have to go down into the darkness - into the world of death where Night and Day both come from." <sup>9</sup>

The so-called underworld is a gateway to the specific stages of illumination as well as to the depths of hell. M. Eliade in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* reflects on the fact that the sun which, from the standpoint of reason

"... might be thought to be supremely an 'intelligible' hierophany of the sky, and of light, was being worshipped as a source of the 'dark' energies ... he is in communication with the chosen world of darkness; sorcery and hell. He is the father of the sorceress Circe, and the grandfather of Medea ... the entry into Hades is called the 'gate of the sun' ... The swing between light and darkness, solar and earthly, can therefore be taken as two alternating phases of one and the same reality. The hierophanies of the sun display, indeed, dimensions that the sun merely as such would lose in any purely rational or profane perspective ..." (op.cit.p.143-4)

The whole hierophany of the sun is rooted in the psyche where rationalism does not hold sway. To come out victorious from the descent into the darkness, one needs courage, determination, discernment, fearlessness, trust in the hidden deity that guides us, and the power to keep silent, cool, and recollected. India, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, all the great civilizations of antiquity had the same message: the way down is the way up, as Heraclitus worded it; light emerges from that fountain of *Darkness* that holds all in suspense, that gives birth to all and takes back its own offspring but to start again on a higher rung of the spiral. Here, as in other domains, myth has retained something of that primeval *gnosis* which made some of our ancestors true *seers*,

prophets able to *mediate* between the highest or heaven and the lowest or earth, able to see into the noumena behind the phenomena, and able to *enshrine* what they saw and knew, from their own deep experience and not mere theory, into that repository of human sentiency, mythology, so little understood, and so much derided.

### THE MOON AND ITS MEANINGS

A last glance must take us to that most mysterious and all important of luminaries which has played quite a role in the ancient mythologies: the MOON, the "heavenly night-eye" as the Babylonians called it, King or Queen of the night, according to the various appreciations and roles. The essential significance of the moon whose borrowed light sheds its uncanny lustre on all it falls upon, with either good or nefarious effect, is important to grasp. With the aim of viewing the moon as a whole, M. Eliade, in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, passes in review and skilfully brings out all its related aspects, such as the moon and time, the moon and the waters, - and vegetation, - and fertility, - and death, - and initiation, - and fate, and - symbolism, to all of which he discovers the dominant theme of *rhythm*

"... carried out by a succession of contraries, of 'becoming' through the succession of opposing modalities - being and non-being; forms and hidden essences; life and death", etc.

The pattern that is thus unravelled bears upon the *moon-rain-fertility-woman-serpent-death-periodic-regeneration*, hence the generation of life, the contrast of fertility and death but a phase generating new birth. This in itself is a law of our universe for which the Ancients deified the moon as its best representative. But we, as M. Eliade explains

"... tend to divide what is and must remain a whole ... Such a whole could certainly never be grasped by any mind accustomed to proceeding analytically. And even by intuition modern man cannot get hold of all the wealth of meaning and harmony that such a cosmic *reality* (or, in fact, sacred reality) involves in the primitive mind ..." (op.cit. p.157)

Primitive here probably means prehistoric for there is nothing primitive in such vision. He goes on very pertinently, and this is most important as it applies to all the known *visions* of the ancient pantheons:

"the whole universe is seen as a pattern, subject to certain laws. The world is no longer an infinite space filled with the activity of a lot of disconnected autonomous creatures: within that space itself things can be seen to correspond and fit together. All this, of course, is not the result of a reasoned analysis of reality, but of an ever clearer intuition of it in its totality." (p.155)

Space, indeed, emerges as an *entity*, just as the human being is an entity made of living cells each performing its specific task. But our dissecting minds have more or less lost this capacity of viewing the cosmos as a whole within which expansion and contraction, fertilising and withering, life and death are opposite aspects and rhythms of one wholeness, of the inhaling and exhaling of the Great Breath.

In these complex appearances that form a wholeness

"... myths, ceremonials and symbols from different religious structures are crystallized and they have not always come directly from the intuition of the moon as the measure of cosmic rhythms and the support of life and death... we find in them the syntheses of the moon and Mother Earth with all that they imply (the ambivalence of good and evil, death, fertility, destiny). Similarly, you cannot always limit every mythological intuition of a cosmic 'net' to the moon. In Indian thought, for instance the universe was 'woven' by the air just as breath (*prāṇa*) 'wove' human life." (p.180)

There is, in this last phrase, a confusion which should be corrected. The word "air" is very misleading for it is not the air on which the universe was woven. This is the failure of our modern languages to translate the ancient thought and thereby its terms. For the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (III.8.4) explains that the universe is woven warp and woof on *ākāśa* by means of *aṣṣara* the eternal vibration and *ākāśa* is certainly not air. Behind the word *ākāśa* lies a cosmic vision out of reach of the present rational mind. The second part of the above phrase refers to Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (III.7.2) which explains that "this and the next life and all beings are held or strung together" by Vāyu, the wind, called the string (*sūtra*), *vāyu* being the equivalent of *prāṇa* in the early *śruti*. One statement refers to cosmic *ākāśa* (III.8.4), the other (III.7.2) to its individualised and specialised

*prāṇa*, the life-breath as energy behind the breath, later the *sūtrātma* that ties each creature as one whole, as well as through its various personalities.

From the esoteric perspective, the moon is a dead planet in the sense that its principles which, like all principles, gave it life, have left to seed another planet, our earth, hence the "moon is the giver of life to our globe". But like all dead bodies, the forces of disruption and decay are active and influence nefariously, although counterbalanced by those positive forces that are being reflected onto the moon from the sun and passed on to earth<sup>10</sup>. Hence the Ancients' appreciation of the moon as both fertilising and deadly, beneficent and infernal, the very image of so many aspects of life.

"Lunar magnetism generates life, preserves and kills it. Soma [the moon plant] embodies the triple power of the *Trimūrti*, (Trinity, positive-negative and their relationship) though it passes unrecognised by the profane to this day" writes H.P.B. (S.D.I.p.398),  
i.e. the moon with its three main phases holds a *triple power* still unrecognized.

No doubt the whole subject of the moon opens the door to the mysteries of life and death and periodic recurrences or cyclic time from which man could measure, speculate, plan ahead and mark out horizons in which the drama of human destiny was played out. The Moirai that spin fates, as pointed out by Eliade, are lunar divinities.

#### SIN, THE MOON

Sin of Babylon who assumed lordship as the moon god thereby overshadowing Inanna of early Sumer, is like Shamash the sun, credited with wisdom and omniscience. He was invoked as "luminary of heaven and earth", the full moon being his crown, hence his name "Lord of the Diadem". Every night he sailed the vast nocturnal spaces in his bark, the crescent moon which in the Middle East lies horizontally, observing the activities of all and measuring time. The gods consulted him for his great wisdom. "When his word resounds in the heavens, the Igigi bow down", "the Anunnaki kiss the soil", for he guides the gods' decisions, settles the destiny of humans upon whom he passes judgment at night and "no god can probe his far-away heart", or know his will and his fixing of future fate. He played a leading part in the Babylonian science of omens.

#### THOTH

The Egyptian representative of the moon was Thoth, the "repository of divine knowledge", "Lord of the sacred words", scribe of the gods, the "reed pen of the universal Master" who taught the ancient Egyptians their hieroglyphics, arts and sciences. This wisdom meant insight into things hidden in darkness which the moon god could divine and bring out for judgment upon the perpetrators of misdeeds; it also meant understanding of those riches of the spirit hidden in the darkness of the psyche and of matter. Thoth is present at the judgment of the dead in the hall of double Maat, and inscribes what befalls each soul in the book of eternity as he keeps watch over the balance that will weigh the heart of the deceased against the feather of Maat. For *The Secret Doctrine*, Thoth's hiding in the moon means that he represents the *secret wisdom* and the light side of the moon as the Logos, but when he retires to the "opposite hemisphere" he then embodies the *Dark Wisdom*.

Within the limits of cyclic time, the moon apparently waxes and wanes, yet remains the same. Within the complexity of its symbolic attributes the moon holds the mirror to that eternal transformation occurring in the universe and also to its essential sameness. It reflects that incessant becoming of all parts towards wholeness, the greatest pole of attraction. The moon binds together, as Eliade put it, "... a whole mass of realities and destinies", complementary polarities and opposites. Within this ever unfolding movement of opposites: of time and eternal duration, of change and changelessness, of dark and light, of divisions and oneness, speaks the secret of the universe and what lies beyond its manifestation when all opposites have merged in one vast sweep of totality; what also lies as a reflection in our mirror mind of some eternal truth that constantly eludes our analytical mind hardly capable of holding the many faceted diamond of a vision of wholeness. Such an array of significant attributes and movements made the moon worthy of deification.

We have to turn to the Ṛgveda, to the Vedic esoteric tradition and its Purāṇic development, to find the *secret of the moon*, the core reason why wisdom was attributed to it, and how its influence on the human mind was observed.

## THE MOON IN THE ṚGVEDA AND THE SOMA RIDDLE

The moon, in the early portion of the Ṛgveda, does not seem to have played such an important role as for example in Egypt or Babylon. Yet, as J. Gonda admits

"... there are places in the early Veda from which it appears that at least some of the widespread beliefs with regard to the earth's satellite had drawn the attention of the ṛṣis." ("Soma, amṛta and the moon". p.40)

Indeed, not only the verses he cites, X.85.19 among others where the moon is said to be "born ever new" and to "extend his long-life-time" show knowledge of the "universal law of becoming, of birth, death and rebirth" embodied in the periodic appearance and disappearance of the moon (cf. Athv.X.7.33; XI.10.16), but the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa refers to the moon as the "hook (*asañjanam*) to which the year is attached by means of the seasons" (Śat.Br.VI.7.1.19), a very quaint way of describing the moon's role in apportioning time. No doubt, its importance was well known, but perhaps certain aspects of its influence, for good or ill, were kept secret. Furthermore, any description of a transference of Soma's heavenly or mountain origin to the moon as such, or the moon as the container of Soma, are subject to doubt. A systematic review of the whole subject of Soma as god, plant and juice as well as moon, with all the pertinent references, may be found in Gonda's chapter "Soma, amṛta and the moon", in *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, 1965, and in A. Hillebrandt's *Vedic Mythology* (trans. 1980). Gonda is at pains to find logical reasons why the Soma should have finally been identified with the moon, such as the "life-giving functions of Soma and the fertilizing power attributed to the moon", the moon governing the waters and Soma representing these waters (Ait.Br.I.7.10 *saumya hy āpah*). Thus

"Both of them express the idea of uninterrupted renewal and victory over decay and annihilation, both of them stand for the principle of continuity of life in spite of temporary periods of decline." (op. cit. p.48)

These are very plausible reasons, but there is certainly more to this identification, for when two objects as totally different as Soma and the moon finally find equivalence, this implies a deeper significance than all physical reasons that may be thought up, something that touches us to the very quick of our being.

Physical aspects including the moisture, rain, life sap, etc. - the usual explanations - do not give half the lofty importance the ṛṣis ascribed to Soma and are but on one end of their spectrum of life; the other end where Soma appears as the "seed of the heavenly stallion" (Ṛgv.I.164.35; cf. Athv.IX.10.14), points to upliftment-inspiration and *amṛta*, not merely as an actual beverage and especially not a mere alcoholic drink, but in its psycho-spiritual dimension, the all illuminating effect of Soma on the seers. For Soma is that divine urge, that transcendent exaltation that carries the poet-seer to further realisations, to fuller bliss, to life inwardly more abundant. Soma is celestial revelation to men and devas. It is Soma who calls "the divine races to immortality" (IX.108.3). In this call, lies the kernel of the mystery of *soma/moon/sūrya*, part of which voiced in apparently nonsensical statements in the Brāhmaṇas. Thus

"The moon is the Soma of the gods." (Ait. Br.VII.11.5)

"The moon is no other than King Soma, the food of the gods." (Śat. Br. XI.1.4.4)

"This verily is King Soma, the food of the gods, which is the moon." (Śat. Br. XI. 66.4.5. also 2.5.3). The moon is "Soma's highest glory in heaven." (Śat.Br.VII.3.1.46; cf. Kaus.Br.XII.5 ; Chānd.Up.V.10.4)

Clear, short and to the point are these statements, they cannot be misunderstood, denied or ignored. But no reason is given for the strange equation. Esoteric statements will never reveal their full meaning and here the latter is well guarded. H.P.B. endeavoured to give us a key to this identification. It touches upon one of psyche's deepest mysteries, earlier mentioned, but completely lost on our modern intellectual generations: the mystery of the kinship of man's own *inner sacred fire* with the sacred fire of *satyam sūryam*, that *true sun* of which our sun is the representative.

Soma's very special attributes known only to the Brahmans (X.85.3&4) awoke them to the reality of that subtler counterpart to the human constitution (as expounded in the Upaniṣads and explained in ch.6), made of a network of *nāḍis*, channels of specialised life-energy of which the three intangible channels, *iḍā*, *piṅgalā* and *suṣumnā* form the most important channels from the spiritual standpoint. These three in time were represented by what was to be called the Hermetic wand or Greek caduceus<sup>11</sup>, however changed from its

original model, the rod interlaced with two serpents. Like the *samudra* or vessel wherein the soma plant was transformed into the nectar, so the human body was also considered a vessel in which occurred the supreme transformation (cf. IX.83.1) whereby the human being could be raised from one level of reality to another. Illumination revealed the transcendent realms whilst spiritual consciousness abolished the shackles of earthly levels<sup>12</sup>. Soma

"releases the mind-yoked vision even as the thunder releases the rain" (IX.100.13ab).

"He gives glory and vigour to the singers (who) donning  
(his) glory, have obtained immortality." (IX.94.4)

Such verses clamour one thing above all others: the entrance into a glorious state of being or consciousness hitherto securely closed, an entrance which could only be effected through the practice of *tapas* and for which Soma facilitated the opening, helping the inner eye to become all illuminating like the sun, hence the reference to the solar eye, to solar vision, to *svar* finding - the Soma drops are *svarvidaḥ*. He who practises *tapas* becomes aware of his own sacred fire deep within the psyche, of which *prāṇa* is the guardian and shower-of-the-way to the knowers. Not without reason was Vāyu, the primal mover, the life-breath in all, in the Ṛgveda the guardian of Soma (X.85.5) the elixir of real life.

H.P.B. summed up Soma as "... the mystery God ... [who] presides over the mystic and occult nature in man and the Universe." (S.D.II.p.45.fn). This simple sentence covers the ṛṣis' knowledge of their own subtler nature and sensitivity to the no less subtle influence of the seven solar rays - primarily to one of these whose counterpart was discovered in the human constitution. It also covers the role played by the moon in this influence, a role fully known to, and appreciated by the ancient hierophants and by yogis. (Cf. I.109.7 and VIII.72.16 discussed in ch.6, pt 2)

Why was Soma identified with the moon? Scholars, as Keith or Gonda have argued against an early Ṛgvedic identification, in contradistinction to Hillebrandt who, in his *Vedic Mythology*, took account of the symbolism of the Soma cult, stressing how the image of the moon fitted the descriptions of Soma in quite a number of verses which he examined meticulously (e.g. I. 91.22cd; IX.86.5&14; 100.8, 9; 15.5; 38.5). Thus, among the several examined:

"The Soma which is inside the jars and the strainer,  
him the moon held in embrace" (IX.12.5 Hillebrandt's trans.)

a graceful image, but was the word *indu* or drop (of Soma) already equivalent to the moon?

"Seen from this point of view" remarks Hillebrandt, viz., that the Soma drink pressed on the sacrificial place symbolizes the nectar contained in the moon, "the ninth book makes sense." For him, the poet-priests "saw in the moon the container of ambrosia which flows in him [Soma] for the gods and the Manes". (op.cit.p.207) Why?

Soma is very probably, already in the Ṛgveda, on the way to being merged with the moon as a Deity<sup>13</sup>: obviously the images of Soma ascending the sky "as a bull", his light illuminating sky and earth, he "king of the waters" "dispels the darkness", "travels with the sun in the sky", "regulates the days" (*vimāna ahnām* IX.86.45), all prelude to an identification. (op.cit. p.203) But the mystery of why the moon was transformed into a vessel of nectar drunk by the gods does not disappear with Hillebrandt's research. A hint, although rather difficult to understand, appears in Gonda's report from the *Purāṇas*:

"The Purāṇas are ... of the opinion that the moon contains amṛta which during the two weeks of *the moon's increase is replenished by a special beam*. This amṛta is not only the food of gods and Fathers, but serves also as 'cold nectar' or dew as a means of feeding the vegetable kingdom." (op.cit. p.58 italics my own)

A folklore to be sure that would make the stern rationalist scoff at so much ignorance, but Gonda makes no remark, only he cannot tell what is that special beam. H.P.B. while discussing some form of *prāṇa* radiated by the solar rays and little understood in her days, claimed

"The animal tissues only absorb it according to their more or less morbid or healthy state ... as do *physical* materials and structures ... It descends in larger supply to vegetation in the *Suṣumna* sun-ray which lights and feeds the moon, and it is through her beams that it pours its light upon, and penetrates man and animal, more during their sleep and rest, than when they are in full activity" (S.D.I.p.537) -

and for human beings especially during the meditation states. This is as clear an explanation as can be made, and given at a time when little was known of the moon's action of polarising the sun's rays. Perhaps an answer will one day be found to H.P.B.'s questions - an answer which she did not need:

"...why is the *Suṣumna* ray believed to be that ray which furnishes the moon with its borrowed light? Why is it 'the ray cherished by the initiated yogi?' Why is the moon held as the deity of the mind, by those Yogis?" (S.D.I. p.516) - a belief repeatedly referred to in Hindu tradition, dating back to Ṛgvedic days (cf.X.90.13).

Hillebrandt's opinion that the priests were following a "popular belief and not ... a priestly belief" (p.207) is completely erroneous and overridden by the mystical evidence from the Ṛgvedic verses on the solar rays (see ch.6 pt.2) which could not be understood by the prejudiced Western mind, and the evidence of the Soma verses themselves. The following stanza clinches the matter:

"Soma is thought to have been drunk when they press the plant;  
the Soma whom the Brahmans know, of that no one tastes.  
No earthly born can taste of thee." (X.85.3,4)

This is no mythic reverie as construed by Keith, but there is here implied a difference between the Soma plant as such and the Soma whom the Brahmans know; that Soma is not tasted by the ordinary human being, but by that spiritual spark in the Brahman, hence not earthly born. Soma endowed with the "solar eye", the bestower of illumination, contributes to the poet's entering into that "cherished state, abode of heaven, kept secret by the priests" (IX.10.9). Soma "milks the heavenly udder for the cherished honey" (IX.107.5). These are pointers to the higher states of consciousness unknown in our brain awareness, and to Soma's aid in achieving these, culminating in the following exclamation:

"We have drunk Soma; we have become immortal;  
we have come to the light, we have found the gods." (VIII.48.3)

Doubtless, Soma had specific properties that acted on the poets, but at times it seems to be used as a screen to conceal the real occurrence, or perhaps more precisely to aid the action of the *suṣumna* ray when polarised by the moon on the *inner force centres (cakras)* of the practitioner of *tapas*, the meditator. This was the Soma not tasted by mortals. But of this mystical occurrence philology can have no inkling.

H.P.B. explains the state of consciousness brought about by Soma:

"... the real property of the *true* soma was (and is) to make a new *man* of the Initiate, after he is reborn ..." - that is after he is capable of being conscious at a much subtler level than ordinary brain awareness. "The partaker of *Soma* finds himself both linked to his external body, and yet away from it in his spiritual form. The latter, freed from the former, soars for the time being in the ethereal higher regions, becoming virtually 'as one of the gods', and yet preserving in his physical brain the memory of what he sees and learns ..." (S.D.II.p.499, fn)

Such experiences are not unique to the partakers of Soma. The core of an out-of-body experience (not uncommon even these days) is the realisation that there is no real death; no real cessation of consciousness; death belongs to the form aspect, identification with which always prevents this realisation; it also brings a tremendous feeling of bliss and freedom.

The fusion of Soma, the nectar, with the moon with its polarised solar light, and its underlying significance, lies in the following riddle:

"they directed their attention (*amanvata*) to the hidden name of Tvaṣṭṛ's cow,  
there in the house of the moon." (I.84.15. J. Gonda's trans.)

Tvaṣṭṛ's secret is Soma, the elixir of life, but Soma is not named here. "This cow, [writes Gonda], is the celestial source of the Soma draught". The inexhaustible source of inspiration and invigorating life is Soma lodged in the moon which is "rubbed with Sūrya's beam"(IX.76.4ab.), i. e. Soma enhanced by that mystical solar ray reflected by the moon. It is implied in the above crucial verse that the seer-poets concentrated on the essential significance (the *name*) of the celestial source of illumination which granted *amṛta* and is hidden in the moon. The "special beam", quaintly related from the *Purāṇas* by Gonda, is not mentioned here, but the moon is, which gives the hint. Who, except those who practised *tapas* and the *īśis* were past masters at *tapas*, could know of this most recondite connection between Soma the giver of ecstasy that released the mind from its earthly shackles, and the moon which, when waxing received a full share of that "special beam"



that activated its counterpart in the human being? The special beam and Soma seem to merge in their influence, to become one, to converge on that which is most concealed in the human being to grant the highest spiritual experience possible to humans - in a merging of bliss with freedom from all shackles and exaltation. This, translated into human terms, yields *amṛta*, nectar of immortality.

The moon as vessel of *amṛta* is a poetic image of what the Brahmins knew of the moon as mirror sending back to earth the mystical potency of at least one solar ray, enhanced during its waxing phase. This is cosmic insight and secret gnosis. For the whole experience could only be endured by and yield its pinnacle of bliss in beings purified in mind and body, for the pure *ākāśa* passes through the *suṣumnā*, uncontaminated by any grosser element. Hence the purification rites and the many references to purifying in the Ṛgveda<sup>14</sup>. To try to stir the *suṣumnā* by means of the prāṇic currents, in a grossly material, or evil minded person, would wreak havoc, hence the great secrecy.

If the explanation of the esoteric meaning of the role played by the moon in the Soma experience of the seers seems at least plausible at the spiritual level, then one can surmise that the popular belief of the moon containing ambrosia arose through distorting hearsay or misconception about the "special beam" mentioned in the *Purāṇas*. As it so often occurred, esoteric tenets known only to initiates and sages, find themselves wrapped up in various images, legends or even contradictory statements. One such completely distorted tale takes us to China where the moon received worship and whose inhabitant, the Hare, made the drug of immortality which was swallowed by Chang-o, wife of I, the Excellent Archer to whom the gods had given the "drug". Chang-o took refuge in the moon and became its goddess. In Japan the modification went even further and the hare is represented, in iconography, in the moon as pounding rice (*mochi-zuki* meaning to pound rice for cakes and also the *full moon* - although the ideograms of both are different).

Was it reserved for the seer-poets of Āryāvarta to conceal in the legend of the moon as drinking vessel of the gods from which they quaffed Soma, nectar of immortality, the esoteric teaching of the *secret fire* with its creative-transcendental, or devastating effects, deeply buried in the human frame and activated through *tapas*, through Soma, and that all illuminating solar ray, the *suṣumna* fusing with the human *suṣumnā* during the full moon? No, for the Greeks also have such a legend. This is brought out by M.L. West in his book *Greek Philosophy and the Orient*, 1971 where he shows similarities of views e.g. on the soul's destiny or the tree of life and the water of life between the sages of ancient Greece, India and Egypt, an admission unacceptable to scholars in H.P.B.'s day. But times have changed and more and more of her impossible statements are being proved correct. Concerning ambrosia in the moon, he writes:

The case for a historical connection is strengthened by a remarkable parallel of detail.

Pherecydes said that the moon produces ambrosia daily, and that the gods feed on it there. In certain of the Vedic hymns, but more commonly and more clearly in the Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads and Purāṇas, we find the idea that the moon is the vessel from which the gods drink *soma*, the divine liquid that gives them immortality. During the second part of the month the gods are drinking the moon up, and so it wanes; then it goes in to the sun, and is refilled during the first part of the next month, at the same time feeding the spirits of the dead. As the drink of immortality, *soma* is called *amṛta*, which is the equivalent of *ambrosia*, etymologically as well as in sense."<sup>15</sup>

This whole tale of the moon's ambrosia is quite an example of how a legend is not invented from start to finish, but rather grows around a certain thought or nucleus of some occurrence or esoteric tenet, is embroidered upon more and more and loses its original meaning. There is no doubt that various esoteric doctrines seeped through the ancient centres of initiation from East to West as demonstrated by M.L. West, with the inevitable accretions and finally distortions. But, however widely prevalent the interchange of ideas and the cross fertilisation may have been, the hierophants of each such initiatory centre, as for instance the famed Abydos or Heliopolis, Samothrace or Delphi, not only assimilated the traditional *gnosis* handed down through the ages, but had to live in accordance with its precepts and adapt these to the needs of those of their own people capable of receiving them. Each nation had its own wise men or "prophets": the pantheons reflect something of the wisdom given by these sages, a wisdom reflected in the gods' omniscience; in a solidarity and stand for truth and harmony as in the Ṛgvedic Rta and the all powerful Egyptian goddess Maat; both embody the concept of eternal movement and stability, of cosmic harmony and justice, and human destiny; the latter

also appears in the Tablets of Fate held by the Babylonian gods, symbol of their omnipotence, etc. Ancient Greece also had her Sophoi or wise ones who, like Pythagoras, Parmenides, Heracleitus, Empidocles, left their mark on the thought of Greece which radiated far and wide.

*Truth* and *wisdom* were perceived as basic to the gods and thus to be imitated by humans (as in the R̥gveda) before the human mind dragged the gods and their symbols down to its own petty, restless and conflicting level such as is reflected in the later Egyptian tales, the later Hindu myths and the Greek, Roman and Teutonic myths, etc.

#### THE PANTHEONS AS MIRRORS OF HUMANITY

Should we dismiss these pantheons as just imaginary, or as sheer human aberration? Does not what lies behind them give us an appreciation of our own human capacity to soar to celestial and moral heights sadly cast away nowadays in the dustbin of bygone ages? Each pantheon bears a message from the psyche to the psyche, holds a mirror to ourselves, our strivings and pitfalls, our inkling of a possibility of solving the enigma of life and death, and our search for such a solution as well as our wonder at life, at cosmos, at truth. Here in mythology we recognise the tradition of the ageless wisdom at work, for myths reveal insights which have acted as guide lines to mould humanity. We observe the pointers to solidarity, to justice, to good will, etc. Each pantheon contributes its own specific colour, its own touch of humour, comedy or drama, to the overall picture of the human mind's own projections.

Where is then the objective truth? In the fact that whatever is mirrored in and projected by psyche must have its own reality as much in the ocean of space from which psyche takes its life as within our own psyche: that ocean of space pulsating with lives which the human mind, before emptying it of life, did clothe with its own garments, its own high powered endeavours which lie as much within ourselves as without. Such is the teaching of the age-old Upaniṣads, of the age-old gnosis.

The closer we come to our two thousand year dispensation, the more we lose contact with the ancient vision of celestial harmony reflected on earth in the balance of Nature, etc. the more do the gods deteriorate to our own lowly level of quarrelling, distrust, hatred, jealousy, envy and self-centredness. Could man finally reflect only that lowliest part of himself because he was losing contact with the higher? Nevertheless even the later myths retained and concealed in their fanciful presentation something of the wider vision and deeper teachings of the seers of the past. Mythology remains for all ages, as Kerenyi worded it, "the repository of man's cosmic sentiency".

## PART II

### THE R̥GVEDIC PANTHEON

It seems that the R̥gvedic pantheon with its very specific features which mark it out apart from others, has remained closer to an original vision, a primeval revelation whereby celestial beings, the devas, and human beings were not éof one origin but also formed part of one vast network of Cosmic Order of which they were, in the devas' case, the willing instruments, in the human case, the unwieldy tools. The devas remain spiritual entities. Aditi, Dakṣa, Varuṇa, Mitra, Agni, Sūrya, Indra, Soma, the Aśvins, Uṣas, Sarasvatī, the Waters (ōpaḥ) etc. the bright gods of the Vedic pantheon appear as cosmic gods of vast compass, some of them regents of specific aspects of the universe; yet all capable of coming into touch with humans either through the ritual, or through the power of prayer, or invocation, *brahman*, or through the contrite heart. Far from being fully anthropomorphised they are not yet degraded to the human level. And yet disruptive touches do appear, especially where Indra is concerned. Attempts were made by later commentators to classify them in accordance with the threefold division of Vedic cosmogony, or still later by modern Western scholars such as Dumézil, according to the three main divisions of human labour, but neither is completely satisfactory. The devas do not easily fit into neat human pigeonholes to suit human reason. Thus Agni belongs to the three realms of the Vedic world and Brahmanaspati, an aspect of Agni as well as the power of the word or *brahman* as understood in the R̥gveda, also spans the three divisions; Soma also, although plant found on the mountain, is as elixir of

life, hidden in the celestial sphere. Dumézil's human classification may fully satisfy our orderly rational minds, but it is somewhat artificial when applied to the fluidity of the Vedic devas.

#### SEERSHIP AND HUMAN ENCOUNTER WITH THE DEVAS

As established by J. Gonda in his *Vision of the Vedic Poets*, and discussed in the Introduction, ch.1, the ṛṣis were seers and their hymns are rooted in their seership. Many verses attest to this capacity to enter into visual contact with the devas, whether through psychic sight which is far more than intellectual perception, or through an enhanced inner vision which they at times attributed to Soma. *Apaśyam*, "I saw", meant real seeing, though at a much subtler level than our ordinary physical sense perception. Thus the poet admits to perceiving Indra through "mental insight" (*manīṣā*) (X.124.9) and in III.38.6 to going to the gods' synod in his mind (*manasā*), this word referring to the seat of thought, feeling and will (as Gonda discovered), and to beholding the gandharvas (cf. also X.181.3 & X.130.6).

"I saw the herdsman, the unfaltering one, approaching and departing by the pathways. He, arrayed in diverging and converging (forces) revolves within these worlds." (I.164.31 = X.177.3)

Through their visioning the ṛṣis penetrated into the world of the gods and through their knowledge of the subtler frequencies of sound entered into communion with the devas. Hints are given of an inner journey, or a dialogue with a god by chanting mantras, or stimulated by a special drink, Soma, in order to reach what can only be called a higher state of consciousness. Thus

"We have succeeded in our song-in-praise of weal;  
we have become aware of the immortals." (X.31.3)

"For thee, O Agni, all these interior musical words... " (*viśvā ... nīthāny... niṇyā vacāṁsi* IV.3.16)

The whole of Antiquity testifies to this human perception of celestial beings, this entrance into other domains of space - (the several *lokas* of Hinduism) - an insight held sacred not merely because it allowed communion between humans and higher beings, even dialogues (cf. IV.3.16;5.3) but also opened up further vision and vaster horizons. The ancient scriptures are replete with such epiphanies, best known among these being the Old Testament: thus, the extraordinary vision of Ezekiel takes practically the whole of ch.2 for its minute description. If Ezekiel stands as one of the greatest of the Hebrew prophets, because he saw and was able to express what he saw, why not the great ṛṣi of Āryāvarta who also saw? Similarly Moses communicates with his God Yahveh who sends him on a mission and later orders him to build a sanctuary "after the pattern of the tabernacle" shown him "in the mount", etc. (in or on the mount or mountain being an esoteric term referring to deep meditation; cf. the three disciples of Christ taken by Christ "up into a high mountain apart" to witness the transfiguration of their Lord). This visioning, this capturing of subtlest wave lengths, this entering into other dimensions of existence, culminating into an epiphany, does not mean that the seers of antiquity were falling into hallucinations as the cynical or rationalist is prompt to believe. Deep meditation opens the way to inner seeing.

The devas are luminous, hence shining (*deva* from root *div* to shine gives the key to their meaning). The substance of their form, however tenuous, is mentioned in terms of what humans know:

"You who were born of the waters and of aditi and of earth." (X.63.2)

"Waters" and "aditi" the boundless (both examined in ch.3) point to *ākāśa* within which all come to existence, and is the basic element of their being, glowing in the freedom of movement; but earth implies a certain restriction to their tenuousness which gives them a form, however fluidic, and enables them to be seen under certain conditions. Out of the luminous cradle of boundless space, they take form and manifest right to the level just beyond ours, hence the possibility for less gifted humans to glimpse them.

We have already seen that H.P.B. called them

"... the 'Sons of Light' because they emanate from and are self-generated in, that infinite Ocean of Light, whose one pole is pure *Spirit* lost in the absoluteness of Non-Being, and the other, the *matter* in which it condenses, crystallizing into a more and more gross type as it descends into manifestation. (S.D.I. p.481)

H.P.B. explains that light is the very essence of their body

"... *Our physical light is the manifestation on our plane, and the reflected radiance of the divine*

light emanating from the collective body of those who are called the 'LIGHTS' and the 'FLAMES' ... " And quoting from the *Commentary*  
*"It is through and from the radiations of the seven bodies of the seven orders of Dhyānis, that the seven discrete quantities (Elements), whose motion and harmonious Union produce the manifested Universe of Matter, are born."* (S.D.I.p.259 & fn)

This description and explanation perfectly fit what one can gather from the devas of light in the Ṛgveda, (e.g. X.63.2. We should discard our notions of anthropomorphic gods such as the Greek poets presented. The powers that rule from behind Nature are not human, though humans and devas are of one common origin in their inner selves. But certain anthropomorphic traits ascribed to the devas are inevitable, as it is well nigh impossible to describe beings radiating light of ever changing shades and vibrancy, and poets prefer the use of concrete symbols. For instance, Varuṇa whose seat is beyond all the elements, who is lord of Cosmic Order, is thousand eyed, tramples on human wiles with his "shining foot". He wears a resplendent robe and a golden mantle. Indra "wears all shapes at his will, effecting magic changes in his appearance" (III.53.8) which once evoked a doubt in the seer as to his existence.

Behind the daily ritual of the human offering to the devas and the devas' returning of the offering by way of boons needed for human welfare, whether physical or spiritual, or poetic-inspiring-uplifting, lay the vast rhythm of the universe, key to the Cosmic Order, the harmony of motion and stability; looms the silhouette of Vāyu, invisible, intangible Primal Mover, herald of life - Vāyu, wind and life-breath.

#### VAYU, THE COSMIC AND PRIMAL MOVER

Why was wind, which for us means nothing more than a movement and confrontation of more or less hot and cold air, so important to all the ancient peoples who saw in it far more than the mere sucking in and blowing out of air - a god to the Babylonians, a god to the ṛṣis, finally interchangeable with Indra? Sanskrit has two words for wind, *vāta* and *vāyu*, both derived from the root *vā* to blow. Whilst Vāyu is associated several times with Indra, Vāta is associated once with Parjanya who brings rain. As Vāta he is called "king of all this world" (X.168.2), as Vāyu he is offered, with Indra, the first Soma pressing.

The ancient seers saw behind or within Wind the mighty momentum leading into and out of manifestation, into and out of change, the rhythm of appearance and disappearance on which depends the universe, the whirling around the heavens of galaxies, stars, planets, the return of the seasons, of the years, the ebb and flow of tides, the growth and decay of all forms. The whole of Nature vibrates with this perpetual movement of the primal, hidden mover: the breath of life, a reflection of the mighty breathing in and breathing out of the cosmos, as poetically worded by the ancient sages, the eternal Pulse of the Great Breath. This mighty Power nothing can arrest or deviate from its course or momentum. In like manner, when fully unleashed in its maddening fury who can arrest the wind?

This movement generates the dynamics of ṛta; brings all seeds to fruition, transforms, regenerates and destroys. At its highest point it is the Great Breath, combiner of elements; at its lowest point on earth, the separator of elements, of the seeds of time, for time is movement. Vāyu the wind, Vāyu the breath, Vāyu the mover of time, these aspects declare him to be the underlying principle without which no thing can proceed to its appointed end. This is the cosmic role of Vāyu, not expressed in so many words, but easily deducible from the data available. Vāyu was interchangeable with Indra in his aspects of mind and time.

Vāyu as breath, vital essence, life, enters man. The inward intake and the outward flow of energy encapsulate the meaning of wind as the vital breath. For Śri Aurobindo, as noted in his *Vedic Glossary* compiled by A.B. Purāṇi:

"In the Vedic system Vāyu is the Master of Life, inspirer of that breath or dynamic energy called *prāṇa* which is represented in man by the vital or nervous activity. Vāyu is always associated with the *prāṇa* or life-energy." (op.cit. p.82)

The word *prāṇa*, not much used in the Ṛgveda, appears in I.66.1 where it is equated with breath which is life, hence the life-breath: "... like the sun's glance, like breath which is life", the Sanskrit

being just *āyur na prāṇo*. From the breath of the primeval Man (*puruṣa*) Vāyu was born (X.90.13). This declares his inner meaning: the power of wind is an outer manifestation of the Great Breath. In Athv.XI.4.15 *prāṇa* is identified with wind:

"Breath they call Mātariśvan; breath is called the wind; in breath what has been and what will be, in breath is all established."

Between the breathing out and the breathing in lies the mystery of life, so it is said. And *prāṇa* is in reality not just breath as previously discussed, but that vital energy that lies behind the breath and fills the human being with life, with a store of dynamism; it underlies all biological life in various degrees. Breath is perceptible to our senses; *prāṇa* is not, hence its ignorance in the West.

Throughout antiquity the close connection between wind, breath and spirit is a striking feature of Ancient thought. Thus the Greek *pneuma* which meant breath also referred to spirit and wind, and the same applies to the wind and soul in Latin, Hebrew, etc. (there being too often confusion between soul and spirit). Similar to the *soul*, wind cannot be grasped but only inferred. Wind is no graspable thing, but it blows across distances, it rumbles across mountains, frames and shreds the shape of clouds, sings among the pine-trees' needles, roars over the oceans; similarly does the soul, ungraspable and so elusive that modern Western man has denied its existence, yet queen of our feeling nature, our intuition and imagination, move us to inspiration and loftiest aspiration, urge us to achieve the impossible, raise us to the acme of love and self-sacrifice!

In the Ṛgveda Vāta is called the *ātman* of Varuṇa:

"The wind, thy *ātman*, has roared through the region" (VII.87.2),

the wind is the *ātman* of all (X.92.13). The Aśvins, those mysterious matutinal deities that travel across the heavens, are invited to come to the ritual "like the *ātman*, like the wind to their own abodes" (I.34.7). In Vāta's haven is hidden the nectar of immortality (X.186.3); Vāyu is Soma's guardian (X.85.5): behind the *prāṇa* lies the secret of life; this takes us back to what was expressed a few lines earlier, as "between the breathing out and the breathing in lies the mystery of life"; lies the secret of psyche and the activating of that ray of illumination which was found a counterpart, in the human being, of one of the solar rays. In X.168.3 the question is asked: whence has Vāta arisen? He, the first born, he observant of Cosmic Order (*ṛtavā*), he friend of the Water goddesses, he

"ātman of the gods, seed of the world, wanders according to his will; heard are his sounds, unseen is his form." (X.168.4)

-seed in the sense of vibration-motion-rhythm, imparted to all; primal mover, face-less, formless.

Agas later, more than an echo of this is found in St John's Gospel:

"The wind bloweth whither it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is everyone that is born of the spirit" (John .3.8)

for the spirit moves not in accordance with the rational mind's decrees, but in accordance with its own strange and unpredictable dictates which reason alone cannot fathom, unpredictable as the wind. Both Aditi and Vāyu are divinities wielding behind the scene a cosmic rule none may disrupt. Did the ṛṣis envisage this power in the depth of their *tapas*, in a state of awareness "whence words return together with the mind, not attaining it" ? Did they manage to express something of this vision in their Queen of Cosmic Order whom H.P.B. called the Celestial Virgin-- infinite space, and in Vāyu, the ungraspable primal Mover, herald here on earth of the GREAT BREATH? Vāyu<sup>16</sup> conceals in himself the measure of cosmos and man, the measure of all things. So do all the great *Asuras* of the Ṛgveda, most of whom have already been considered in previous chapters. Behind the Vedic gods lie depths of soul insight and knowledge which our puny minds can hardly fathom and have mostly dismissed as primitive aberrations.

#### THE ORGANISING OF SPACE, THE DEVAS' ACTIVITY

Here stands out another very ancient viewpoint, totally alien to our way of viewing the universe, which concerns the elements as understood in ancient cultures and touched on in ch.3 and 4. For the Seers "Fire, Air, Water, Earth, were but the visible garb, the symbols of the informing, invisible Souls or Spirits - the Cosmic gods, to whom worship was offered by the ignorant, and simple respectful recognition by the wiser." (S.D.I.p.461)

This makes it plain that the elements were looked upon as the outermost, physical expression of the informing spiritual entity; hence fire viewed as a god because of that informing, powerful principle, constructive and destructive; so for air or wind, for water and earth. The element itself is not the deva but only its outermost garb, which gave its name to the principle. This distinction has subsequently been totally blurred, hence the confusion between the principle and its manifested aspect. Nevertheless enough testimony appears in the ancient scriptures as to a divine power expressing itself through an element, - a lord of divine will, against whom puny man cannot prevail. Thus fire was seen as a supreme manifestor of Deity in the Old Testament as well as in the Ṛgveda and the Avesta.

"For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire." (O.T. Deut.4.24)

So to Mose "The angel of the Lord appeared ... in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush ... and God called unto him out of the midst of the bush." (O.T. Ex.3.2)

"And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire." (O.T.Ex.19.8) (cf.Ex.24.17; 2.Kings.2.11; 2 Samuel 22.1-16)

And the seer Vasiṣṭha in the Ṛgveda admits that meditating on Varuṇa - "when just now going into the presence of Varuṇa, I contemplated the face of fire." (VII.88.2)

One element, with its presiding deity, was assigned to each of the cardinal points, the inter-relationship indicating the structure, the pillars upon which our terrestrial world was deemed to be built and held together. For fire, air, water and earth or solid matter, are essential to terrestrial life in this cycle. H.P.B. points out that

"The Cosmic Tabernacle of Moses, erected by him in the Desert, was *square*,

representing the four cardinal points and the four Elements, as Josephus tells his readers. (Antiq.1, ch.iii)" (S.D.I.p.347 fn), the idea coming from the pyramids in Egypt, and also the pillars in Tyre.<sup>17</sup> These four cardinal points form the fourfold foundation of the manifested world, the square of matter, without which no universe could fully manifest; the four modes of objectivity - above-below, left-right, the cross of manifestation. These four corners or directions are, in the Ṛgveda, connected with "four oceans" - not literal oceans as shown in Athv.XIX.27.3, but they represent the four quarters of space - and with four original rivers as against the seven rivers which Indra released and which belong to a different, more developed order. Four rivers are also mentioned in *Genesis* as watering the Garden of Eden (Gen.2.10), flowing from one source in highest heaven to water the Garden. From that source the waters part into four streams, each of which is given a name with a mystical meaning. Compare the Scandinavian Cow Audumla from whose udder flow four streams of milk, and the buffalo-cow (Vāc) through whom "live the four directions." (I.164.41,42) Not for nothing are these statements similar. Over each corner of these quarters was seen to preside a great spiritual entity. Connected with these four directions are the four winds to which were traced good or evil happenings. (cf.Ṛgv.X.137.2&3. Cf.also O.T. Ez. iii.4)

The Vedic altar was a reconstruction on earth of the fashioning of space as cosmos out of chaos or *ākāśa* (the Ṛgvedic waters of space), and thus a direct link between the higher spheres and the earthly spheres. The whole building of the altar brick by brick, each step being meaningful, and the establishing of the ritual with the chanting of its officiants, was the reproduction of what happened in space at the beginning, *in principio*, - as revealed to the original seers, Vedic, Zoroastrian and others. The Vedic altar is thus the "navel" or centre of the Vedic world. This is well explained by M. Eliade in his *The Sacred and the Profane* where he points out how the fire altar ensures the presence of Agni and communication with the celestial sphere, hence the sacredness of the altar.

Agni called the messenger between devas and men finds his counterpart within the seer who thereby enters into communion with the numinous powers. The link between both spheres was to be concretely symbolised by the axis mundi, the *skambha*, or the mountain, or the ziggurat, or the pyramid - symbol of the quaternary basis of matter plus the triangular rising of the spiritual (feeling, mind, intuition), and its apex lost in the beyond. The Ṛgveda gives specific hints as to the organising of space; the basic and perhaps most important being that the Sons of Aditi, the Ādityas "vision the Cosmic Order and establish it" (IV.55.2cd.) which clearly admits that the gods establish what they have visioned, or reflected in their own consciousness. They are "ṛta-visioned", if one may translate thus *ṛta dhīṭayaḥ*. This tallies strangely well with H.P.B.'s description of the Dhyan Chohans' spiritual task, "the intelligent soul, or cosmic consciousness, which directs

and guides that energy [inherent to matter] and which is the *Dhyāni-Chohanian thought reflecting the Ideation of the Universal Mind.*" (S.D.I.p.280) If she had known of the above Ṛgvedic verse, she would surely have quoted it as her explanation throws light upon its meaning.

Spiritual entities whether we call them devas or by any other name, are reflectors of the Universal Mind or *Word manifested*, and they act in accordance with what they reflect.

The verb usually used for the continuous process of establishing the various manifestations in our space-time dimension, is *mā*, to measure out, demarcate, yielding *māyā*, a "measure", its original meaning, thereby implying that what we know of reality here below is only a "measure" - the tip of an iceberg! To measure, divide, maintain, are aspects of the creative activity of the devas in the Ṛgvedic pantheon. The verb *mā* is explained by Gonda as giving

"...the sense of 'realizing in the phenomenal world' - and this implies in three dimensional space - by applying a special technique such as 'measuring' what was mentally conceived; converting an idea into dimensional actuality." (*Four Studies in the Language of the Veda.* 1959. p.168. )

It implies the laying down of the potential into the actual, for which each deva has a particular task to accomplish. But what is not stated in the above explanation is that this measuring is the result of sound/vibration hinted at in Ṛgv. I.164.41,42 examined in ch. 5 - for sound "measures" out form. The universe is the "song" of the devas. So Varuṇa "measures" out the "ancient realm" (VIII.41.10; cf. also 4c). He has also "measured out the earth even with the sun as measure" (V.85.5), the mystical element here is connected with the sun and its seven rays comprising light and *svara*, i.e. fire and frequency, the two instruments of creation. These subtleties have been completely missed by Western exegesists bound by the very narrow parameters of philology and rationalism.

Space for the age-old gnosis is no real vacuum, except to our physical senses, but a fullness pregnant with infinite potentialities, which the devas, as foci of dynamic consciousness, undertake to actualise into our world. What we call a vacuum is a measure of space without air.

#### THE RIDDLE OF THE THREE EARTHS AND THE THREE HEAVENS

Varuṇa whose form is ṛta, a cryptic image to describe the "Lord of Cosmic Order",  
"in accordance with the law ... observer of the law,  
has spread out the world in threefold order. (IV.42.4cd)

The Cosmic Waters, or "womb of Cosmic Order" (Naighaṇṭu 1.12) are his realm. Varuṇa unfolded the world in three levels of differentiation and caused "heaven to be fixed in the seat of Order". (IV.42.4b.)

In this threefold order, he "circumscribes seven seats", or special domains, and is said to rule over "seven" *lokas*. Varuṇa is he

"whose brilliant all-seeing rays have extended over the three earths (*tisro bhūmīḥ*)  
and filled the three upper realms. Immovable is Varuṇa's seat;  
over the seven he rules-supreme." (VIII.41.9)

"Within him are placed three heavens, and below  
are three earths in-a-series-of- six." (*ṣaḍvidhānāḥ* VII.87.5)

The words *tisro bhūmīḥ* are *unequivocal*. Two different verses, one from book 8 and one from book 7 refer to three earths which with 3 heavens make 6 domains, over which Varuṇa, from his seat, or seventh, rules. This has obviously always been incomprehensible, we know only of one earth. But there are similar hints elsewhere. Thus the Atharvaveda refers to the "earth which was previous to this one" and to know of its existence is to be "wise in ancient lore" (Athv.XI.8.7) hence in the gnosis. Another undeniable statement in this respect is found in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa:

"There are here three earths (or worlds *prthivī*) viz, this one, and two beyond it."

(Śat.Br.V.1.5.21)

These statements are clear enough but no explanation could be offered, and translators have avoided the issue by using the idea of tripartite earth, or a threefold earth. Gonda wondered "how these poets and priests could regard our visible earth and the atmosphere surrounding it tripartite." (*Triads*.p.53-4) Here the great Sanskrit scholar failed to envisage that the ṛṣis' seership is the clue (or that of their ancestors who gave them the gnosis)

- there must be other globes, though invisible to us. For the verses do not point to one earth, but clearly to three. This is another of those hints referring to the knowledge of a *secret doctrine* which has remained unknown, at least to the West until H.P.B. revealed it in her *The Secret Doctrine*, and A.P. Sinnett explained it in his *Esoteric Buddhism*, both taking their information from the same source, but of course both dismissed as an impossibility. Whether we can accept it or not does not alter the fact that the *R̥gveda*, the *Atharvaveda* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* hint at something unknown to us, something which seems like an ancient teaching taken for granted.. A short comment (chosen as against the long ones) in *The Secret Doctrine* explains

"Bhūmi (the Earth) appears with six sisters" says the Commentary. H.P.B. adds in a note: It is a Vedic teaching that 'there are three Earths corresponding to three Heavens, and our Earth (the fourth) is called Bhūmi'. This is the explanation given by our exoteric Western Orientalists. But the esoteric meaning and allusion to it in the *Vedas*, is that it refers to our planetary chain, three 'Earths' on the descending arc, and three 'heavens', which are the three Earths or globes also, only far more ethereal, on the ascending or spiritual arc: by the first three we descend into matter, by the other three we ascend into Spirit; the lower one, *Bhūmi*, our Earth, forming the turning point, so to say, and containing, *potentially*, as much of Spirit as it does of Matter ..." (S.D.I.p.250 & fn)<sup>18</sup>

"The six invisible globes "of our chain are both 'worlds' and 'earths' as is our own, albeit invisible. But where could the *Six* invisible earths on *this* globe be?" (S.D. II. p.607 fn)

In *R̥gv*.IV.53.5, quoted previously, Savitr "impels the three heavens and the three earths"; (the other two mentions being *R̥gv*.VII.87.5ab and VIII.41.9); one from the *Atharvaveda* points out that to *know of the earth that was prior to ours* is to be "wise in ancient lore". What is that ancient lore? In the *R̥gveda* as in the *Vendīdād* the evidence of a *secret doctrine* is plainly implied - another point in favour of H.P.B.'s claim of a common esoteric heritage.

P. Kingsley, in his article "Ezekiel by the Grand Canal: between Jewish and Babylonian Tradition", refers to a Babylonian mystical text dated to the "late second or early first millennium BC" translated shortly before the Second World War:

"It describes the universe as consisting of three heavens and three earths...This view of the cosmos occupied a significant place in Babylonian priestly tradition. The colophon, or closing formula of the document, is quite explicit about its esoteric nature. 'Secret of the great gods: let the initiate reveal it to the initiate but do not let the uninitiated see it.' "(*Royal Asiatic Society*. J. C.U.P. 2. pt 3. Nov.1992. pp.341ff.)

This is quite a revelation of that esoteric doctrine to which not just the Vedic seers had access, but those of Babylon as well. The *universe* mentioned here refers to our solar system.

According to *The Secret Doctrine*, the One Eternal Law unfolds everything in manifestation on a septenary scale or "sevenfold principle". Thus the seven planes found in some cosmogonies have their reflection in the *R̥gvedic* "sevenfold foundation of the ocean of space", the Sevenfold Water Goddesses as well as the seven stations of Agni. Similarly every dense visible planet in our solar system has its six companion planets or globes, each of a more tenuous matter as each evolves on a different plane of matter invisible to physical eyes, until our plane of matter is reached. Seven globes are said to form one individual *chain* of which the fourth globe is dense enough to be visible. Hence Mercury, Mars, Venus, etc. are visible to us. The chain is thus viewed: the fourth planet, in our case, the earth, is on the densest plane, as are the planets known to us and visible in our solar system. Moreover, around each of the seven globes of a particular chain, the *life-wave* ushers in waves upon waves of the seeds of life that will express themselves in the mineral, vegetable, animal and human kingdoms. This life-wave circles round each globe 7 times in cycles, descending down each plane until it reaches our own most dense plane. Each cyclic circling is called a "round" in each of which one element develops, thus fire in the first, air in the second, water in the third, and earth or solidity in the fourth. As, according to the doctrine, we are in the fourth round, there are 3 more rounds to come.

The globe, says the Commentary, was *fiery, cool and radiant*, as its ethereal men and animals, during the first Round', ' *luminous* and more dense and heavy - during the second Round; *watery* during the Third'. 'Those of the fourth Round have added *earth* as a state of matter to their stock as well as the three other elements in their present transformation. In short, none of the so-called ' elements were, in the three preceding rounds, as they are now. For all we know, *Fire* may have



been pure *ākāśa*, the first Matter of the *Magnum Opus* of the Creators and 'Builders' ..."  
(S.D.I.p.252-53)

The earth having reached its 4th round, the life wave has passed the densest immersion where matter is paramount over spirit and prepares to ascend on ever subtler levels where spirit will have more freedom of expression. "The well-known Kabbalistic aphorism runs: 'a stone becomes a plant; a plant, a beast; the beast, a man; a man, a spirit; and the spirit a god.' " (ibid.p.246)

The Persian Sufi poet, Rumi, unwittingly or, better, intuitively expressed in a few lines the whole tenet of this ageless *secret doctrine* in his *The Ascending Soul* (Rumi.III.3901. Trans. By R.A.Nicholson)

"I died as mineral and became a plant,  
I died as plant and rose to animal,  
I died as animal and I was Man.  
Why should I fear? When was I less by dying?  
Yet once more I shall die as Man, to soar  
With angels blest; but even from angelhood  
I must pass on: *all except God doth perish.*  
When I have sacrificed my angel-soul,  
I shall become what no mind e'er conceived.  
O let me not exist! for Non-existence  
Proclaims in organ tones: 'To him we shall return'."

#### COSMIC HARMONY, DEVA SOLIDARITY AND OPPOSITION

Subtle connections between all the devas, not at all perceptible to the superficial eye, underly their basic oneness as they weave the vast network of the Cosmic Order: a living, pulsating, all radiating canvass. Hence the following refrain from one of the Ṛgvedic hymns:

"One is the mighty divinity of the shining ones." (III.55.1)

- *asuratva*, is the word being used, the state of being *asura*, the *asura* being the highest spiritual entity, somewhat equivalent to our archangel; the asuras in Ṛgvedic days being possessors and bestowers of the breath of life, *asu*, and not demons as later on degraded by orthodoxy; the word *deva* being more general. Through their constant interaction, the devas establish, give shape to and rule the universe and our lower order as the noumena of all phenomena, in accordance with the Law implicit in their nature which is the same law at the heart of the universe, *Ṛta*. It is thus through the action of the devas that the working of the law can be assessed. The world is the manifestation of their concerted activity, solidarity, oneness. They are regents of the universe as well as powers expressed through human beings and in no way detract from the majesty and the oneness of Deity, the Absolute:

"The one fair-winged Being, inspired poets, with their words, shape in varied ways." (X.114.5ab)  
Hence the field of the dynamics of *Ṛta* is par excellence the intermediate level where the universe unfolds in accordance with certain patterns of progressive and harmonious stages in which those realms of activity, supervised by the devas, develop in perfect concord (*sajoṣas*) with other realms. The evidence is in the verses themselves, for instance in accordance with the ordinances the worthy ones engendered the waters, plants, trees, etc. and filled the mid-region (X.66.9).

"These, Aditi's sons, undeceivable, have grown mighty in the abode of ṛta." (VII.60.5cd)

"In accordance with ṛta, godly Savitṛ toils; he extends far and wide the peak of ṛta." (VIII.86.5ab)

"Dawn ... the all bounteous, follows along the established norms." (III.61.1cd)

The Dawns " ... the same today, the same tomorrow, keep Varuṇa's everlasting Law." (I.123.8)

the devas "rule over the whole world in accordance with the ṛta." (V.63.7c)

"All the gods follow the statutes of Varuṇa." (VIII.41.7)

As lords of truth the devas remain "celestial denizens, flame-tongued, thriving through the law, abiding brooding in the womb of law" (X.65.7ab), gracious towards humans, for they are of one spirit with man and "bounteous to every man". No subsequent, known pantheon has ever mirrored to such a degree such a profound solidarity and activity in complete freedom, with such good-will towards humans. In the ṛṣis's vision

as sung in the Ṛgveda, the whole universe appears as a hymn of praise offered to the Innermost by its own creatures, devas and humans; a "holy-song" (*śloka*) which Savitr "fashions for the sake of his own dharman" (IV.53.3). In this "sacred-song (*sāman*) of ṛta" (I.147.1d) the gods revel. The *Cosmic Order* was the devas' *celestial song* from which they "milk the abundant milky streams of ṛta" (VII.43.4). The human ritual is itself a celebration of this Order.

Yet within this orderly reflection of wholeness especially in its higher levels, the ṛṣis saw plainly the tension of opposite polarities as necessary to the formation of a world based upon the play of two opposite and complementary poles - expanding-contracting, positive-negative, active-passive, etc. which in more restrictive conditions such as our terrestrial sphere offers, lead to division, friction, conflict, pain, suffering. This aspect, in their pantheon, they sketched as the hostility between two categories of beings which we could call the gods and the anti-gods. Thus certain devas are opposed to the Ādityas in whom rules the principle of expansion, evolution, freedom (within the limits set by law, ṛta), for the building of a world based upon law, order. Among the opposing forces, the Dānavas, rules the principle of constriction, of bondage. Thus Dānu (restraint) is the mother of Vṛtra the constrictor, mother of the seven Dānavas vaguely outlined who form the nucleus of what was to become, in the *Purāṇas*, the two opposing forces of devas and asuras. Indra in the Ṛgveda does fight these opposers and he seems also, at one time, to fight all the furious gods, though this is not repeated (I.30.3 & 5). Aggressivity is one of his characteristics; he fights the Dāsas and the Dasyus, demonic entities, also considered human foes. These were taken as the evidence of the fight of the Āryans against the indigenous peoples as they invaded India, but this is by no means a settled question.

As explained by L. Renou:

"These cosmic powers, precursors of the *śaktis*, do not constitute a system of clear-cut oppositions. In classical times Śiva, the terrible destroyer, could also be a kindly protector; similarly in the Vedic system, vast spheres of activity are controlled by ambivalent powers. A normally well-disposed divinity may take on a *ghorā tānu*, an awful aspect; Varuṇa is alarmingly liable to assume the aspect of Vṛtra ... Sometimes the ambivalence is an integral feature of the divinity, as in the case of Rudra."<sup>19</sup>

An indefinite picture thus emerges of the forces of light and evolution personified in the Ādityas set against the forces of darkness, constriction, retrogression, personified in the Dānavas, wielding the same power, *māyā*; the gods of both sides being called the sons of the same Father, Prajāpati, the Lord of Beings, but of different Mothers, Aditi and Dānu (Śat.Br.I.2.4ff). This opposition, not so emphasised in the Ṛgveda, the seer-priests being more in tune with the higher levels of their vision, does represent the tension between *release* and *restriction*, *attraction* and *repulsion*, each group of devas therefore having its own peculiar task to accomplish in the vast Order. The Asuras are called "older brothers" in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (XIV.4.1.1), their evolution belonging to an earlier age or *kalpa* than the bulk of the Ṛgvedic devas, and this is confirmed in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.

The power the devas use called *māyā* in the Ṛgveda, refers to the great asuras' creative power which is, as well, the power of transformation, for creation means transformation, the moulding of form out of essence, creation being a deed of mighty magic, *māyā*. This power was later to be used by the demons for deceptive purposes. We glimpse here also the degradation through wrong or illicit use of a creative power which originally meant shaping, that transformation which makes of the universe a kaleidoscopic panorama, a vision of magic. So Agni bears many names and *māyās*, or powers of transformation - hidden in the wood, the stone, the water, he appears suddenly as the flame or lightning or solar ray; he warms, cooks, ripens and reduces to ashes. Earth and Heaven are both *ṛtāyinī*, followers of the *ṛta*, and *māyini*, skilled in wondrous arts, producing their wonder in changing forms; the growth of plants, the change of leaf to bud, to flower, to fruit, then back to seed, the metamorphosis of grub to butterfly, of embryo to creature, etc. all pertain to this magical momentum of transformation. By his *māyā* Varuṇa "has encircled the nights and settled the light-rays" (VIII.41.3ab) thereby laying down the law of cycles.

"Your *māyā*, O Mitra-Varuṇa, is laid down in heaven." (V.63.4)

"Mighty is the *māyā* of Mitra-Varuṇa, even like the moon  
it bestows its splendour far and wide." (III.61.7cd)

In no way does this *māyā* detract from the majesty and orderly unfoldment of the Cosmic Order.

"Neither those who possess *māyā* nor those who hold wisdom can impair the primeval, firmly-fixed statutes of the gods." (III.56.1ab)

For *māyā* as transformative power is part of the Cosmic Order. But the opposing forces or "demons" have come to use *māyā* to deceive humans, hence the conflict, hence its evil side, though it is a feature of ignorance to attribute evil to a neutral power. It is the wrong application of any power that makes it bad and this far too often devolves to human beings. To the ṛṣis' vision, there were maleficent powers in the universe, powers which the devas had to restrain and keep under control, powers to which humans should not succumb but too often do. The evil powers could change their appearance, or lure the unwary into situations that cost these their lives, their sanity, or their honour. This aspect of *māyā* inevitably led to the meaning of deceit, thence illusion, to the exclusion of other meanings and is far more developed in post Vedic literature, whilst its original meaning of "measuring", transforming, sank into complete oblivion.

Every ancient race conceived this universally felt conflict in oppositions, in one way or another. The ancient Egyptians used the image of the solar bark daily having to encounter the force of opposition in the shape of the serpent Apophis obstructing its progress across the firmament. Opposition, interchange, interplay based upon attraction and repulsion or union and separation - the "weave forth, weave back" of the ṛṣis' hymn X.130.1, form the warp on which the universe is strung. It is evident that the *problem of evil* is here implied, though it is not as insoluble as in the monotheistic conception where the Lord God of Isaiah is obliged to admit: "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil. I the Lord, do all these things. (Isaiah.45.7)

This problem will be considered in ch.9. During the present cycle it concerns primarily humanity and its ever growing nefarious impact on Nature.

### PART III

#### FROM GODS TO ANGELS

Prior to our 2000 year monotheistic dispensation the emphasis was mostly on creative gods, builders, architects, measurers, lords of specific realms and functions and dispensers of justice, with whom human beings, either in their visionary or in their dream state, could enter into communion. But in the course of millennia came a change in human perception and attitude. In the various theogonies one of the great creator gods assumed precedence over the others, as is well seen in the reform of Zoroaster. The original Absolute Source untouched by human speculation and distortion, disappeared from human view, transformed into the new apprehension of the Creator God, moulded into a Supreme anthropomorphic Deity who, among the masses, became man's own self projection on the screen of the cosmos. The gods as creative intermediaries slowly faded from poetic vision and with them the wholeness of Cosmic Order - the gift of Āryāvarta, Ancient Egypt and to some extent Greece - to yield their place to new "appearances" of spiritual entities, angels and archangels whether of the Judaic, Christian or Muslim vision of the present cycle, the ministering servants and messengers of the Most High, yielding a glorified mirror of human kingdoms in the past two millennia. The personalising of God has destroyed the "majesty of the Absolute" and fomented that pernicious attitude ready to kill or torture because "my God is the only true God" and you must believe in Him!

Whether gods or angels are in question, the subject of the existence of spiritual entities has exercised some of the best minds in philosophy, religion, poetry, and art. Neoplatonism headed by Plotinus and Proclus had quite an influence on the development of a Christian philosophy and in so far as angelology is concerned, on such men as Dionysius the Areopagite, called pseudo, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Jacob Boehme, Meister Eckhart, etc.

In his *Elements of Theology* Proclus devised a system of classification of the gods from the ONE to the many, with hierarchies each composed of 3 orders distinguished by their different functions, each higher grade interpenetrating the lower. "A God is more universal as he is nearer to the One, more specific in

proportion to his remoteness from it." This about sums up the ancient idea, for the denser the vehicles the more specific, individual, personal and therefore limited becomes the entity.

The great Arabic philosopher and physician Avicenna (Ibn-Sina) whose works influenced both scholasticism and medieval medicine, was himself also influenced by Plato and Neoplatonism. He devised a double hierarchy of ten Intelligences headed by the Angel Gabriel who was deemed to have revealed the words of the *Koran* to Mohammed; the higher order being composed of cherubim, the lower of angels standing between pure intelligence and the world of matter. As intermediary, the angel helps man to develop intuition and reach out to illumination.

With pseudo Dionysius whose name first appears through St Paul in the *Acts of the Apostles* (xvii.32-34), the hierarchies of angels are also a threefold order determining their function and influence on humanity. In the highest, one notes the seraphim, the "burning ones", of the *Old Testament*, depicted as fiery six-winged beings (as in Isaiah's vision); the cherubim (from Hebrew *kerubh*) those who are "capable of knowing God"; the thrones, those who serve as a basis to God. The middle order comprises dominations, powers, and virtues; the last order covers the principalities, the archangels and the angels. These latter preside over humanity so as to help raise human consciousness to divine realisation.

The Kabbalah, which may be traced in several writings, notably the *Book of Enoch*, the *Book of Creation* and the *Zohar* or *Book of Splendour*, is close to the tradition of the *gnosis*, and indeed is as close to *The Secret Doctrine* as any of the Vedic hidden teachings. H.P.B. herself admits:

"The difference between the Kabbalah and the archaic esoteric *vidyā* - taking the *Kabbalah* as contained in the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*, not as misrepresented by its now disfigured copy, the Kabbalah of the Christian Mystics - is very small indeed, being confined to unimportant divergences of form and expression." (S.D.I.p.241)

In its detailed presentation and abstract emphasis the *Kabbalah* may strike us as quite different, but the essential basis and significance of the ideas are the same. The *Kabbalah* envisages the creation of the world in ten distinct stages of emanation or, as a rabbinical saying goes, "the world was called into being by ten divine Utterances". As obvious, the call to being by *utterance* is purely esoteric, and is typical of the *Vedas*, and so are the stages of emanations whether ten or seven. These ten are known as the Sefirot seen by some as "divine powers or vessels" expressing divine attributes. (See ch.8 for further details)

Such classifications as have been mentioned seem to derive from a forgotten lore of knowledge based upon seership, a revelation from a similar source, transformed by rational thinking, with varying details, gradings and activities. Only, from the first group, that of the "gods" of Antiquity who are seen more in terms of their cosmic role as regents and creators, even though they stand as intermediaries between humans and the Ultimate Source of all, the perspective has changed to that of the "angels" of the new dispensation, where the latter's essential role is that of intermediaries between the One Creative God and humanity; they intercede on behalf of humans, helping, ministering, healing. The highest of their hierarchies being so close to God, can know very little of us, the term "seraphim" or *burning ones* depicts them well, but also implies clearly that "The Lord thy God is a consuming Fire" (Deut.4.24). Their functions and attributes may differ, but the essential meaning, the essential message remains: the cosmos is not devoid of living beings, higher and lower spiritual entities whose functions are specific, who relay and step down the divine power from plane to plane, and with whom humans can get in touch on specific occasions, and who indeed are so recorded, examples of which have been shown.

Thus in spite of all the divergences that occurred throughout the millennia in human perception and understanding of celestial entities, a common basis remains, a common meaning ascribes to god or angel, namely a spiritual entity, hence usually invisible to physical eyes, usually beneficent though at times also maleficent (the word *spiritual* being used in this one instance for non sensuous, intangible beings, but not exalted divinities); an *intermediary* between one level or dimension of space and the other and its corresponding level of consciousness, either creative or destructive, or ministering and healing, or conducive to temptation among humans. Beyond this fundamental aspect, variations set in to create the manifold tapestry of the gods and the angels, a tapestry that is the mirror of the human mind's attempts at coming to terms with the many mysteries of cosmos and microcosmos. Drive the gods away and they all rush back in the guise of angels or of

the many saints of Roman Catholics who find it more suitable to address these for their petty requests than the Great God Himself!

As expressed by an agnostic, Jean-Marc Fombonne, who at times tends to be somewhat derisive of the subject he researched, namely angelology, but who finally had to admit that the angel's "nature goes beyond the evidence of his necessity", in the preface to his book *Des Anges et des Hommes*:

"Be it [the angel] master of the soul, a being of light, or be it the depth of the ego, everything primarily bears witness to the presence of the angel.

A presence that appears constantly in the history of religions and the testimonies of mystics or saints, in the experiences that go beyond loss of consciousness, in improbable rescues, but above all in the intuition of that immemorial, though repressed, memory we harbour concerning its revelation which keeps begging to surface again." (op.cit. p.13)

The author's conclusion that the angel may be master of the soul or may be the depth of the ego is noteworthy not only because of his insight, but also in view of the esoteric doctrine that the solar angels or Dhyān Chohans gave us our higher *manas*; for this reason the soul is called at times the solar angel.

### THE ESOTERIC DOCTRINE

Underlying this kaleidoscopic panorama of celestial entities seen through and painted over by the human mind, is the *esoteric doctrine* that posits ethereal beings forming a ladder from the highest down to the lowest, from the Supernal Source to the infinitesimal, all with their attributes and tasks to perform, tasks inherent to their very nature. Concerning all these "Sons of Light", "Builders", "Elohim", "Lipika", H.P.B. remarks:

"After due allowance for the imagery of personified Powers, we must admit the existence of these Entities, if we would not reject the existence of spiritual humanity within physical mankind. For the hosts of these Sons of Light, and 'Mind-born Sons' of the first manifested Ray of the UNKNOWN ALL are the very root of spiritual man." (S.D.I.p.106)

"However varying in their external presentations and dogmas, beliefs in the hosts of invisible intelligences of various grades have all the same foundation." (S.D.I.p.611)

One may surmise that this *same foundation* lies in the ancient *vision* or extra-sensory perception which allowed sages to commune with celestial beings as recorded in the world scriptures. It stands to reason that since we cannot see with our physical eyes, except through a microscope, viruses, bacteria, microbes, etc., and atoms are even beyond the power of the microscope, then we cannot in all fairness dismiss as absurd testimonies based on extra-sensory perception as found in world scriptures.

The devas of the Vedas or Dhyān Chohans of *The Secret Doctrine*, composed in their subtle form of the energy inherent to matter, and in their higher or spiritual nature of "the intelligent soul or cosmic consciousness which directs and guides that energy" (S.D.I.p.280) as it reflects the Universal Mind, are dynamic centres of creative power and the very cause of all manifestations. That the universe is the living expression of countless spiritual entities all working together in accordance with a harmonic scale of values accounts for the fullness and the livingness of space, and for the nature of our little globe, the interlinking of all phenomena with their celestial counterpart, the one divine life pervading all and bringing all things to fruition. This is part of the essence of the Vedic message, however little it has been understood!

It is worth repeating H.P.B.'s remark:

"...what is called 'unconscious Nature' is in reality an aggregate of forces manipulated by semi-intelligent beings (Elementals), guided by Higher Planetary Spirits (Dhyāni-Chohans), whose collective aggregate forms the manifested *Verbum* of the unmanifested LOGOS, and constitutes at one and the same time the MIND of the Universe and its immutable Law." (S.D.I.p.277-8)

This is a clear statement of the "unity" in "diversity" of Nature, that unity being the spiritual basis of all; and of the essential role of the Dhyānis and their manifestations, all forming the Logos or Word divine as it ripples throughout Creation - one of the fundamental principles of the *esoteric doctrine*, one which, as has been shown, underlies the whole of the Ṛgveda:

"One whole governs the moving and the stable, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation." (III.54.8cd)

"One minded, one-intentioned, the shining-ones (devas) move unerringly together to the one purposeful accomplishment." (VI. 9.5cd)

The creative energy, constantly outpoured from the Nameless Source through the hosts of spiritual entities, devas or Dhyān Chohans, is stepped down at every rung of the ladder of life through these hosts of beings comparable to powerhouses, to reach our own dense level. The fashioning and weaving, the energising and attuning of all forms here below to ever greater perfection, to more and more suitable vehicles to enshrine the divine life, in short the whole momentum of evolution is due to them. For the ancient gnosis, these hosts are the essential creative and energising principles between the Highest Spiritual Centre and the lowest material manifestation on this earth, headed by humanity.<sup>20</sup>

Emmanuel Kant, as quoted by H.P.B., assures his readers that communication between humans and celestial beings is possible:

"I confess I am much disposed to assert the existence of Immaterial natures in the world, and to place my own soul in the class of these beings. It will hereafter, I know not where, or when, yet be proved that the human soul stands even in this life in indissoluble connection with all immaterial natures in the spirit-world, that it reciprocally acts upon these and receives impressions from them." ("Traume eines Geistersehers", 1766. In S.D. I. p.133 fn)

The records of the prophets or seers of the Vedas, the Avesta, the Old Testament, the Sumerian and other great religious sacred texts bear full witness to this possibility.

From such esoteric vantage point, it is utterly futile to quarrel as to whether Deity created this world or Its emissaries, Principles, or Gods; or whether the universe was emanated rather than created. Futile to reject the "gods" of antiquity as mere projections of the human mind or personifications of natural phenomena and promulgate the monotheistic all powerful God who is an even mightier projection of the human mind and its own desires and separativeness. The ancient sages were aware of *noumena* of radiant light operating behind physical *phenomena*, forming the Universal Soul, or Mahat; but this did not mask from their penetrating insight the Ineffable Source from which all came and to which all returned, dimly glimpsed in its reflection in those very centres of intelligence, and in that universal law of harmony, (ṛta of the R̥gveda, or Maat of the Egyptian theogony) and in their own spiritual achievement.

## THE SHINING ONES AND THE ORGANISATION OF SPACE

### FOOTNOTES

1. See p.63 and 64 of *The Sacred and the Profane*. Eliade explains how the *sacred* operates a centre in formless chaos and thereby opens a path of communication between one plane and another ; thus an orientation becomes possible. This plainly shows that the *Ancients* knew of the different cosmic levels.
2. Concerning atoms, H.P.B. reminds us that from Anaxagoras to Epicurus, to the Roman Lucretius and finally even to Galileo, all these philosophers believed more or less in animated atoms, not in invisible specks of so called 'brute' matter. Atoms were the garments of souls, hence soul infused (animated) and soul guided, some thinkers even equated the word atom with soul. "No ancient philosopher, not even the Jewish Kabbalists, ever dissociated Spirit from matter, or vice versa. Everything originated in the ONE, and, proceeding from the one, must finally return to the One." (S.D.I.p.568) This is fully implied in the teaching of cyclic evolution whereby all evolving monads, as they are called in *The Secret Doctrine*, emerge from the matrix of space, pass from one kingdom of nature to the next, in cycles, to reach the human kingdom eventually, and after due learning and gathering of experience, pass on to the Dhyān Chohans, or gods of the subtler realms.
3. Concerning the goddess Inanna, the authors of *The Myth of the goddess* remark: "Her title 'Queen of Heaven and Earth' reveals the lineaments of the Neolithic Great Mother whose being was Life-and-Death, and in this role she is reflected in other great goddesses of the Bronze Age- Isis and Cybele- who share her lunar character. For Inanna is, above all, a lunar goddess who gives life as the waxing moon and then withdraws it as the waning moon ... As the holder of the *me*, the Sumerian Tablets of the Law, she incarnates the principle of justice, derived from the idea of the duality of the Lunar power that can balance the

giving of life with the taking away. She embodies the cyclic aspect of time, both as goddess of life-and-death, and as goddess of fertility..." (op.cit. p.101-2).

4. Perhaps the most telling of the texts is the Pyramid Text quoted in ch.3:

"I am the outflow of the Primeval Flood, he who emerged from the waters.  
I am the 'Provider of Attributes' serpent with its many coils,  
I am the *Scribe of the Divine Book* which says what has been and effects  
what is yet to be." (*Pyramid Text* 1146)

- a real complement to R̥gv.I.89.10 and to the doctrine of the *word*. The *Scribe of the Divine Book* as the word that vibrates and fashions throughout space, giving shape and quality to primordial substance, here called Primeval Flood, inscribes in space what is, and what is to be, just as *ākāśa*, cradle of all, contains all seeds and through the word, *akṣara*, records all happenings. The scribe and the serpent of matter are two aspects of manifestation. The Vedic and the Egyptian gnosis in this respect are one.

5. Since *ṛta* is fundamentally the law of adjustment, adjusting the tension of the polar opposites into universal order, it implies the constant restoration of the cosmic equilibrium or harmony of what had strayed too far away. This is Karma; karma is inherent to *ṛta*. (See *Vision of Cosmic Order* p.151ff.)

6. See E. Neumann's *The Great Mother* for his conception of this archetype.

7. M. Eliade in his *The Sacred and the Profane*, mentions how certain North American Indians, for instance the Yuki, use their word for *world* or *earth* for the *year*. (See p.73.) Compare also the Vedic idea that just as these worlds are established on the primeval waters so the year is established on day and night, i.e. the alternance of both, hence movement (Śat.Br.VI.7.1.17.19). In Śat Br.XII.2.3.7 the year is a large bird, its body the *viśuvat* day, its wings the two six months - precursor of Garuda, the vehicle of Viṣṇu, symbolising the great cycle or *mahā kalpa*.

8. Looking at the microcosmic world, one discovers the world of cells: the interlocking of genes (selective, specific) produces cells. At the cellular and sub-cellular level the hidden face of intelligence overshadows the processes of birth, growth, regeneration and decay. Even the latter is not the end of the chain of cause and effect, since even during decay the liberation of energy adheres to particular laws. Cells fit into a pattern with respect to themselves, what they are and what they do, and to their neighbours; in an attack systems operate to repel the attacker in an attempt to produce equilibrium. Cells divide arithmetically, know their work within a system. The process of birth, growth, etc. is not haphazard but one of orderly division, expansion, contraction, exchange of energies, which have ordered progression and continue in an intelligent way, unless man interferes through wrong action!

9. *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*. p.68, 71. For *The Secret Doctrine*: "DARKNESS [to us humans] is the one true actuality, the basis and the root of Light, without which the latter could never manifest itself, not even exist. Light is matter, and DARKNESS pure spirit. Darkness, in its radical, metaphysical basis, is subjective and absolute light; while the latter in all its seeming effulgence and glory, is merely a mass of shadows, as it can never be eternal, and is simply an illusion, or Māyā." (S.D.I .p.70)

Darkness and light in human terms of reference are relative, light in mystical texts referring to that absolute light which for our minds is darkness. So P. Kingsley in the above cited book admits - whilst taking the meaning of light and darkness somewhat lower than H.P.B. does - that

"It is impossible to reach the light at the cost of rejecting darkness. The darkness haunts us; we're chased by our own depths ... That's why Parmenides' journey takes him precisely to the point where all the opposites meet: the point where Day and Night both come out from, the mythical place where earth and heaven have their source. And that's why he describes the gates he comes to as having their threshold in Tartarus but 'reaching up into the heavens' ..." (op. cit. p.70 ff.)

10. According to *The Secret Doctrine*, the moon "...whether male or female, whether Thoth or Minerva, Soma or Ashtōreth, the Moon is the Occult mystery of mysteries, and more a symbol of evil than of good. Her seven phases, (original, esoteric division) are divided into three astronomical phenomena and four purely psychic phases." (S.D. I.p.396-97)

11. The Hermetic wand or caduceus, as may be surmised, has its origin much further back than Greece, for it can be traced to Sumer, to India, and possibly other places that await discovery. Its meaning was esoteric and thus the prerogative of the initiates, the hierophants of the temples. In Egypt, the uraeus on the brow of gods

and pharaohs proclaims this knowledge of the secret fire. Hence H.P.B.'s remark that "the Wisdom-Religion is the inheritance of all the nations the world over ..." (S.D.I. p.xviii)

According to *The Myth of the Goddess*

"Foremost among the magisterial symbols of Inanna's power as Great Mother are the caduceus and the double-headed axe, which as in Crete, symbolized the power to bestow and withdraw life." (op.cit. p.193) In a cylinder seal, c.1850-1700 B.C. Inanna is shown "standing on two lions and holding the caduceus of entwined serpents in her right hand" - the symbol of power and gnosis which reveals the status of the goddess at that time, representing the great cosmic, female power at the root of life. This is undeniable for the entwined serpents around the rod are the image of what the Hindu *Tantras* were to describe and explain - the *susumnā* entwined by its two flows, *idā and piṅgalā*. This caduceus was shared by both mother and son/lover, Dumuzi/Tammuz. See also pp.207-8 on the cup of the Sumerian King Gudea of Lagash, with its caduceus of uniting serpents, symbolizing the secret power and gnosis .

Note that Hermes, the winged bearer of the caduceus, is messenger of the gods; Agni, the sacred fire, "charioteer of the Transcendent", is messenger of the gods to men and vice versa; Thoth, the Egyptian precursor of Hermes, "transmitting wisdom, too secret for profane eyes, to a few initiates", brings conciliation among gods and peace and order among men, is also a messenger or transmitter of divine knowledge. (G. Hart. *Dictionary of Egyptian gods and goddesses*. p.216) The caduceus has far more to it than is generally known and its ancient history is documented.

12. Soma allowed the poets to come into contact with supra-sensory beings and powers, hence enter another dimension of life: "he, thundering, has produced the gods" (IX.42.4) i.e. made their presence manifest, exactly as Agni does (*kṛṇoti devān* I.77.1). As "arouser" "he unseals the intuitive perception of the priest" (IX.95.5b.): "this here when drunk arouses the word,

this has awakened the eager intuitive-insight". (VI.47.3ab)

There are enough hints to show the effect of Soma on the seer-priests: Soma the eye of illumination, the finder of *svar* (*svarvit*; again like Agni); (cf. IX.110.3a & 4b). That Agni has the same effect as Soma only means that the *secret fire* in the human being, aroused to activity through *tapas* which granted the divine vision, was also enhanced in its action by the help of Soma.

The Soma experience of heightened consciousness as described in the Ṛgveda and by H.P.B. contrasts starkly with our latest Western search into the Soma experience as in Wasson's and O'Flaherty's *Soma: Divine Mushroom of immortality*, where nothing better is thought than to degrade the whole process to sheer bestiality. The acme of Western intellectualism cannot soar to "Soma's highest glory in heaven".

13. Gonda cannot "... subscribe to Hillebrandt's theory ... of an original lunar character of Soma, a theory which was without sound reasons upheld by W. Koppers ...", and finds it "on the whole not really acceptable." It is true, he goes on, that "a regular moon cult did not belong to the institutional rites of Vedism and early Hinduism." ("Soma, amṛta and the moon". p.38, 40). Book IX of the Ṛgveda, where most of the Soma hymns are collected, had no real significance for A.B.Keith for whom "the monotony of the ninth book is only equalled by its obscurity in detail ... much of the obscurity hides no real depth of thought but merely puerile fancies" - "the ninth book contains mere nonsense". It is amusing to read that Hillebrandt wished to "save" the "ancient Ṛṣis" of Book IX from the outcome of Keith's "sound principles" of method - to which Keith clung so closely he would not allow any other theory than the one he favoured. (*Vedic Mythology*. p.202). Thus was swept away by Keith, in one ignorant stroke, the whole lore of the Soma ritual, apparently understood in its depth, a few decades before, only by H.P.B.

One should recall, as Gonda remarked, that the Avesta-Hoama (=Soma) cult which is so similar to the Vedic "puts the Indo-Iranian (common Aryan) 'origin' of this cult beyond controversy, but is silent on any identification of the Hoama and the satellite of our planet." ("Soma, amṛta and the moon". p.46

14. For the purifying function of the sacrificial rite see *Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*, p.226-28. Cf. Ṛgv.IX.67.22-27 where Agni and Savitṛ are begged to purify "this prayer" and Ṛgv.I.135.6 where Soma is said to be pounded by those who have freed themselves from taint of sin. Note Ṛgv. IX.83.1 where the seer-poet admits that "the immature, unripened body cannot receive that; only vehicles made ready can"; also Yajurveda S.V.34.55 where the seer asks Soma to "approach the seven ṛṣis" (the seven sense perceptions lodged in the



head) "not to go downward beyond my navel" - a clear enough hint of the dual action of Soma, in a spiritually mature person the consciousness is uplifted, in an ordinary person it is lowered to the animal level.

15. op. cit. p.62-3. Pherecydes, a 6th century B.C. Greek writer, seems to have had close links with eastern Greece ( modern Turkey). His writings of which only fragments have survived, were studied and preserved by the early Pythagoreans, and all attest Oriental influence. In his chapter on "Pherecydes the syncretist" M.L. West writes: "All that is attested for Pherecydes is metempsychosis and a moon that produces ambrosia for the gods. But when we reflect that these doctrines of his were part of a system that has to be explained almost throughout from oriental (and in some cases Indian) thought - the cosmic progenitor Time, the three elements and the five, the nooks, the banishment of a great serpent to the outer waters, the Mansions of Ogenos, the robe of Chthonic, the world tree, and the water of life - only the most obstinate agnostics among us will decline to believe that these features too came from abroad and not from Pherecydes' fantasy." (op.cit. p.68)

16. Concerning the coupling of Vāyu and Indra, Śrī Aurobindo remarks:

"... for man it is the meeting of Life with Mind and the support given by the former to the evolution of the latter which is the important aspect of Vāyu. Therefore we find Indra, Master of Mind, and Vāyu, Master of Life, coupled together and the latter always somewhat dependent on the former ... Indra is the master of mental force, Vāyu of nervous or vital force and their union is necessary for thought and for actions." (*On the Veda*. p.323)

Śrī Aurobindo is here more concerned with Vāyu's relation to humanity than with his cosmic role, hence his evaluation of Indra as the "superior" god, although in the cosmic scale this might not stand. The interlinking of the two gods not only as spiritual entities but as they affect human beings, may strike us as odd, but a close parallel exists between thought and breath which can be evidenced through experiment. Once a certain control over thought is achieved the mind can be brought to a relative stand-still, so does breathing slow down even to a stoppage; these two lines of activity running parallel to each other, are closely connected. The ceasing of breathing affects the current of thinking and vice versa. Vāyu and Indra coming together to the Vedic altar for the offering, could be the mythological way of implying the interlinkedness of their counterpart in the human being. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa goes further and boldly identifies Indra with Vāyu (Śat. Br; 44.13.9), but identifying became in time the norm.

17. "In the Egyptian temples according to Clemens Alexandrinus, an immense curtain separated the tabernacle from the place for the congregation. The Jews had the same. In both, the curtain was drawn over five pillars (the Pentacle) symbolizing our five senses and five Root Races esoterically, while the four colours of the curtain represented the four cardinal points and the four terrestrial elements. The whole was an allegorical symbol..." (S.D.I.p.125)

The significance of number FOUR may belong to the mythopoeic mind but must be based upon a reflection of that doctrine which states that our earth is the fourth globe in our systemic chain of evolution, that it has gone through four main cycles, called "rounds" of evolutionary progress; and that thereby only four basic revelations have been vouchsafed to humanity: thus the FOUR VEDAS, the FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS, the FOUR GOSPELS, the FOUR GOOD DEEDS PERFORMED BY THE DEITY in the Egyptian *Book of the Two Ways* (C.T.VII.462d-464ff.). Also the four yugas or cycles of time within a vaster cycle or manvantara (corresponding to the four ages of the Greeks) - the Hindu computation, according to H.P.B., being closest to the esoteric one ; also the Four bodies of Brahmā, the Four-faced Brahmā, the Four-faced Varuṇa (Ṛgv.V.49.5), the four mind-born sons of Brahmā, the four sons of Horus and the four canopic jars; the four-faced creatures of Ezekiel's vision, the four horned buffalo (Ṛgv.IV.58.2), the four horns of Agni which for Sāyaṇa refer to the Four Vedas; the four measures of Vāc, the four elements as the basis of the world, the four pillars of Hercules, the four phases of the moon which the ṛṣis personified as four goddesses invoked in Ṛgv.II.33.6-8; the four stages and the four ends of human life, the four states of consciousness, etc. All these are not haphazard, but based upon an ancient doctrine.

18. Why was such a doctrine kept so secret? H.P.B. answers: "The danger was this: Doctrines such as the planetary chain, or the seven races, at once give a clue to the sevenfold nature of man, for each principle is correlated to a plane, a planet, and a race, and the human principles are, on every plane, correlated to sevenfold occult forces, those of the higher planes being of tremendous power. So that any septenary

division at once gives a clue to tremendous occult powers, the abuse of which would cause incalculable evil to humanity. A clue which is, perhaps, no clue to the present generation - especially to Westerners, protected as they are by their very blindness and ignorant materialistic disbelief in the occult; but a clue which would, nevertheless, have been very real in the early centuries of the Christian era ..." (S.D.

I.p.xxxv)

19. *Religion of Ancient India*. 1953.p.20. Renou also points out how terms like *manyu*, *māyā*, *yakṣa*, "have two sets of meaning, according to whether they are used of good or evil beings".

20. As previously explained the opposition encountered by the celestial hosts is inherent to the structure of manifestation. Hence opposition, limitation, restriction, etc. (especially where human beings are concerned) have their place in nurturing nature, and society; but on the ascending arc of fuller maturity and responsibility, vaster horizons, wider freedom, etc. should open out. All crystallisation of parts (religious bodies, sects, political parties, etc) now leads to death. The ancients "defined evil as the 'lining' of God or Good; *Daemon est Deus inversus*, being a very old adage. Indeed, evil is but an antagonizing blind force in nature; it is *reaction*, *opposition* and *contrast* - evil for some, good for others. There is no *malum in se* [absolute evil] ... " (S.D.I. p.413)

## CHAPTER 8

### PURUṢA, ARCHETYPE OF CELESTIAL MAN. MAN AS THE PRIMORDIAL SACRIFICE IN THE VEDAS AND THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE KABBALAH

#### PART I ARCHETYPAL MAN IN THE VEDAS

##### INTRODUCTION

We come in this chapter to that most disturbing of Nature's offspring, Man, himself creator and destroyer in his own microcosmic sphere, yet all too often but the scourge of Nature, rather than its co-worker. In *The Secret Doctrine* (Vol. II Anthropogenesis) H.P.B. deals with the esoteric history of our planet, the creation of man and evolution of the human races as recorded in the *Stanzas of Dzyan* and the Commentaries. One may or may not accept these records as authentic descriptions of what happened in those far off days as visioned by past great seers. Nevertheless, in reading these accounts there arises a strange sense of far reaching possibilities of human potencies and destiny, and of the wealth of Nature's endeavours and its evolutionary momentum. That the human mind was capable either of conceiving or of visioning such a vast evolution is in itself extraordinary, vast in that it takes into account not merely the physical aspect which has been called here the tip of the iceberg, but its spiritual counterpart as well as other parallel though subtler streams of evolution of which physical science knows nothing, but repudiates the very idea.

To back her own explanations, comments and comparisons with the ancient Commentaries, H.P.B. falls back on the *Purāṇas* which, for all their purposely garbled narratives and lack of precision, contain numerous hints and details, insights into the hidden corners of human evolution, lacking in other world scriptures. Thus the Old Testament gives a very scanty account of our Earth's beginnings, reducing ages of evolution to a few lines and dwarfing time lapses to a minimum that was to be taken literally by believers and discredited by the literally minded intellectuals. A little thought should have made them realise that the six days of creation are not "human" days but "Deity" days, hence different. Nowadays we may think of them as equivalent to the Days of Brahmā. Naïve literal mindedness seems to have made believers incapable of conceiving that days, or time, would be totally different for a "divine consciousness" than for a human one, even though the "divine consciousness" as envisaged by man, may be only a projection of his own, except on a larger scale.

H.P.B. claims that

"The Esotericism of both [Indian philosophy and religion] is at one with our Secret Doctrine, however much the form may differ and vary" (S.D.II.p.88) .

There is more than enough evidence for this in the Ṛgveda, as already shown, let alone in the whole *śruti*, and it should constantly be kept in mind. Did she invent *The Secret Doctrine* on the basis of the *Purāṇas*? But then, she would have had to fit in the hints scattered in the Ṛgveda and other Vedas to some of which she refers - a mighty task which would involve a complete study, at least of the Ṛgveda, at a time when it was not properly translated, let alone understood. The verses specifically chosen in the previous chapters - *not mentioned by her* - imply a long standing *gnosis* which does prove her point. What about the meeting of fundamental beliefs or visions in so many of the world religions and mythologies also observed by her, but dismissed in her day? The *Purāṇas* contain, within their stories, like the *Brāhmaṇas*, certain till then secret teachings - such as the tale of *Purūravas* receiving the divine fire from the *Gandharvas* - as well as the, till then secret, computations of cycles. Any one can have access to the *Purāṇas* and work something out of them, but as yet the Trans-Himalayan teachings to which H.P.B. refers seem still too well guarded as a whole, for one to make definite conclusions. Only a "corner of the veil has been lifted" admitted H.P.B. and she emphasised that she was only an instrument in giving back a small part of the *gnosis* in a language that could be understood. In using the *Purāṇas* as a basis of comparison for her explanations of unsuspected events, she showed how order could be made out of the *Purāṇic* chaos. Yet despite making use of the *Purāṇas* to substantiate some of her more "outrageous" disclosures, H.P.B. does claim that

"Between the *Vedas* and the *Purāṇas* there is an abyss of which both are the poles, like the seventh

(*ātmic*) and the first or lowest principle (the physical body) in the septenary constitution of man."

(S.D.II.p.527)

The whole subject of man, his creation and earthly evolution, is complex, but it is not the purpose of the present study to stray far in the *Purāṇic* labyrinth and away from specific outlines and hints clearly found in the *Vedas*, whether substantiated or expounded in the *Purāṇas* or not. So a great deal of this esoteric "history", as exemplified in the *Purāṇas* and explained in *The Secret Doctrine*, will be left out, only sufficient details will be outlined to give a picture as a whole.

### SACRIFICE; ITS VARIOUS REPRESENTATIONS

Universal Man, as essential archetype in every human being is, strangely enough, bound up with sacrifice. This was so well understood in the whole of antiquity, prehistoric and historic, that the *ṛṣis* of Āryāvarta conceived sacrifice – so rejected by the modern mind because so alien to our Western hedonistic mentality – as the very basis and framework of cosmos: sacrifice = Cosmic Order, *ṛta*. The supreme sacrifice, the universal self-offering, is that Cosmic Order whose very core is the hearth of that flame-powered contemplation of THAT ONE whose *tapas* projected this universal order, *ṛta*. (Ṛgv.X.129; 190.1) So the first step in this investigation into the mystery of human evolution, as envisaged in the *esoteric tradition*, will be to discover the meaning of sacrifice, its impact on life, the images used to implant its profound significance into human consciousness.

In the very depth of each normal human being scintillates the archetype of universal sacrifice that nothing, not the most lethal or stultifying materialism can ever eradicate, making him or her act, under special conditions, in complete self oblivion. This archetype took shape as a particular image that developed through the ages in other, similar images: the image of the Cosmic Man, whether called *Puruṣa* or *Prajāpati* or Adam Kadmon, or Gautama Sidartha, or Jesus Christ; or the image of the Sacrificial Horse of Vedic times or Bull of the Zoroastrians, or the scapegoat of sacrifices, or even the Tree of Life: an image that was transformed into an idea which materialised into actions and rituals, some horrifying and distorting of a fundamental truth, others grandiose and leading to the greatest acts of human self-sacrifice. The simplest and most obvious proof of this sacrificial streak inherent to human nature is seen in the mother's willingness to sacrifice herself even unto death, for the sake of bringing a child to birth. This has been deemed so utterly natural and taken so much for granted, that it has hardly been thought worth singing about, as great masculine heroic war deeds have been sung throughout the centuries; yet on the one hand it is the eternal self sacrifice of about half humanity; on the other, the same urge drives its other half to self-sacrifice for honour, country, ideal. Unfortunately distortion may here set in as fanaticism. Life out of death, death out of life: the eternal circuit of give and take, and receiving the gift, willing and accepting the Divine Will - a glimpse into the warp and woof of Cosmic Life.

Fundamental to universal rhythm is an inexorable inner and outer motion, mirror of the emergence of seed into form, its various transformations and its withdrawal, its disappearance from form. Similarly breathing *in* gives way to breathing *out*; and so it goes on, and the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad* explains that breath is sacrificed to speech and speech to breath:

"These two are unending immortal oblations; whether waking

or sleeping one is sacrificing continuously." (K.Br.Up.II.5)

This was taken up in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* with the great Horse sacrifice which is the subject of meditation of the whole *Upaniṣad*, and in the *Chāndogya* thus:

"The earth, verily, O Gautama, is a sacrificial fire. In this case the year is the fuel; space the smoke; night the flame; the quarters of heaven the coals; the intermediate quarters of heaven the sparks."

"In this fire the gods offer rain. From this oblation arises food" (Chānd.Up.V.6.1.2) Man is also a *sacrificial fire*, according to that same *Upaniṣad* (V.7.1.2), and woman also in whose fire the gods send the semen and from which oblation arises the embryo (Chānd.Up.V.8.1.2). Thus in eternal succession each form gives way to another form, and each kingdom of nature sacrifices to the next higher one in the ladder of evolution; but the innermost life, the Flame divine, goes on and on through successive forms as vestures donned and cast away in succession. This was the ancient Vedic vision.

This sacrificial aspect was so well understood that we find it cryptically summarised in the following:

"This sacrificial-offering, the hub of the universe" (Rgv. I.164.35b). In only four Sanskrit words (*ayam yajño bhuvanasya nābhiḥ*) the whole significance of the universal sacrifice, the give and take, the eternal circuit of life's activity moving as a wheel around its hub, is encapsulated in the sacrificial ritual performed on the Vedic altar; the latter representing the "hub" of the universe. The next step to this universal vision is expressed in the Brāhmaṇa:

"Man is indeed the first of the sacrificial victims" (Śat.Br.VI.2.1.18)

an echo of another R̥gvedic verse

"The sacrifice is Man, providence, our Father" (X.100.5c) the essential meaning of which verse has been completely misunderstood. This is taken up again in "The sacrifice is man" (*puruṣo vai yajñāḥ*) (Śat.Br.I.3.2.1; cf. Chānd.Up.III.16.1). The same Brāhmaṇa asks: "Which is the better, the man who sacrifices to the Self, or the man who sacrifices to the gods?" to which the answer is given "the man who sacrifices to the Self must be the reply..." (Śat.Br.XI. 2.6.13) - a statement of the highest importance! These verses do not point to the immolation of the physical body, the mere vehicle of the inner man, but to the sacrifice of that "inner man" at both levels: our *emotional-psycho-mental aspect*, which for this cycle forms the human person, and the spiritual aspect behind it all. The emotional-psycho-mental aspect, or personality is that which should be sacrificed to the greater spiritual aspect; it should be brought to the point of being capable of registering the divine will and therefore of "doing" the divine will of the *ātman*. This is the real human sacrifice enshrined in these terse statements distorted by the many. The ṛṣis knew their inner meaning. The proof is in the above quote of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XI. 2.6.13. But there is a further factor: in taking incarnation the *ātman* or spiritual aspect which is called in *The Secret Doctrine* the human monad, also "sacrifices", for it takes on the shackles of earthly garments for the sake of making these garments more and more subtle, thus more fitting vestures for the divine sparks. This is the *esoteric doctrine* not so spelled out but underlying these many statements scattered throughout the *śruti*. The story of Śunaḥśepa, so misunderstood by earlier scholars, is quite an allegory in this respect, showing how human sacrifice was frowned upon, and only the father through greed was capable of accepting to immolate his son, and how the devas intervened to stop the sacrifice, just as the God of Israel, after testing him, intervened to stop Abraham from sacrificing his only son. Both scenes and narratives are highly symbolic of the inner meaning of sacrifice: the offering of the most prized possession in us, which is not the outer body. But to understand this, the image/symbol used has to be material.

The divine life is, in the Vedic vision, viewed as dispersed in the many forms which life constantly builds and discards. It is imaged in the thousand branched tree of life which the R̥gveda, alone among the very ancient texts, sees as rooted in the higher spheres, with its branches trailing downwards to earth (I.24.7c) to take root in ourselves; hence the tree is also the image of man who spans both the higher and the lower, hence the sacrificial post hewn out of the living tree to link heaven and earth, through which post the human offering of Soma and of the poets' best visionary chant rises to heaven on the flames of Agni, but to descend back to earth with the devas' blessing; each descent disperses the divine life, each ascent re-integrates its fragments. It is imaged in the grand figure of Puruṣa/Prajāpati sacrificed that the many may come to existence as separate units to be re-united at the consummation of time in accordance with the grand universal circuit, so beautifully imaged for us in the orbital circuit of the starry galaxies. The tree is the earthly, naturalistic image of Archetypal Man, the latter the human, yet spiritual image, of what puny man can conceive of manifested Deity, at a certain stage of his evolution. Therein lies the intrinsic connection between the Kabbalistic Sefirotic tree outlining Adam Kadmon on the one hand, and the Cosmic Puruṣa, or its counterpart, the sovereign tree of the forest, *vanaspati* (R̥gv.I, 91.6) on the other. The R̥gveda and the Kabbalah grant us two specific views by two different peoples, differing in their outlook, hence cultures and appreciation of a fundamental archetype, yet coming round to the same conclusion. Hence these two aspects of Universal Man will be examined in this chapter.

Within and between Cosmic Puruṣa and Vanaspati, the Soma plant or nectar yielding tree (IX.12.7), lies the inner link of a divine essence or life immolated:

"For Soma is a god, but they do kill him when they press him.

They kill him with that (stone)." (Śat.Br.III. 9.4.17)

In that immolation the plant yields the juice that grants *amṛta*, the ambrosia, and in his immolation Puruṣa gives life to countless creatures born of his being, born to give birth to a whole world:

"For when the gods in the beginning seized (slew) a victim, then as it was drawn upwards,

its sacrificial essence flowed downwards, and from it sprang the tree." (Śat.Br.III.8.2.17)  
This is the tree of life, born of an immolation; the sacrificial post hewn out of the living tree, man's version of the Tree of life and his own created link between higher and lower, immortal and mortal; this is Puruṣa himself, the tree of life and of knowledge born of the eternal sacrifice of the divine life. The sacrificial post or pillar sustaining all things is Soma, lord of the forest, who as the "consumed" merges in Agni's action of the "consumer", both pointing beyond themselves, both pathways to ambrosia.

"In truth, the sacrificer makes himself a ladder and a bridge to reach the celestial world"

(Taitt.S.VI.6.4.2)<sup>1</sup>

for the sacrificial post as a projected image mirrors the human inner ascent – through the sacrificial flame in spiritual travail to the highest. Further,

"The gods scatter the sacrifice by means of the sacrificial post". (Śat.Br.III.2.2.11)  
and man, in gathering the sacrifice, restores it by himself becoming the sacrifice:

"Man is indeed the first of the sacrificial victims" (Śat.Br.VI.2.1.18; cf.I.3.2.1)  
a very ambiguous statement whose esoteric meaning concerns man's *ultimate sacrifice* of his prized egotism or personality, of his *mind-soul* offered in final gift as a footstool to the *ātman* on the threshold of *mokṣa*. The "eternal pilgrim" with all his garnered experience finally fuses with its divine flame-spirit. The real meaning, most difficult for most of us to accept, nevertheless belies all animal or human sacrifices that might at one time have been offered as substitutes in ignorance. One particular prayer openly declares that the true offering, fashioned in the heart, is worth all the cattle. Thus

"Agni to thee we bring with our song this offering shaped in our heart.

Let these be oxen, bulls, cattle to thee" (VI.16.47)

Cosmos is thus seen as impregnated with the spiritual essence of the flame-spirit at its heart, the very essence of the spirit's self sacrifice. Hence the idea of the world's axis, the pillar, post, hewn tree or *skambha* that supports the universe and is the connecting link between the spiritual and the earthly as well as the core of manifested life. This was beautifully expressed in the Skambha hymn of the Atharvaveda:

"Tell me of the Support of the universe; who, the One among the many,  
is he in whom the Lord of life found his prop  
while he upheld all the worlds?

Tell me of the Support of the universe: who, the One among the many,  
is he in whom earth, mid-region and sky  
have had their foundation,  
on whom rest Agni, Candrasmas, Sūrya and Vāta?

Tell me of the Support of the universe, who, the One among many,  
is he, the Being in whom both immortality and death lie in concord,  
in whom are gathered the water-courses as arteries?

Transcendent through *tapas*  
the great Spirit lies in the centre of the world,  
and on the surface of the water;  
and all the Devas attach themselves to him.

So stands the trunk of a tree with branches around it.

Those who know Brahman in Puruṣa  
 know the Being who is supreme;  
 he who knows the Supreme Being  
 and he who knows the Lord of Life (Prajāpati)  
 these know the loftiest Brahman,  
 and thence they know fully the Support of the universe."  
 (Athv.X.7:7,12,15,38,17. A.C.Bose translation)

In this universal ascent and descent, in this upward and downward movement of the divine life, in this gathering and dispersing, pulsates the everlasting rhythm of Cosmic Life, the grand circuit of manifestation, the eternal sacrifice that "effects union and release for our help" (Ṛgv.IX.84.2c) – union as the fruit of Soma's action, release from the shackles of material imprisonment. The images are simple, yet their implications far exceed the average mind's compass.

The horse, to whom two hymns are fully dedicated in the Ṛgveda, and on whom the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad bases its grand meditation, is also the great sacrificial victim, symbolising Cosmic Life. The Vedic seers fused into one image the *world tree*, the *world horse*, the *world flame* and *sacrifice*. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa (I.1.3.9) tells how Agni changed into a horse to dwell within a tree, concealing himself from the devas. He remained in the *aśvattha* tree for a year. Agni, latent in the wood, Agni, spirit of the tree, has no foliage and casts no shadow, and as such fuses into that extraordinary image of the *great, leafless, shadeless steed*, (Ṛgv.X.27.14) vehicle of the Lord who animates all, vehicle of the Transcendent. Compared to a tree whose branches are his blessings to men (VI.13.1), Agni is both the steed as vehicle and the tree as the ramified flame; is both the sacrificial flame and the post linking heaven and earth; is both the fiery essence and the very sap of Soma – sap of the Life divine that sacrifices itself to itself. Hence the enigmatic verse:

"O Agni, sacrifice with thy mouth to thine own body ." (VI.11.2d)

The tree has a dual meaning: as the tree of knowledge without which humanity cannot progress, it is the tree of *real life*; as the tree of life in its material sense, the tree of *saṁsāra*, it is the field of experience for countless souls, but the tree that must eventually be cut down or sacrificed if man wants to reach out to those further spheres far beyond our terrestrial realms. Such is the gist of the eternal gnosis. The cosmic tree of life is meanwhile viewed as the manifestation of the Lord of beings. Thus, in the case of the Scandinavian Cosmic Tree, Yggdrasil – whose three roots harbour the world of those who have passed beyond, called mist-world, the world of the giants who formed our earth out of the remains of the giant Ymir, and the world of humans – the name Yggdrasil meant the "steed of the redoubtable" Odin.

"It is the means or the vehicle by which the All-Father descends

and ascends, transmigrate, makes his varying avatars"<sup>2</sup>

The idea is so close to the Vedic idea as to obviously have emerged from that deeply buried archetype that points to a fundamental truth in Nature, the eternal descent and ascent of the divine life that all lives might exist. Similarly, the *aśvattha* tree has also part of its name meaning horse (*aśva*), the vehicle of the divine. It is also significant that the *aśvattha*, the tree of life and wisdom, in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa legend, grew out of the sacred fire given to Purūravas by the gandharvas and momentarily left behind by him, only to find, on his return, the sacred flame transformed into the tree of knowledge and wisdom, the *aśvattha*.

As I wrote in my *Vision of the Cosmic Order in the Vedas*

"There emerges from these primordial images the great archetype of the tree of life which in giving its own life-sap for the many is constantly dying; a death and a becoming: sacrifice, the law of the universe. In Christian symbolism, the tree becomes the cross of matter upon which is nailed Celestial Man (the Christ). Vanaspati and Puruṣa meet once again in this age-old symbol of the cross of life

and death. " <sup>3</sup>  
H.P.B. points out that:

"The Norse Ask, the Hesiodic Ash-Tree, whence issued the men of the generation of bronze, the Third Root- Race, and the *Tzite* tree of the *Popol-Vuh*, out of which the [Mexican] Quiché *third* race of men was created, are all one... But the Occult reason why the Norse Yggdrasils, the Hindu Aśvattha, the Gogard, the Mazdean tree of life, and the Tibetan Zampun, are one with the Kabbalistic Sephīrōthal Tree, and even with the Holy Tree made by Ahura Mazdāh, and the Tree of Eden – who among the Western scholars can tell?"

To this question H.P.B. adds a footnote to show why she asked it:

"James Darmesteter, the translator of the Vendīdād, speaking of it, says: '*the tree, whatever it is...*'

(S.B.E.IV.p.209.fn.)" (Quoted in S.D.II.p.97).

Such a rather flippant remark relegating the "tree" to unimportance, made H.P.B. note that to certain scholars the image of the tree and its profound significance, was utterly meaningless. Thus indeed was it for A.B. Keith some decades later, who when faced with the fig-tree in paradise under which Yama revelled with those who have passed beyond as recounted in Ṛgv.X.135.1 and Athv.V.4.5, could only comment:

"It is implausible to see any mythological importance in this tree which seems merely the reflex of the tree of the Indian village under which sit the elders." <sup>4</sup>

But in fact the tree, under which Yama the god of death, revels is the tree of knowledge and life, the very tree, or its reflection over which Varuṇa presides (Ṛgv.I.24.7) and very similar to that tree on which sit a mortal and an immortal bird to partake of the sweet fruit in whose inner core dwells the wise herdsman (*gopāḥ...dhīraḥ* I.164.20-21) of the world, a Ṛgvedic verse referred to in many Upaniṣads. Similarly mention of a special tree is made in the Vendīdād:

"Go, O Spitama Zarathustra towards that tree that is beautiful, high-growing and mighty amongst the high-growing trees." (*Vendīdād*. Fargard XIX.2.18.(60) (S.B.E.4.p.20)

For of those sacred trees, whether representing the tree of life or of knowledge of good and evil, or of cosmos or Archetypal Man, H.P.B. writes

"The symbol for Sacred and Secret Knowledge was universally in antiquity a Tree, by which a Scripture or a Record was also meant." (S.D.I.p.128.fn) <sup>5</sup>

"As in the Gogard, among the luxuriant branches of all those mundane trees, the 'Serpent' dwells. But while the Macrocosmic tree is the Serpent of Eternity and of absolute Wisdom itself, those who dwell in the Microcosmic tree are the Serpents of the manifested Wisdom. One is the One and All; the others are its *reflected* parts. The 'tree' is man himself, of course, and the Serpents dwelling in each, the conscious Manas, the connecting link between Spirit and Matter, heaven and earth."

(S.D.II. p.98)

From the tree of life to the pillar of cosmos, to the human being as a tree of life, to Cosmic Man as sacrificial archetype of cosmos embracing all that is and will be, and offering himself constantly that all may be, the steps show how the sages of antiquity envisaged the cosmos and its network of lives, activities and evolution. No one can deny the fact that life is a perpetual giving and taking, forthgoing and withdrawing, that as Śri Aurobindo put it dramatically " 'the eater eating is eaten' is the formula, pregnant and terrible, in which the Upaniṣad sums up this aspect of the universe,"<sup>6</sup> yet an aspect that concerns only the outer form, the habitations of life, whilst the inner hidden impetus of its spiritual momentum goes on unceasing within it all; indeed goes on thanks to the sacrificial streak at the heart of all beings, unconscious though that may be; to find its acme in man's deliberate offering of himself, e.g. in the Buddha's sacrifice of *nirvāṇa*, in Christ's own self sacrifice, both of these for humanity's sake; and finally in archetypal man as the very pillar of all, yet



sacrificed that all may be; reflection of the GREAT SACRIFICE whom H.P.B. beautifully describes as

"...sitting at the threshold of LIGHT, he looks into it from within the circle of Darkness, which he will not cross; nor will he quit his post till the last day of this life-cycle. Why does the solitary Watcher remain at his self-chosen post? Why does he sit by the fountain of primeval Wisdom, of which he drinks no longer, as he has naught to learn which he does not know – aye, neither on this Earth, nor in its heaven? Because the lonely, sore-footed pilgrims, on their way back to their *home* are never sure to the last moment of not losing their way in this limitless desert of illusion and matter called Earth-Life. Because he would fain show the way to that region of freedom and light, from which he is a voluntary exile himself, to every prisoner who has succeeded in liberating himself from the bonds of flesh and illusion. Because, in short, he has sacrificed himself for the sake of mankind, though but a few Elect may profit by the GREAT SACRIFICE." (S.D.I.p.208)

#### PURUṢA, COSMIC MAN, AND THE *PURUṢA SŪKTA* AND WESTERN EXEGESIS

One of the famous hymns of the Ṛgveda called the *puruṣa sūkta* (X.90) wherein Puruṣa, archetypal or cosmic Man is exalted to godhood through his self-sacrifice, a hymn known to all and chanted by most Orthodox Hindus, has remained one of our precious records of the ancient gnosis, *vidyā*, that the Vedas harbour in a more or less veiled way: a gnosis so well concealed in that hymn behind the allegory of the primeval sacrifice and what ensued from it, that its full *spiritual significance* has remained truly hidden and meaningless to Western exegesists. The hymn is set in a cosmic framework with sacrifice as its fundamental thrust, some of whose stanzas contain several layers of meaning and hints as to an esoteric tradition which seems to have been lost to Orthodox Hinduism.

This viewing of the coming into being of the world as a stupendous sacrificial offering wherein Cosmic Man is the actor and the victim - the offerer and the offering - pervades the Vedic *śruti*, though not so clearly in the first 9 books of the Ṛgveda where the hymns just gather momentum towards a final apotheosis of Archetypal Man as the sacrifice. Analogically, each aspect of the ritual represents an aspect of the sacrificed victim, originally *Puruṣa*, developing in the Brāhmaṇas in *Prajāpati*, the Lord of creatures, all the variations underlying the one basic significance: a self immolation that from the One homogeneous Being or Wholeness, the many heterogeneous beings, or separate fragments may be; a transformation from the ONE into the many, from the subjective to the objective, from the infinite to the finite, a *limitation* for further expansion, further experience for all, and thereby a making sacred by the very act of self-offering. The world is thus sanctified, rooted in a holy act of all inclusiveness, mirrored on earth in human moral laws, social statutes, the ritual.<sup>7</sup>

For the *Vedic experience*, as well explained by R. Panikkar,

"Sacrifice is that which preserves the universe in existence, that which gives life and the hope of life.

The universe in its totality does not repose on the shoulders of any extracosmic reality; if it did, it would not be the whole universe, but only an appendix to it. Reality has to include all that of which we can be aware ... The universe does not repose on anything other than itself and its own structure.

This ultimate structure is not to be regarded as 'another' or 'deeper' thing or substance, it is in fact sacrifice, which is, precisely, the *internal dynamism of the universe, universal ṛta, cosmic order itself*.

This order, this sacrifice, obviously cannot be a static result of an already performed action. Sacrifice is the act that makes the universe. It does it, not through an external agent, but by the self-cooperation of the universe itself..."<sup>8</sup>

These are profound thoughts which deserve deep pondering upon, especially in our de-sanctified, demoralised, crumbling society whose foundation bereft of the age-old values can only founder to extinction. Behind these thoughts proclaiming the essential role and message of the Vedic sacrifice, the underlying

homogeneity inwoven within the universal heterogeneity of all things has been completely missed: the solidarity of all celestial members working towards the accomplishment of a divine purpose is reflected in the interlinking of everything. Of this, man as such, knows nothing, but in due course of evolution, will be called upon to join the task. This is hinted at in such verses as the following, already quoted, but which need repeating:

"All gods, one-minded, one intentioned, unerringly proceed  
to the one purposeful accomplishment." (Ṛgv.VI. 9.5)  
"Truth is the foundation that bears the earth;  
By law the sons of the Infinite stand secure." (Ṛgv.X.85.1)  
"Where spiritual and ruling powers move together in unity,  
that world shall I know as holy, where dwell the shining ones  
and Agni-the-flame-divine." (Yjv. 20:25)

This is part of the spiritual message of the Vedas, apparently hardly appreciated.

The word *puruṣa* has been variously derived, though nothing is definitive about these attempts. According to Monier Williams' Dictionary, the word could be derived from *pṛ* and connected with "*puru*" which means "much", whilst *pṛ* is given as meaning to fill, bring up, make full, complete, etc. From this, the inference could easily be made that *Puruṣa*, by his very nature and his sacrificial action, in one profound sense "saves" the many, i.e. gives them conscious existence, a goal to be pursued through existence, to evolve, to perfect the gift of life by their own efforts. But though this fits his character, it may be too early to thus speculate.

W.N. Brown in his well researched study, "The Sources and Nature of *puruṣa* in the *puruṣasūkta* (Ṛgveda 10.91 sic)",<sup>9</sup> has noted all the appearances of the word *puruṣa* and its synonym, *puṃs* as they appear in the Ṛgveda. Apart from its use in the plural in X.165.3 for *men* and in the singular in VII.104.15 for *man*, the word *puruṣa* appears in X.51.8 in a different sense, for it rather means soul or essence of plants, since one cannot translate *puruṣam āusadhīnām* as "man of plants"! This example points to a meaning quite separate from the mere sense of man or male as it is usually translated. In this particular hymn, X.51, Agni is being celebrated, having disappeared and being sought in plants and in the waters and discovered by Yama, and begged to make pathways to the gods. As W.N. Brown remarks

"...the *puruṣa* of the plants is Agni himself who had entered them (X.51.3), now paradoxically demanded by the god... the fact that *puruṣa*, where it has a specialised usage, appears in an Agni context is at least suggestive."<sup>10</sup>

- for it points to the Agni nature of *puruṣa*, and since *puruṣa* does have a spiritual meaning, it hints at the flame-spirit within the human being, as will be shown, but missed by W.N.Brown.

*Puṃs*, another word for man, as shown by W.N. Brown "appears clearly as an epithet of Agni in three cases (Ṛgv.IV.3.10 where he is called "Agni, the bull, the man"; III.29.13 where the ten fingers clasp the "new born *puṃs*, Agni" and VII.6.1 where the poet extols the sovereign of *asura* dominion and manliness (*puṃs*, Agni). *Puṃs* and *puruṣa*, being synonyms, belong as epithets to Agni, concludes W.N. Brown. Both words have as basic to their meaning might, virility, power, all of which bear upon the sovereignty inherent to Agni. In Ṛgv.X.130.2 a hymn concerned with the sacrifice, the man (*puṃs*) is said to stretch out the sacrifice, as though a warp right to the heavenly vault, whilst the gods make of the *sāman* hymns the weaving shuttles. Here man appears in his capacity of performing, or stretching out the sacrifice, even to the higher spheres, hence the duality of meaning, man and spiritual man. By the knowledge of how the primeval sacrifice was performed, how rhythmic chanting affects surroundings and relates to each of the gods, men, our ancestors, were made *ṛṣis*, so we are told. The word used here for men is *manuṣya*, a derivative of *manu*, the thinking being, bringing to mind the question: what is the difference between *manuṣya* or *manu*, and *puruṣa* or *puṃs*? *Manu* seems to have

been restricted to the meaning of the thinking being (from *man* to think) and to those fourteen successive progenitors of the human race, but not to the Heavenly Man or Archetypal Man that stretches the warp of the sacrifice to the dome of heaven. It may be that he who can spiritually stretch out to the heavens must have acquired that gnosis of the inter-relation of devas and humans, of the right intonation/vibration that stirs the devas, etc. hence the significance that makes him more than thinking man, in fact a *ṛṣi*, one who sees beyond human sight. This meaning of *puruṣa* seems to apply to its use in the *puruṣasūkta* and in the Upaniṣads.

In the *puruṣasūkta* we are not told who is Puruṣa, where does he come from, why does he allow himself to be sacrificed by the devas. He just appears, or is just there, on the scene. The hymn begins immediately with extolling his greatness, far pervasiveness, immortality, and goes on to outline his sacrifice and its consequences, creative and cosmic in their far reaching importance. He is "born in the beginning" but to be immolated on the altar of manifestation, like the lamb of Christian Revelation: "the lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev.13.8), strangely reminiscent of Puruṣa's own immolation also at the foundation of the world, implying that the creation or manifestation is a *sacrificial* offering. The eternal archetype of sacrifice, deeply buried in the human psyche, is seen here at work constellating its images, no matter what the conditioning of the various cultures or religions be. But, so it is said, St John was a Kabbalist. Is not Jesus Christ also immolated on the cross of matter for the sake of humanity, to redeem it, but this time, nailed and condemned by humanity itself, and not by the gods or agents of the cosmic order – another facet of that universal archetype. In this respect, H.P.B. comments in connection with the great sacrifice of some of the "Sons of Light" that

"It is closely linked by a direct evolution of Spirit and involution of Matter, with the primeval and great Sacrifice at the foundation of the manifested worlds, the gradual smothering and death of the spiritual in the material... Hence in the Puruṣa Sūkta of the Ṛg-Veda, the mother-fount and source of all subsequent religions, it is stated allegorically that 'the thousand-headed Puruṣa' was slaughtered at the foundation of the world, that from his remains the Universe might arise. This is nothing more or less than the foundation – the seed, truly – of the later many-formed symbol in various religions<sup>11</sup>, including Christianity, of the sacrificial lamb. For it is a play upon the words. 'Aja' (Puruṣa), 'the unborn' or eternal Spirit, means also 'lamb', in Sanskrit. Spirit disappears – dies, metaphorically – the more it gets involved in matter, and hence the sacrifice of the 'unborn', or the 'lamb'." (E.W. p.308)

In the *Manu Smṛti* we are given a clear enough indication of the origin of Puruṣa: thus starting with the Supreme Spirit, eternal, soul of all beings, incomprehensible to all, who, resolving to emanate from his own substance various creatures, first produced the waters in which he deposited his seed which became an effulgent germ as dazzling as the luminary with the thousand rays, within which the Supreme Being took birth from himself, under the form of Brahmā, the ancestor of all beings. We are then told:

1.11. "From the (first) Cause, indistinct, eternal, including in itself Being and no-

Being, came Puruṣa, known in the world by the name of Brahmā."

This equates Puruṣa with Brahmā, the creative Deity, the Demiurge, hence Prajāpati, the Lord of creatures.<sup>12</sup> It shows him as being indeed the first born of the Eternal into non-eternal manifestation, hence subject to the laws of being, to the ebb and flow of the manifest and the unmanifest; and through his fragmentations, as shown in the *puruṣa-sūkta*, becoming Lord of creation, of creatures. Puruṣa, Archetypal Man may have been first conceived before Brahmā or Prajāpati were conceived by sages, but since he was "born in the beginning" (X.90.7) or *first born*, he had to come from somewhere, some supreme Source. Manu's description gives the

highest source for Puruṣa, in keeping with the tenor of the *puruṣasūkta*. Puruṣa, as such, emphasises the sacrificial aspect of creation; Brahmā, the creative aspect, the bursting into seed, into existence, into joy - a different perspective!

The following is a literal translation of the hymn with its extremely simple language; adding a few explanatory comments:

1. "Thousand-headed [was] Puruṣa, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed;  
Having encompassed the earth on all sides, he extended beyond the length of ten fingers.
2. Puruṣa indeed is all this, what has been and what will be, and he is the lord of  
immortality which he transcends (or grows beyond) through (sacrificial) food.  
These first two stanzas are simple enough but already contain difficulties such as "the length of ten fingers" and that description that Puruṣa grows beyond through food, both of which have been interpreted variously. From the Mudgala Upaniṣad (I.1) we learn that the ten fingers refer to an infinite distance.<sup>13</sup> For the second stanza, there may be implied that he grows beyond all this through food, the food is not qualified, but it seems to mean what "fuel" means to us without which nothing can go on; he transcends it all through his *sacrificial offering*.
3. Such is his mightiness and far-more than this is Puruṣa;  
one fourth of him is all beings;  
three fourths of him – his immortality in heaven.
4. With three fourths Puruṣa ascended on high;  
one fourth of him came again into being here;  
thence he strode abroad in all (directions) to what eats and does not eat  
(= the animate and the inanimate)
5. From him Virāj was born, from Virāj Puruṣa.  
He when born reached out beyond the earth  
from behind and also in front."

The first 5 stanzas are, as is easily seen, purely descriptive of Puruṣa's greatness expressed in physical terms of extension and pervasiveness, embracing the whole of manifestation which he nevertheless surpasses since only one quarter of him is in all beings, whilst the other three quarters represent his immortality in the higher spheres. This extension beyond the visible shows the poet's awareness that what we see and touch is only an infinitesimal part of all that there is. Cosmic Man is immediately depicted as towering far above puny man, his representative on earth. He contains not only the whole universe, but the past and the future, a statement reminiscent of Aditi, the divine matrix and mother, also deemed to be "what has been and what will be" (I.89.10). But the hour has now come for disregarding the Great enfolding Mother principle for the emphasis is more and more on the virile male towering above all else and projected as Cosmic Man. But it also implies that each human being, the pale shadow of Cosmic Man, has something far grander than appears in the superficial self: indeed in the human being lies a promise which is portrayed in Cosmic Man, viz. that the future of the human soul "is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit." (*Idyll of the White Lotus*) Furthermore, does one quarter of Puruṣa, coming again here below, mean that in spite of being sacrificed, he lives eternally as he comes back here to be sacrificed once again, for sacrifice goes on unceasingly? A doubt remains as to the prior existence of the animate and the inanimate over which Puruṣa spreads out. They

are supposed to come to existence in consequence of the sacrifice, their coming to manifestation is parallel to the performance of the sacrifice and the spreading out of Puruṣa.

Commenting on the number *four* R. Panikkar reminds us:

"Temporal life is only a quarter of the whole Man. We find here the image of the four quarters of reality, which has had a long history in the cosmological conceptions of Man up to the present day. Four is the terrestrial number par excellence and at the same time expresses the mystery of reality, three quarters of which are immortal, concealed, and unspoiled by the shadow of their own eternal manifestations. On the other hand, nobody can stand for a long time on one single foot, that is, on the external, empirical realm alone..."<sup>14</sup>

This however is always ignored! In any sacred text no number is without significance. We have already noticed number seven which is the number of Nature and Evolution. Number five has not been examined but it too has its own significance, and in the *esoteric tradition* is the number of man, *manu*, the thinker, whose fifth principle is *manas*, mind.

Four, like seven, is one of the fundamental mystical numbers which early man has recognised as of vital importance to the basis of the cosmos, being the material aspect: four is the number of orientation, of establishing an order, a foundation, hence the four directions, or the four quarters of the horizon mark the foundation of a world, of a country, city, house. It has been said that to account for matter four terms are required: sculptor, block, inspiration, statue. Vāc also is said to have four divisions of which humans know only the fourth; so Puruṣa is divided into four quarters of which only one fourth covers all creatures, the one fourth pertaining to the terrestrial realm. This is as much as to admit that man knows only the tip of the iceberg appearing above the surface of the ocean, but too often, in his arrogance, thinks he knows all there is! In this square of matter is glimpsed the vertical line meeting the horizontal line at the centre and forming the cross of manifestation – so suggestively depicted in the two Ṛgvedic images, previously commented upon, of Agni robed in lightning standing erect amid the reclining waves (II.35.9) and also as lightning buried deep in the ocean, lapped by the ever rolling waters (VIII.100.9). Four appears in so many contexts and enumerations (mentioned in ch.7) in the world's scriptures that coincidence is ruled out.<sup>15</sup> *The Secret Doctrine* divides the ages of evolution of our planetary life into seven; of these seven we are in the fourth cycle or round. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* tells the tale of a first Agni, chosen by the gods as highpriest and vanishing; so did the second; so did the third; but the fourth was rediscovered. Does this refer to three preceding ages when Agni was also deemed the highpriest, each disappearing in time; but why do they stop with the fourth? Why are Indra's names said to be four? Thus: "Four are the divine names of the mighty one..." (X.54.4a). Furthermore, since Puruṣa, Cosmic Man, is the pattern of puruṣa, puny man, and since three fourths of Puruṣa are beyond the earthly sphere, it may not be improbable that in these four quarters we have a subtle hint of a fourfold division of the human constitution which was in later times to be adopted in the Rāja Yoga scheme (*viz. sthūlopādhi, sūkṣmopādhi, kāraṇopādhi, ātmā*, of the Taraka Rāja Yoga).

Stanza 5 takes us a stage further, for a process of permutation appears here reminiscent of Aditi and Dakṣa, each one being born from the other (X.72.4d); but in the present hymn the permutation implies a stepping down from a more abstract or spiritual reality, Puruṣa, as Cosmic Man to a more concrete representation: "from him (Puruṣa) Virāj was born, and from Virāj Puruṣa". This is explained by W.N. Brown thus:

"That Puruṣa is both the son and the progenitor of Virāj is not necessarily surprising: as the essence and source of all, the underlying generality, Puruṣa must precede even that out of which he rises in concrete form."<sup>16</sup>

Virāj has many meanings – apart from being a Vedic metre. As an adjective, and literally, it means ruling far and wide, sovereign; as a substantive it is either masculine or feminine according to context. It may refer to

"the first progeny of Brahmā (according to Manu 1.32, etc.) Brahmā having divided his own substance into male and female, produced from the female the male power Virāj, who then produced the first Manu or Manu Svayambhuva who then created the ten Prajāpatis."

(Monier Williams , *A Sanskrit English Dictionary*. p.982)

Considering Virāj<sup>17</sup> appears in Athv.VIII.10 as the Cow of plenty with quite a symbolic part to play, the word could here, in Ṛgv.X.90.5, be considered as feminine. In the Atharvaveda, Virāj, the Cow of plenty, symbolises Nature's bounty, her cycles of activity and rest, fruitfulness and aridity, birth and death.

Athv.VIII.10.1 declares "Virāj verily was this (universe) in the beginning". Puruṣa in the *puruṣasūkta* is also this universe. So one could envisage Virāj as that more manifest aspect of Puruṣa, the *substance* of Nature emerging from Puruṣa, that feminine aspect which in the Atharvaveda, in the guise of a cow, approaches each category of beings, offering herself for milking and being killed in turn by each, and each time coming back to life for further offering of herself – again the circuit of sacrifice. This aspect, clearly emerging from Puruṣa in Ṛgv.X.90.5, would reveal Puruṣa, like Adam-Kadmon of the Kabbalah, as embodying the masculine and the feminine, the latter being more and more played down, its contribution to life minimised in later texts, except in the Sāṃkhya philosophy where *prakṛti*, the essence of matter, is seen as the other polarity of puruṣa, without which he can do nothing.

The second part of the hymn describes the sacrifice and what resulted from it, as the victim is divided into its several parts (st.6-14). Of these 9 stanzas, no.12 is deemed most important from the socio-political aspect. The allegorical significance of the sacrifice comes out clearly in stanza 6 and in most of the following stanzas since, when the gods performed the sacrificial rite with Puruṣa as oblation, "spring" was the melted butter, "summer" its fuel, "autumn" its oblation. Here the difference between the oblation of Puruṣa and that oblation named "autumn" is not clarified, the latter being the ordinary offering, the former the special. The stanzas translated literally, run thus:

6. "When, with Puruṣa as an oblation, the devas performed the sacrifice,

the spring was its melted butter, the summer the fuel and autumn the oblation.

7. That Puruṣa born in the beginning they besprinkled as a sacrifice; with him

the devas sacrificed

and the Sādhyas and those who [were] ṛṣis.

8. From that sacrifice fully offered was collected the clotted butter; this formed the creatures of the air and those belonging to forest and villages.

9. From that sacrifice fully offered, were born hymns and chants; from it were the metres born, from it the sacrificial formula was born.

10. From that [sacrifice] were born horses and those with two rows of teeth;

yea, from that were cows generated; from that were born goats and sheep.

11. When they divided Puruṣa, into how many parts did they arrange him?

What of his mouth, what of his arms, what are his thighs, his feet called?

12. His mouth was the Brahman, his arms were made the warrior; his thighs  
[became] the [common] people; from his feet the Śūdra was born.

13. The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born;

from his mouth Indra

and Agni, from his breath Vāyu was born.

14. From his navel was [made] the mid-region; from his head heaven  
unfolded, from his feet the earth, from his ear the directions.

Thus did they fashion the world.

15. Seven were his enclosing sticks, three times seven the faggots prepared  
when the devas, performing the rite, bound as victim Puruṣa.

16. With the sacrifice the devas sacrificed to the sacrifice [i.e. paid  
worship to Puruṣa as the sacrificed]; such were the primary ordinances.

The mighty Ones attained to heaven where dwell the ancient Sādhyas, and the devas."

That Puruṣa is *born* in the beginning immediately points out that he is not the Ultimate Deity or Universal Unborn, but an emanation, hence born in time to disappear in time. But he is born to be sacrificed, thereby giving rise to a transformation of his own substance into the many, a fragmentation of his homogeneity to a heterogeneity wherein the many beings can have their separate existence. Puruṣa is offered as an oblation by the devas who "stretch out the sacrifice" as the usual technical term has it, and it is the devas, the *sādhyas* and the ṛṣis who perform the task. Here are three types of celestial beings who have reached a relative state of perfection through evolution in previous *kalpas*. Scholars deny that the conception of *kalpas* existed at the time of the Ṛgveda although the words *yathā pūrvam* of Ṛgv.X.190.3 do mean "as before" – or as of old, the world is re-fashioned as before, implying a previous age, a cycle of time.<sup>18</sup> If the doctrines expounded by the ṛṣis in the Upaniṣads and other sacred texts are based on those teachings given out by the original ṛṣis of Āryāvarta, then it follows that the Upaniṣads reflect those original teachings, one of which is the doctrine of *kalpas*, just as another one was the doctrine of *karma* which was not to be expounded in "public" at the time of the early Upaniṣads (Bṛhad.Up. III.2.13); one does find traces of these teachings in the Ṛgveda - and as usual, they are disregarded or just denied. The result is the question asked by W.N. Brown, e.g. concerning Viśvakarman the "All-maker" (Ṛgv.X.82) who is described as having

"celebrated or instructed the sages (ṛṣis) how to celebrate the first sacrifice, which was that of creation (and where, by the way, did these ṛṣis come from – there is no answer in the text)."<sup>19</sup>

The same applies to the devas and other beings in the *puruṣasūkta*. The gods, he points out, "seem to be external to Puruṣa, but where they came from is not indicated in the hymn".<sup>20</sup> Obviously, there was no need for the poets to indicate this as it was clear that they came from a previous age. The Puruṣa's original sacrifice refers to this present world's dispensation, the gods performing the sacrifice belonging to a former age.<sup>21</sup>

Furthermore, there is no hint in the *puruṣasūkta* of any claim made by the gods concerning their due, viz. "the oblation which will allow them to survive", as J. Varenne concludes in his comments on the *sūkta*,

a rather cynical remark <sup>22</sup>, missing out completely on the fundamental spiritual message of the sacrifice and the profound significance of *ṛta*. Such an attitude of *due*, typical of our Western mentality, has no room or meaning in the *ṛta*, or among the Ṛgvedic devas of whom many descriptive verses have been quoted and who differ fundamentally from the later Greco-Roman gods and indeed from our own present mentality. This question of the gods' action and their supposed claim and its survival<sup>23</sup> purpose can be viewed under its two main aspects: the gods' activity in the *ṛta*; and the *yajñā* as an intimate part of the *ṛta*:

a) The devas in the Ṛgveda, whether they be the great asuras such as Agni, Brahmaṇaspati, Dyaus, Savitr, Varuṇa, etc., or specifically the Ādityas, or the Vasus, or the Viśvedevaḥ, are born in the Cosmic Order (*ṛtāja*), are "law-abiding, born in law, sublime fosterers of law" (VII.66.13ab), they rule in accordance with the *ṛta* (V.63.7c), have grown mighty through the *ṛta* (VII.60.5cd), serve the *ṛta* (V.68.4). Subservient to the *ṛta*, the living embodiments of the *ṛta*, they can only act in accordance with it. Their "surviving" is due to their inherent stand in *ṛta*, not because of any human "due" to them. Such is the original conception of their gods by the ṛṣis, before the slow taking over by those whose minds failed in reaching the higher spheres, already observable in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* where the gods start reflecting human frailty.

b) The sacrifice, or *yajñā*, was conceived as a mirror of the cosmic process, as the human expression of the law and order, visioned by the ṛṣis as *ṛta*, in which the offering of the divine essence in sacrifice that all may live, is itself a supreme act of creation, a making sacred of every creation. To the eternal circuit of giving and taking, of dispersing and uniting, the very law of becoming, all creatures including the devas are willy nilly subservient. That which is taken up by the spiritual powers in one form is returned in another: the eternal flow of life seems to enter into dissolution but to reappear in another form. As St Paul pertinently observed: "that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die." (1.Cor.15.36). The gods perform the sacrifice because it is in their nature to act in accordance with the *ṛta* and *ṛta* is fundamentally equivalent to *yajñā*.

"Vast truth, mighty order, consecration, contemplative exertion (*tapas*), invocation (brahman), sacrificial offering (*yajñā*), these uphold the earth." (Athv.XII.1.1)

The Cosmic Harmony is, as it were, the mighty sacrificial hymn sung by the devas and offered up (to the Unborn) by the all. So the "devas revel in the sacred-song of *ṛta*." (Ṛgv.I.147.1d). These devas are not yet degraded, by the human mind, to the level of human perversity and cynicism. The later development all too visible in the Brāhmaṇas should not be tacked on to the previous condition as appears in the Ṛgveda. This is too often done by Western scholars (cf. Kuiper and the asuras) and by those Hindus who generally have little knowledge of the Ṛgveda and follow Western opinions. One should also be aware that celestial beings, unlike human beings, have been observed by seers to be devoid of those two specifically human attributes, *personality* and *emotional nature*, hence cannot fall into the trap of jealousy, envy, quarrellings, or any perversion, hence their abiding in the *ṛta*. Such "vices" are *given* to them by human fancy which cannot get out of its own conditioning. The dramatic difference between the ṛṣis' attitude and that of the Brāhmaṇas' redactors, is on the one hand, one of seership and communion at a high level, (recall Ṛgv.I.109.7) and on the other, one of transmitting the *śruti* with a good deal of "accretions". On this subject of celestial beings, hardly or never taken into consideration, H.P.B. remarks:

"Individuality is the characteristic of their respective hierarchies, not of their units; and these characteristics vary only with the degree of the plane to which those hierarchies belong: the nearer to



the region of Homogeneity and the One Divine, the purer and the less accentuated is that individuality

in the Hierarchy." (S.D. I. p.275)

The closer the oneness the less the separative attributes. The Ṛgvedic devas can be thought of as "surviving" rather in terms of their inherent being in the ṛta which the sacrificial offering was deemed to enhance. Observe that man too cannot survive except he obeys the dictates of Nature, which is part of the Cosmic Order as witness the balance of Nature which can be impaired only at grievous risks. To pollute Nature on a world-wide scale as is now occurring, worst of all when it is for the mere gain of the few at the expense of the many's misery, is to destroy the very protections Nature gives man. This can only bring him disaster.

A glimpse of one meaning of the original sacrifice of Puruṣa is caught in this exposition which I explained in *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*.

"This transformation of the primeval *puruṣa*, this 'birth' into more and more restricting conditions forming the various levels of the ladder of evolution, is itself the perpetual sacrifice that keeps the universe going. It indirectly implies that the law of change, in the conception of the ṛṣis,

becomes

equivalent to the eternal sacrificial offering of the *puruṣa* by means of which the universe evolves."<sup>24</sup>

Every thing, whether animate – animal, human being- or inanimate, or even chants, metres, etc. every single thing known to the ṛṣis in our universe, is thought of in terms of being born as a result of the sacrifice of Puruṣa. But there seems to be something more to the allegory of, e.g. the birth of fowls of the air (st.8) or mammals from Puruṣa's body (st.10). Strangely enough – or is it really strange? – there seems to be here a reminiscence of an old esoteric tradition, expounded in *The Secret Doctrine*: at one stage of evolution, in this fourth round of the *kalpa*, a *kalpa* different from the previous three, the forms of animals developed from the "cast off types" of human races that had evolved in a previous round or cycle. This means that "from the residue of the substance" of men, evolved forms of animals (S.D.II.p.186-7; 263), man being the prototype to which Nature aspires on this planet, and as prototype, in this one particular cycle, appeared first on the scene, though not in a physical form, but became the model for the kingdom just below the human. The Kabbalistic axiom "Man becomes a stone, a plant, an animal, a man, a spirit" holds good for the whole duration of evolution, on which is grafted so to speak a spiritual evolution, the descent of the spirit or monad into the lower spheres, finally to assume more and more control in the physical vehicles offered by humanity. This is of course a vast subject, not touched upon in the *puruṣasūkta*, except for that one seeming reminiscence of the human prototype from which the higher animal forms were evolved in this particular round. But many hints can be found in the garbled accounts of the Purāṇas.

Stanza 11 now starts changing the tone of the hymn for it asks certain questions which will lead to an admittance of a meaningful fragmentation of the victim, and a revelation of what seems like new values.

Western exegesists stand at the opposite end to the esoteric approach; or, some might find, they complement each other. This subject will be treated more fully in ch.10. Readers can have access to any number of analyses of the hymn in periodical articles produced during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The general scholarly view on the *puruṣasūkta* is taken from a purely intellectual standpoint – especially socio-political, grammatical

and historic. Apart from R. Pannikar's exegesis, there is very little recognition given to a spiritual significance underlying the hymn. No wonder, as its theme of sacrifice is totally alien to the Western mind which distorts and derides it, and there is no inkling among Western scholars of an esoteric tradition behind the hymn. Objective rationalism that recognises nothing other than its own rational rules, whilst necessary for a clear cut superficial assessment of texts, cannot probe the ancient thought in depth through the sheer limitations of its own structures. Only a deeper insight into the workings of the human psyche and its spiritual aspirations and needs can bring out the hidden meaning of *sacred texts*.

Towards the elucidation of the present text, certain outstanding elements in the analysis of two different scholars will here be taken up as they show how far they may lead us to a fair assessment of the *puruṣasūkta*, leaving out of consideration its deeper significance, which will then be taken up for an esoteric examination.

P. Mus, in his brilliant analysis covering both his articles – "Où finit Puruṣa?" and "Du nouveau sur Ṛgveda 10.90?"<sup>25</sup> – emphasises the turning point in Vedic history marked by the hymn, primarily through its three new "terms" which for him have little to do with the old religious, magical or even sacrificial *values*, but really with sociological norms. One of his key statements bears upon the thrust of his whole analysis: "There could hardly have been anything else in question than an intellectual construction speaking through images rather than concepts..."<sup>26</sup> This really sums up P. Mus's evaluation of the hymn. His attention is arrested especially on stanza 12, only one stanza out of 16, where for him the essential of the new contribution is found, with three new terms: *rājanya*, *vaiśya*, *sūdra*, and the four classes mentioned for the first time, pointing to the socio-political Aryan establishment in process of transition. The assignment of each of the four classes to a specific part of the body of Cosmic Man in stanza 12 is viewed as the Brahmaṇa's surest way of anchoring in the framework of the established sacrificial ritual of Puruṣa the relatively new social order with its ideology of four classes, the Brahmaṇa still at the head as being the mouth, hence the creative word, the mouthpiece, the teaching aspect – the highest authority; the governing class or *rājanya* being his arms; the bulk of the peasants and tradesmen or *vaiśya* being his thighs; the *sūdra* or servants right at the bottom, born from his feet, but debarred from participating in the ritual and later even from entering temples, even though the Upaniṣads proclaimed the *ātman* as present in all beings. P. Mus thus sees in the hymn, to use some of his own expressions, the necessity to *ratify juridically*, within the Ṛgvedic hymnal collection, a *charter* of the Aryan tribes, thereby sanctifying within the charter framework, the privileges and duties enjoined on the new society, and heralding the values of Hinduism. The very future of the Hindu socio-political system is thus contained in a single stanza, giving to the hymn its far-reaching importance. All this is obviously very valid so far as it goes and evinces a greater insight than that which dismissed the hymn as "a wild explosion of primitive superstition" or Geldner's flippant opinion that the hymn was "without any real depth of thought", or Keith's usual arrogant dismissal of anything he could not understand! But the spiritual significance is once again totally missed.

The *puruṣasūkta* is far more than just a socio-political charter prophetic of the coming Hindu order. P. Mus's analysis does go slightly further than a mere consideration of certain facts as he understood them in the hymn; for he concedes that W.N. Brown<sup>27</sup> (the second scholar's exegesis to be examined here) has made valuable contributions to the understanding of Puruṣa's nature.

W.N. Brown indeed gathered some very important elements that do offer a core of insights into the meaning of Puruṣa, but he stopped short at the *mere enumeration* (and Mus could draw no conclusions). Thus :  
 "...a close examination of the hymn shows that it contains a number of lexical and mythological integers drawn from the sphere of the related deities Agni, Sūrya, and Viṣṇu, and it seems probable, therefore, that Puruṣa has his chief importance as a blend of these derivative elements, which are treated with a rudimentary personification... and... posited as the substance offered at the primal cosmological sacrifice."<sup>28</sup>

Puruṣa's rising upwards and spreading out in all directions is indeed expressed in terms typical of first, two deities, Sūrya and Viṣṇu. Those particular *integers* use certain verbal roots concerned with *rising, moving up*, indicating that "we are clearly faced with an idea drawn from the milieu of Sūrya",<sup>29</sup> or in the case of the verb *vi kram*, "to stride widely" with an expression typical of Viṣṇu. The further epithet of *tripad*, literally meaning three footed, is also specific to Viṣṇu, who with three steps encompassed the universe. In the context of the hymn, the word has to be translated as three fourths or three quarters which represent the immortal spheres of Puruṣa, whilst the one remaining quarter covers all beings here below. The further epithets of "thousand-eyed" and "thousand-footed" are, in the first instance, as W.N. Brown words it, at least "suggestive of Agni" – (Agni is thousand-eyed I.79.12) – and in the second, of Sūrya, all of which point to Puruṣa's far *pervasiveness* equal to that of the three deities, Agni- Sūrya-Viṣṇu. Finally, Puruṣa is called "lord of immortality" the word *amṛtatvā* appearing "regularly in the RV in an Agni, or Savitṛ context".<sup>30</sup> Agni is indeed the custodian and bestower of immortality (I.31.7; VI.7.4; VII.4.6). The gods made Agni the very centre of immortality (III.17.4) and for these Savitṛ generates the highest share, viz. immortality (IV.54.2). These are the findings of W.N. Brown which shall be examined more in depth further on.

For P. Mus, looking from an outer, objective viewpoint, without giving any thought to the possibility of an inner standpoint, that is, the inner correlations and their implications, a supposed link between these three gods and Puruṣa can only show a ".mythological *patchwork*", mere indirect allusions to gods through whom no longer transpires "...what gave their grandeur to the older Ṛgvedic texts: the image of a divine epic-poem",<sup>31</sup> an epic no longer retrievable through such a patchwork. This may be so for the intellect, but there does exist another kind of standpoint that observes the fundamental aspects of the three gods in their inner, organic merging, out of which emerges the outline and action of a grand cosmic figure, and also the sketch of a different epic vision. For, both P. Mus and W.N. Brown miss out on the fundamental trait of the three gods: light-flame-power. For P. Mus, the mythology of the *puruṣasūkta* "...still supplies a background and even a language. But it is rehashing, whereas sociology is constructive".<sup>32</sup> Sociology indeed builds a concrete picture of human society to which the intellect responds more readily than to mythology, the repository of human cosmic sentiency. It appears far more important, whereas the cosmic vastness of the image evoked in the *puruṣasūkta* with its sacrifice of Archetypal Man performed by celestial entities, and its far reaching implications, finds little response in our dessicated minds. It is too archaic; not earthy, not practical enough.

But P. Mus does find something of a puzzle in the hymn indicating in his mind some inkling of a deeper meaning. This makes him ask a pertinent question - important in the rationale of his exposition- but which he can only leave without answer, for the real answer cannot enter his logic:

"...if, in the language in which Ṛgv.X.90 is expressed, Puruṣa is indeed a collection of features

borrowed from Agni, Sūrya and Viṣṇu, we are still not told *why the synthesis*. To what end have the poets sought out these features – in short rather ill-assorted – in three well known mythological cycles? Did they just want to add at the tail-end of the Ṛk Samhitā, an original, supplementary personification, and a ‘rather shadowy’ one in the opinion of W.N. Brown himself, a personification destined, besides, at this level, to remain anonymous: ‘the Man’?”<sup>33</sup>

### ESOTERIC EXEGESIS

An enquiry into the inner dimensions of the images and the ideas behind them, dimensions which, in these religio-mystical hymns, constitute the key to revealing the real meaning, would give an answer to this question which Western exegesists can only posit but to which they are incapable of finding the answer.

Thus, to take up the "puzzle" concerning the intrusion of the three gods through the rather unobtrusive "lexical integers" used by the poet, there is no real "borrowing" from the gods supposedly "ill-assorted" with Puruṣa; no wish to add to the Ṛgvedic already vast pantheon and cosmic vision a supplementary personification which is deemed rather shadowy. These are intellectual, analytical views that completely fail to hit the mark of the mystical meaning underlying the narrative, fail to realise that these qualifications are inherent to the nature of puruṣa and not in the least ill-assorted! "The Man" is archetypal.

It is certain that Agni, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, in their solar aspects and all pervasiveness, are permutations of each other, differing only in their outer appearance and their tasks, but forming, in an inner dimension, a *flame-power* of considerable compass and supreme importance to the working of the cosmos, a power which Western exegesis seems to constantly ignore, a power whose wholeness is obscured, for the analytical mind, by its differentiated manifestations and activities. Thus Ṛgvedic Viṣṇu, as the *wide-strider*, is one aspect of Sūrya who himself is the *traverser* of the heavenly expanses as well as the *solar presentation* of Agni, who himself is the *very essence* of the *hidden flame-power* that confers intelligence on human beings, that pervades all, secretly rules the cosmos and harbours in his very core the secret of immortality. Wide-encompassing Viṣṇu, but also Agni pervading all, hold in their innermost centre or highest step (both being equivalent) the gift of immortality which means bliss, or the fountain-spring of honey its equivalent; in the case of Sūrya, he being the *ātman* of what moves and moves not (I.115.1) is the very light and insight of the gods and of men, the "most excellent light" (I.50.10) that illumines all, both physically and spiritually. These three gods are three grades of manifestation of one essence and one power. All this was discussed in chapters 4 and 6.

Agni's activity (as set out in Ch.4, pt.3) spans the three domains of Vedic cosmogony (Ṛgv.VI.12.2) just as does Viṣṇu's, as the wide-pacer with his three steps, just as does the sun Sūrya, the "traverser" also of vast space. But such threefold division, already a development from the twofold one (heaven and earth) suffers a further division, for Agni "circumscribes seven stations"<sup>34</sup> which link up with the "sevenfold foundation of the ocean" of space (VIII.40.5); like Viṣṇu striding over "the seven regions" of the universe (I.22.16), Agni ranges over seven domains of space (IV.7.5), thereby manifesting on every rung of the ladder of life. That epithets or verbal forms belonging to these gods should be used to describe the thousand-eyed, thousand-footed Puruṣa who is the lord of immortality, prove the fundamental *inner link* of Puruṣa with what these gods express: the *Flame-power* at the heart of life, of the cosmos, of beings, the all pervading, sustaining and finally destroying

power; an inner link spelled out in numberless verses, yet unnoticed by scholars.

Furthermore, that Puruṣa is "Lord of immortality" beyond which he grows through food, transcending this world through the oblation offered as described in stanza 2, does indicate, in W.N. Brown's words, "more positively that we are in an Agni milieu",<sup>35</sup> quite so; but its primary importance reminds us that it is the eternal exchange of one energy for another that makes the universe move on, evolve, and that *Agni is at the centre of this movement*. To be "lord of immortality" and to be sacrificed, fragmented into so many parts, may appear as a puzzling contradiction. True, Puruṣa transcends his apparent mortality through the eternal burning of the sacrificial offering of himself, an allegorical or mystical way of referring to his transcendence of this world through his own offered oblation. There is no real contradiction, but different levels of being encapsulated in very few words. Immortality is not necessarily the indefinite continuation of physical life as usually interpreted and as some other Ṛgvedic verses may lend credence to such a view: but the entering into a dimension of being where the physical limitations have disappeared, which disappearance brings a sense of complete freedom and bliss. This state the poets called the domain of the immortals, of the "shining ones", the realm of light, of wide spaces, freedom, where our space-time-consciousness is transcended - meaningless to the logical brain :

"We have drunk Soma; we have become immortal;  
we have gone to the light; we have found the gods." (VIII.48.3ab)

Soma is born:

"to give glory and vigour to the singers (who) donning (his) glory  
have attained immortality." (IX.94.4bc)

Such declarations have nothing to do with any span of physical life, but refer to a state of ecstasy. But what is the fundamental meaning? Just as the heat of the flame is the transformative agent which brings to maturity what it heats, only to reduce the outer rind to ashes once completion has been achieved, so the spiritual principle in the human being, like its outer image the flame, is the activator in the transmutation process which brings the human to relative maturity and perfection but to burn up the vehicle once its usefulness is over.<sup>36</sup> That Puruṣa is lord of immortality intensifies the reminder that the *Flame* divine is embodied in Archetypal or Cosmic Man, that which "calls all generations of humans to immortality" and that which is, in man, the promise of future achievement.

Can we really judge the meaning and nature of Puruṣa on epithets used for Puruṣa but found almost exclusively in the contexts of the three gods discussed above, epithets which, in the views of scholars, appear as having little to do with the main features of Puruṣa? It is just these rather unobtrusive verbal forms that make one detect a hidden connection with Puruṣa, revealing thereby something of his *inner nature* that centres around *flame-power* - Agni-Sūrya-Viṣṇu. To translate Puruṣa as "man" or "person", detracts from his essential significance out of all proportion to the "mask" put on, or *persona*, which is but the limitation of a vehicle, and once again serves but to secularise the meaning of sacred texts and reveal our complete ignorance of spiritual meaning. Because Puruṣa appears in human form, the limitation is fully implied, a recognition of the human person, and its place in the Cosmic drama. The vocabulary that describes the transcendence of Puruṣa, his pervasiveness, and that implied inner burning flame that makes him immortal, all this points to a *vital inner connection with these three particular gods* fully suggestive of the hidden significance of Puruṣa: *embodied Flame- divine*. This seems to have been so obvious to the seers of the Maitri Upaniṣad who pertinently

summed up Puruṣa thus: "what is puruṣa that is Agni Vaiśvānara" (Maitri Up.II.6). Here again, in *puruṣa* with his Agni-Sūrya-Viṣṇu inner significance and the Maitri Upaniṣad summing up, we have a full denial of W.N. Brown's dismissal of any mystical traits in the Ṛgveda. On the whole, just by using words that pertain to the solar-powered gods in their essential all pervasive flame nature, the Vedic poet reveals *puruṣa* in that light that transcends the "person", the "human" and the mere phenomenal, and yet as Archetypal Man subtly acknowledges the person, the human, the mere phenomenal. Therein lies the grandeur of the picture evoked.

One may well wonder that since "all sacrifices are Agni, since all sacrifices are performed in him" (Śat.Br.IV.5.1.13), and since Agni is lord of immortality, ruler of thought, since Agni is seer-will or mental power in the human being, why was there a need to conceive this all pervading flame-power, this *ātman* of the moving and the unmoving, already divined in Agni and Sūrya, in terms of Cosmic Man? Or in terms of the Lord of beings, Prajāpati, whose name takes over in the later *śruti*? It seems that in viewing this spiritual principle descending, so to speak, through the sevenfold foundations of cosmic space, the human mind with its strong anthropomorphising tendency could not help paint it in the figure of Man. The Flame divine in becoming manifest assumes, or is visioned as assuming a human form, becomes embodied flame, a form that draws Archetypal Man much closer to the human understanding than the *spiritual principle* he proclaims even if imaged as flame. There is in the *puruṣasūkta* a definite shift in the viewing of the Flame divine, a new approach; from the primordial vision of a Flame perpetually burning unconsumed, in the depths of the celestial spheres, as in the exaltation of sacrificing that manifestation might be, as in the very core of the human being, to a more "personalised" vision of it as Archetypal Man - a model for man: embodied Flame limited by vehicles of manifestation heralds the human person. Puruṣa now recognised as himself the willing sacrificial victim born to be sacrificed, is now the torch-bearer within the manifested world, the revealer of that very Flame at the heart of our being as of the cosmos, the Universal Flame-Power, Deity; the everlasting consuming of the everlasting Unconsumed. Representing the embodiment of the flame-spirit, Puruṣa had perforce to be described in terms that belong to Agni-Sūrya-Viṣṇu, and this, to the outside viewer may appear as a synthesis. The latter could not have been premeditated from the very fact of the inner meaning of Puruṣa to the ṛṣis, but would have occurred spontaneously as any intuitive insight does, hinting at a recognition of that fundamental esoteric tenet that Man in his *essential being* embraces not only all the divine attributes *in potentia* – however little, in the present age, he may recognise or use them – but the whole universe, as indeed is told in the Upaniṣads, for he is the microcosm of the macrocosm, one of the basic tenets in the ancient gnosis.

This esoteric insight, part of an age-old doctrine which pervades the Indian *śruti* perhaps more than any other world scripture, comes out again, however differently presented, in the figure of the Christ nailed on the cross, the son of Man and the son of God. Have we ever thought of the profound significance of the *son of Man* and the *son of God*, of the Christian scriptures, that link between the spiritual and the earthly? Also echoed much earlier in the Orphic dictum: "I am a child of Earth and Starry Heaven, but my race is of Heaven alone".

W.N. Brown's conclusion, in one respect unbeknown to himself, joins rank with the esoteric approach:

*"Puruṣa is both the essence of creatures and also the inclusive principle, the first principle, the ruler, the immortal, the eternal. He is neither Agni, Sūrya, nor Viṣṇu alone, nor is he a combination of the three. He is a combination of characteristics derived from them, fused in a*

rather shadowy way in a new unity, with especial reference to the sun. He does not, as far as I can see, draw his importance from any relationship with the Teutonic world-giant or Ur-mensch, either genetically or ideologically; he is most significantly a secondary derivation from notions established antecedently in the RV. The authors of our hymn no more thought of the world as a human being than did the composers of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad think of it as the sacrificial horse... *The emphasis in the hymn is not on the man-like nature of Puruṣa, but on his qualities of universality and his functioning as the SACRIFICE, which last is of predominant importance.*"<sup>37</sup>

The italics, my own, show the very pertinent remarks' meeting-point with the esoteric doctrine. But there seems to be no inkling into the meaning of sacrifice and Puruṣa's vital participation as of the "the lamb immolated from the foundation of the world". (Rev.13.8) One may add that the *puruṣasūkta* is prophetic of the exalting of puny man as an expression of Cosmic Man, and in the Hindu social order especially man as the Brahman.

There is in the immolation of Puruṣa another hidden aspect of the esoteric wisdom. The gods or celestial beings that perform the sacrifice are not called upon to sacrifice themselves in the sense that Puruṣa is – seemingly obeying a law inherent to his being. In one specific sense, Puruṣa symbolises that stream of divine life that descends into the densest aspect of matter, right down to the mineral kingdom, to ascend back through the plant, animal and human kingdoms and further to the celestial realms beyond, whence there can be no return here except as celestial helpers of evolution. Hence the gods, having passed beyond this phase of evolution are not called upon to be sacrificed, but Puruṣa, representing that flame-spirit due to animate creation, is thus called upon to descend into densest matter, even at the risk of being smothered; yet by doing so to spark all forms, and in humanity to light the torch of knowledge and understanding, and lead it to its full flowering: for only flame can kindle all things, only flame can light the mind of man, only flame can fire him on to the pinnacle of achievement and self-sacrifice. Such is the spiritual significance of Puruṣa whose immolation and action, as outlined in the *puruṣasūkta*, was originally dismissed as primitive superstition! Whereas it brought down to our human level of understanding the mystery and the gnosis of the Flame divine which the older texts had left in its pure state, even if differentiated into specific aspects by the human mind; had left garbed in that awesome creative and destructive power which they saw at the heart of all things, "glowing with hell-like flame, like everlasting Will-Power" (Ṛgv.I.66.5); lying within the earth and in water and stone and plants, and cattle and horses and deep within men (Athv.XII.1.19); seated within rivers or streams of consciousness, of inspiration, intuition, insight; housed in every human tabernacle, every human heart.

As presented in the *puruṣasūkta* this flame divine without which no existence could be, unobtrusively but surely emerges as Archetypal Man, the pattern and pinnacle of achievement to whom puny man may look up and from whom he may find comfort and at the same time may meet his greatest challenge. As embodied Flame Puruṣa becomes the Great Sacrifice, symbol to the mystical vision, of the self-offering of the fragmented Divine Life to the Divine Life in its wholeness. One may just wonder whether this archetype of self-sacrifice of Cosmic Man did not also touch the Greek mind in its very depth, to produce the grand figure of Prometheus with his gift of fire and his eternal retributive suffering for the sake of enlightening mankind, just as the Man on the cross was said to be sacrificed for the sake of redeeming humanity.

## SIMILARITIES, CORRESPONDENCES AND PARALLELISMS

Similarities, correspondences and parallelisms abound in variants of the *puruṣasūkta* found in different parts of the world. But before taking a few of these up to examine the last four stanzas of the hymn, one particular parallelism should be looked at. This is the *secret fire* as seen in our disruptive 20<sup>th</sup> century, a view which is fundamentally similar though experienced differently and worded scientifically. The new perception is connected with the atom and its power and thereby parallels the ancient knowledge of the flame-power as present everywhere, as playing its part throughout cosmos, with the difference that this presence, in the ancient texts, refers to all levels of manifestation, the subtler ones as well as the physical ones, and is couched in poetic images with their visionary insights difficult for the modern mind to grasp, but with no detailed explanations.

We all know now that the particles of the atom when fissioned released potential energy; this release, in a controlled state, leads to the gift of electricity with its many uses; in an uncontrolled state it produces the destructive atom bomb with its appalling ravages; in both states the radio-active material *burns*. The atom then is a storehouse of immense energy and may be considered, poetically, a potential *pillar of fire*. When it is split by fission it produces shortwave radiations, the most dangerous for biological life being the x-rays and the gamma rays. Gamma radiations are caused by the high velocity of the particles involved and weight; the particles penetrating and being absorbed by, for instance, the human body, cause destruction to the cells by *burning*. This is parallel to taking light particles marching out of step, and making them march in step as in laser technology, thereby producing a powerful instrument for better or worse, for healing or destroying. The basis of the universe at the physical level, is the atom with its infinitesimal particles at the core of which is that *pillar of fire* of which we know not whence it comes nor whither it goes, to what mysterious consummation it is heading, yet it is the *support* of the universe and its destructor: the mystery of mysteries.

"A mighty wonder in the midst of creation  
moves, thanks to *tapas*, on the water's surface.  
To him whatever gods there are adhere  
Like branches of a tree around the trunk.

...Tell me of that support – who may he be?

In him exist no darkness, no evil.  
In him are all the lights, including the three  
that are in the Lord of Life. The one who knows  
the Reed of gold standing up in the water  
is truly the mysterious Lord of Life." (Athv.X.7.38,40-1)<sup>38</sup>

We have seen that underlying the general presentation of Puruṣa is an esoteric doctrine which has so far not been detected. However, in "A Note on the Old Russian Variant of the Puruṣasūkta"<sup>39</sup> St Schayer draws attention to the "conformity in the details" of certain correspondences in ideas (stanzas 13 and 14) with passages from the *Dove Book*, originally entitled "The Book of Profound Mysteries".

"This was the designation of a category of apocryphal works which were current in Russia in the Middle Ages. They were not looked on favourably by the official clergy as it appears from the fact



that St Abraham of Smolensk (XIIIth century) was persecuted for reading these books." "What strikes us is the very conformity in the details (the Ether and the hearing, the Moon and the Mind); this indicates that it was not only the 'general idea', but an elaborately worked out doctrine which migrated."<sup>40</sup>

This remark lends weight to *The Secret Doctrine's* assertion that

"human religious thought developed in uniform sympathy in every portion of the globe... born under whatever latitude... inspired by the same revelations... [showing] that man was nurtured under the protecting shadow of the same TREE OF KNOWLEDGE." (S.D.I.p.341)

The author points out that of this "well-known Vedic myth"

"There exist also non-Indian variants, viz. the Iranian in the Bundahisn, the Greek variants in the medical tract II... and in the Orphic hymn to Zeus, the Judean in the Book of Enoch (where Adam is substituted for the Cosmic Man), the Germanic in the Ymir-legend of the Edda, and finally the Slavonic in the Old Russian 'Poem on the Dove Book' (Stich o golubinoj knjigě)".<sup>41</sup>

For Schayer the *Book of Enoch* which he considers "an adaptation of an Iranian variant" owes its "importance to the fact that the old Asiatic myth of the Cosmical Man has been transmitted through it to the Christian literatures of the Western World."<sup>42</sup> This could very well be but how come that

"If the origin of castes from Adam's body as told in the Dove Book, is really an original and not a casual element, the Christian Apocrypha could not have been the only source of inspiration of the anonymous Old Russian bard. In no Christian Apocrypha, especially in the 'Discourse of the three Saints'... in no variant excepting the Vedic Puruṣa-Sūkta, does the legend of the origin of castes appear."<sup>43</sup>

Schayer notes and comments on the parallels of the *Dove Book* and the *puruṣasūkta*. Thus

"The springing up of the social groups from Adam's body strikingly reminds one of the genealogy of the Indian castes from the body of Puruṣa ... It is obvious that the older myth, in which the social classes were directly created from the dismembered body of the primordial Man, was replaced by the current Christian belief that humanity descends from Adam as its biological ancestor." Whilst "the whole creation is derived from the body of Puruṣa ... in the Russian text the functions are divided: nature springs out from the body of God, whereas social classes originated in that of Adam.

The derivation of the moon from God's breast is on first view not so well founded as the distinct and suggestive parallelism between the winds and the Holy Ghost (=Pneuma, the Breath), the stones and the bones, etc. But in the Vedic text we meet here with a macrocosmical correlation between the mind (*manas*) and the moon" and similarly in Eastern and Western variants. "The breast of the Dove Book is obviously only a substitution for the heart as the seat of the *manas* in the same manner as the face of God is a substitution for the eye, the cosmical correlate of the sun. If we eliminate these transparent misinterpretations the concordances of the Slavonic and the Indian version become still closer to one another."<sup>44</sup>

In the esoteric tradition, to each sense corresponds a cosmic element, hence hearing or sound corresponds to ether. But, asks St Schayer in a footnote,

"... why should the moon be the correlate of the mind? I can think of no answer to that question... Professor Deussen's supposition that 'die ruhige Klarheit des Mondlichtes' is here the symbol of the Intellect, cannot be accepted. It would be rather possible to think of a connection between the moon and the souls of the dead; unfortunately the Indian *manas* is not the soul but the thinking."<sup>45</sup>

Here again only the esoteric doctrine can come to the rescue to explain these puzzles. However, *manas*, to the ancients, was more than just the thinking principle. But the correspondence of mind-moon as "a constant element of the Indo-Iranian system" and its complete baffling to scholars in the sense that there is no logical reason for this, imply its origin as a secret teaching. The usual two correspondences, *sun-eye*, *moon-mind*, widespread among the ancients, is an esoteric tenet that should be explained. As the sun is the light and life-giver of all on earth, called the *ātman* of all things (R̥gv.I.115.1), so the eye is the organ through which the light and life-giver, the *ātman*, looks out and sheds its light via psyche upon the world, through which psyche receives the light of the world. So the *Atharvaveda* tells us: "Sūrya is the superintending lord of the eyes." (Athv.V.24.9. Muir's trans.) and Plato remarks "I regard it (the eye) as of all the organs of sensation possessing the most affinity to the sun" (Plato, Republic VI.18).<sup>46</sup>

The right eye is said to transmit the energy of the soul (*buddhi*), the principle of spiritual insight (hence the solar light), the left eye the energy of *manas* or mind, hence borrowed light, hence the moon's correlation with mind which is a limited reflection of *buddhi* light. The full moon, as explained (ch.7) was deemed by the ancient sages to be a reflector of the solar rays, in particular the *suṣumna*, considered most influential on the human mind. This is why the *śruti* associated the moon with mind, the reflector of solar light, the mind the reflector of spiritual light, that is, when not blinded or blighted by too much selfishness, or materialism. Whence the Purāṇic legend of the *special beam* that replenishes the moon during its waxing phases.<sup>47</sup>

So stanza 13 simply says that the moon comes from Puruṣa's mind and from his eye the sun, thereby establishing very succinctly, but esoterically, the connection between the two luminaries with mind and eye, to the despair of the logical mind! Philology once again fails to account for *correspondence* and *meaning* in esoteric statements and rationalism is not all knowing. One should observe how Indra and Agni (mind and fire) are joined together as born of Puruṣa's mouth: the word which fires the mind; and Vāyu from his breath (*prāṇa*). These gods emerge from Puruṣa, they do not form part of those that sacrifice Puruṣa, thereby implying a difference in the hierarchy of the gods, and thus in the cycles of time: the gods that sacrifice are the much older generations evolved in past aeons; the others are more recently evolved. But all this is not spelled out.

Stanza 14 similarly expresses what Schayer mentions as ether corresponding to hearing, as the "directions" coming from Puruṣa's ear. The Sanskrit *diś* also means quarter, point of the compass, region, space, or *ākāśa* which is correlated with sound. In this stanza the earth appears as the footstool of Cosmic Man.

#### THE LAST TWO STANZAS

Of the last two stanzas, no.15 and 16, the first is very esoteric, although superficially it does not seem to mean much or to add anything to the hymn. But again it creates a baffling problem. As the whole hymn is allegorical one may suspect here another hint of an esoteric nature. The words are so simple that there can hardly be any difference between the various translations. Only, the "seven enclosing sticks" attract attention.

Commentators have noted that these so-called sticks or logs close the altar to the west, the south and the north and therefore always number three; yet here they are specifically mentioned as numbering seven – enough of an indication that an altogether different meaning is to be expected.

The word used is *paridhi*, enclosure, that which is put around to enclose the altar; it means fence, wall, protection especially "the three fresh sticks... laid round a sacrificial fire to keep it together" (Monier Williams); but also a cover, garment, the ocean around the earth and the halo around the sun or moon. W.N. Brown<sup>48</sup> in his speculation on these sticks draws attention to the word as used in Ṛgv.X.139.4 regarding the sun's enclosures which obviously are not sticks, but could refer to its seven rays radiating all around as a halo. He also brings into comparison another word mentioned in Ṛgv.X.5.6 as the *sapta maryādāḥ*, the seven landmarks or limits or goals which "the wise ones have established". Both words *maryādāḥ* and *paridhi* mark a boundary setting limits to something; in the case of X.5.6 that boundary seems to be rather a landmark: the choice of seven ways of approach towards the goal of liberation; in the case of X.90.15 the word *paridhi* may play upon the dual meaning of *stick* or *enclosure* and *cover* or *garment*. The seven logs do not square with the 3 enclosing sticks always used, but they do fit with the 7 "enclosures" in which human beings are more or less imprisoned and which serve a purpose. They seem to be metaphors for the seven vestures or garments assumed by the spiritual entity as it descends upon each of the seven planes or levels of cosmos; vestures of the same substance of each plane, tenuous or more material, necessary as means of access to the plane; as "fuel" and as "boundary" wherein the entity can evolve protected like the embryo in the womb, the infant in its little park, the child in its home, the adult in the city, country, nature, world; until such time as, having learned and experienced whatever had to be experienced, each vesture is finally burnt on the pyre of greater Life.

One of the better known ancient tales recounts the descent of Inanna/Ishtar into the underworld "where the light has to descend into the darkness in order to reappear in the next cycle"<sup>49</sup> Here is not merely a lunar myth, but the esoteric tale of the human soul; a tale that combines the descent into darkness as the ground of the unknown (which can be taken as the descent into hell as well as the descent into the very core of Life) and the casting off of garment after garment as is done on the way of ascent, as the soul reaches its ultimate goal. "The way up is like the way down" said Heraclitus.

Whatever be the full meaning of the 7 logs or sticks enclosing the victim Puruṣa, this allegorical description is concerned with a most recondite aspect of the human condition and its odyssey, linking the human side to the divine aspect, its present condition to its primeval state.

H.P.B. in her *The Secret Doctrine* touches upon the *puruṣasūkta* and brings attention to the relation between Puruṣa, the Heavenly Man and *puruṣa* "terrestrial mortal man". Mortal man could not link with the immortal part of himself except through more and more tenuous, inner vehicles or veils forming a web of light radiations around him, and stepping down, as it were, the too effulgent spiritual brightness,<sup>50</sup> each veil requiring the purification of the person before it can be penetrated, mastered and by-passed. Hence the doctrine of the septenary nature of the human constitution, the human being compared to a seven-leaved plant, *saptaparṇa*.<sup>51</sup>

H.P.B. advises that the student should

"... study in all the abstruseness of their metaphysical meaning the relations in it [ Ṛgv.X.90]

between the (Heavenly) Man, 'Puruṣa', SACRIFICED for the production of the Universe and all in it

(cf. *Viśvakarman*), and the terrestrial mortal man, before one realizes the hidden philosophy of this

verse:

15. He ('Man', *puruṣa*, or *Viśvakarman*) had seven enclosing logs of fuel, and

*thrice seven* layers of fuel; when the gods performed the sacrifice,

they bound the Man as victim." (S.D.II.p.606)

It seems that, besides this presentation of Archetypal Man as embodied Flame descending through the seven levels of cosmos and gathering on each of these an *appropriate* vesture made of each level's substance (called fuel) as means of access to and experience of each of these; there is also the hint of Cosmic Man, in every human being, due to evolve through seven races and their sub-races of which "three" human races and their seven sub-races have already passed away. Hence the puzzling allusion to the three times seven layers of fuel. If this observation of H.P.B.'s into the meaning of these logs of wood for burning (*samidhah*) were ever proved correct, then the great antiquity of the archetype of Cosmic Man would be demonstrated. For, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, five races have already evolved on the face of the earth, we being half way through the fifth race, (these five being mentioned several times in the Ṛgveda). But the above stanza only mentions three times seven layers, not four, not five.; that is, this embodiment had happened three times or cycles, hence three races. These few words invite speculation. They do not mean just logs, just fuel, just the human person.

By such a sacrifice the gods paid homage to the sacrificial host (stanza 16). *Yaj* means to worship with oblation, to honour, consecrate, hallow. It implies a relationship between both sides; a partnership, and a recognition on the part of the devas of the tremendous task undertaken by that flame-spirit which dwells in the human form, descending into the depth of material engulfment to rise again taking matter with it, transforming it into a subtler essence to suit the future needs of another wave of spiritual evolution. These first ordinances or established rites, with their cosmic and human import, served not only as a reminder of such ancient teaching but also as a reflection of the law of Life, whether natural or social for all later social development. The ancient Sādhyās considered "a class of semi-divine beings" (Dandekar), or "ancient gods or demi-gods" (Edgerton)<sup>52</sup> are celestial beings belonging to the *gaṇa-devata* whose world is said in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa to be above that of the gods (Monier Williams); this would make them higher than the devas .

As seen by R. Panikkar and quite in line with the esoteric tradition, Cosmic Man's sacrifice "signifies divine transcendence investing humanity", which he explains as the "twofold dynamism of this universal sacrifice" as a "sacramental downward movement of the All towards the earth" and "a sacrificial upward movement of the world towards the All".<sup>53</sup> Sacrament and sacrifice are closely linked and both make for sacredness. Life is sacred and he who lives in harmony with the supreme Law is sacred.

Behind this breathing out and breathing in, this diastolic and systolic rhythm, lies the whole drama of cosmic unfoldment, including pilgrim man's aeonic descent into material conditions and ascent into spiritual life. These succinct stanzas of Ṛgv.X.90 only hint, yet far reaching implications may be glimpsed. In this downward movement which sanctifies the earth, indeed the whole manifestation, and in this sacrificial upward movement of all parts towards the All, crowned by man's final capacity to "redeem" all in his self-offering, exemplified in the great messengers Kṛṣṇa, Buddha, Christ, etc., we also glimpse what H.P.B. expressed in terms of the ātman:

"This descends 'like a flame spreading from the Eternal Fire, immovable, without increase or

decrease, ever the same to the end' of the cycle of existence, and becomes universal life on the Mundane Plane." (S.D.I.p.572)

She summarises this evolution in very dramatic terms, suited to her Russian temperament, painting an immense vision of the Cosmic Drama, from the cycles of the septenary evolution in sevenfold Nature to the universe, to man, the spirit-pilgrim engulfed in matter and finally rising out of it:

"...between the Alpha and the Omega there is the weary 'Road',  
hedged in by thorns, that 'goes down first, then –  
...winds uphill all the way.  
Yes to the very end...'

Starting upon the long journey immaculate, descending more and more into sinful matter... the *Pilgrim*, having struggled through and suffered in every form of life and being, is only at the bottom of the valley of matter, and half through his cycle, when he has identified himself with collective Humanity... In order to progress upwards and homewards, the 'God' has now to ascend the weary uphill path of the Golgotha of Life. It is the martyrdom of self-conscious existence. Like Viśvakarman, he has to sacrifice *himself to himself*, in order to redeem all creatures to resurrect from the many into the *One Life*. Then he ascends into heaven indeed; where, plunged into the incomprehensible absolute Being and Bliss of Parinirvāṇa, he reigns unconditionally..."

(S.D. I.p.268)

The *puruṣasūkta* may indeed be a charter, but not just of the new social order to be established which it outlines in just one stanza out of sixteen; not just of the doctrine of sacrifice; not just of a new pattern in a supreme vision of certain important aspects hidden in the esoteric tradition; worded in very simple, allegorical language and metaphors charged with meaning far beyond our modern grasp; a far visioned charter important to humanity and, for the Hindus, a fundamental *credo*. That this hymn is based upon an all embracing view, which we ourselves have completely lost and far beyond the orbit of our Western intelligentsia, a view which reaches out to the supreme vision, is confirmed in one of the additional stanzas given in the Yajurveda:

"I have known this mighty puruṣa refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness;

only by knowing him does one transcend death; no other way is there to go." (Yjv.vs.31.18)

Here is a song of exultation, of the joy of having discovered that which passes ordinary understanding, of having entered the supreme state of consciousness and been made one with what transcends death!

Puruṣa or *Cosmic Man*, the foundation of all earthly life and spheres far beyond on much subtler levels, is not only as much as human intuition was able to perceive and translate into imagery and words that human beings could grasp, but through the imagery used, was an open door to a host of inferences for those whose insight was deep enough to take them beyond the limits of words. For behind this image of Archetypal or *Cosmic Man* succinctly portrayed in the *puruṣasūkta*, looms an ever grander vision of a Heavenly Man glimpsed in ever widening precision. For in his vast compass, would he not enfold and unfold, like cells in the body celestial, not only all earthly lives as known to us on our planet, but a complete scheme of planets evolving within our solar system, the latter itself expressive of a still grander life embodying series of planetary

schemes in still vaster systems going on and on *ad infinitum*, until the mind reels and vision swoons. For what does *cosmic* mean? For every physical manifestation of the starry galaxies, is a point of divine life in the immense network that forms the stupendous wheel of *Cosmic Order*, *ṛta*, at the core of which ever burns unconsumed the One Universal All Consuming Flame-Power.

This is the core of *The Secret Doctrine* of the ages, and the *puruṣasūkta* is a partial, succinct and evocative expression of it.

#### THE SPREAD OF THE IDEA OF COSMIC MAN

Far and wide spread the archetype of Cosmic Man, but whose mental conception or description of it came first? Indian, Chinese or other, who knows, and what does it really matter? We are slowly coming to the recognition of a common ground to different ideas at one and the same time, though where geographically that source originates from is dubious, especially in the case of the Puruṣa who, as an archetype, may go back far earlier than we are inclined to imagine. The only surety is the human psyche as the fertile soil from which have been projected archetypal images, ideas and ideals; some of these, when marshalled together, formed the basis of the *wisdom tradition*. Indeed when it is a question of fundamental archetypes and truths embedded in the psyche, there is little use trying to find out the "origin"- who borrowed the idea from whom, as is usually done. Innate ideas and their projected images and the theories clustering around them will flood the mental world of humanity and influence great minds in various parts of the planet irrespective of distances.

Obviously an archetypal image had its start somewhere in some one's mind, but those that are so ancient usually defy any ramification to a particular point in space. We know how the minstrels of the Middle Ages spread abroad through their songs and epic poems the ideals of chivalry, of the quest of the Holy Grail which is but another version of the quest for the flame-divine. Hence the different versions, the accretions engrafted on an already similarly cultivated soil, namely the basic pattern of the human psyche. So too does this apply to the various versions of Archetypal Man.

Heanh-Son Hoang-Sy-Quy in his article "Le Mythe indien de l'Homme Cosmique dans son contexte culturel et dans son évolution"<sup>54</sup> related that according to one Chinese source the myth was introduced in China during the 6<sup>th</sup> century, though this date is thought to be much earlier by M. Granet.<sup>55</sup> The Chinese version of Cosmic Man is found in a number of variants mostly coloured by their Taoist or Buddhist background. From the former has come down a popular myth of Pan Ku as a personal Creator considered the Father and Lord of creatures. According to some tales Pan Ku was born from Yin and Yang, the Chinese representatives of the positive and the negative poles of creation. His mission was to draw heaven and earth out of chaos, Pan Ku's name referring to "original abyss" in one of its meanings. Another version shows him springing out of chaos and dividing it into Yin and Yang and by means of these two creating Heaven and earth and men: all very familiar, archetypal and original vision. His tools are the hammer and a pair of scissors with which he chisels (like Vāc) to fashion chaos. So Viśvakarman, the Vedic All-maker, in whirling his arms blows forth the worlds (Ṛgv.X.81.3); Brahmanāspati welds the worlds together like a blacksmith (Ṛgv.X.72.2ab); and Tvaṣṭṛ moulds all forms. 18,000 years were necessary for Pan Ku to fashion the universe. From very small that he was at first, he grew by 6 feet each day and reached a mighty size as his cosmic task grew in accomplishment.

Then he died that his creation might live. His head became the mountains, "his breath the wind and clouds, his voice the thunder, his lips the four quarters, his veins the rivers, his flesh the soil, his beard the constellations, his hair and skin the grass and herbs and trees, his teeth and bones with their marrow metals and precious stones, his sweat the rain. Insects that crawled over his body became human beings." Excellent reminder of human lowliness!

The author draws attention to the fact that the Indian version emphasises the "organs of perception and activity corresponding to the cosmic energies", whereas in the Chinese version it is the material division of Pan Ku's body that forms the world; further, the integration of man to the universe is generally "more marked in the Indian and Chinese thought than in any other civilizations".<sup>56</sup> This is most probably because they kept closer to the wisdom tradition.

Several versions of Cosmic Man are found in the Iranian tradition, one is borrowed from the Indian and, among others, one keeps close to the Chinese parallels. There are divergences in the correspondences to the body of Cosmic Man, the oddest being his "acquired reason"<sup>57</sup> which corresponds to "cattle"!

To a certain extent one finds this archetype also in Scandinavia and Babylonia, however differently presented: thus the giant Ymir emerged in human form from the drops that appeared as the ice melted – a graphic way of representing the differentiations of *ākāśa*; from his sweat were born the first couple, man and woman, both giants. From the melting ice the Cow Audumla was born to nourish the giants. From her udders flowed forth streams of milk and from the ice she licked a further form of a giant appeared, Buri, and so on. But the giants struggled with each other and killed Ymir. They formed from his body the earth, his flesh becoming the land and his blood the sea; his bones the mountains, his hair the trees, and his skull raised on four pillars became the vault of the sky. With the sparks that escaped from the south they created the stars and the sun and moon, etc. This account may superimpose several ancient tales, but the underlying figure of a giant man from whose body the universe is fashioned is once again present, though the description is very much reduced to the physical level.

With the Babylonian account, it is the figure of Tiamat, so-called "monster" who originally was no monster but chaos, which H.P.B. calls root matter, that serves Marduk, the new god of emergent Babylon, as the substance with which to forge a new world. In the R̥gveda the struggle between Indra, the newly acclaimed god, and the Obstructor Vṛtra, the Coverer, leads to the release of the waters of life, etc. but the dragon Vṛtra is not used as basic material for the universe. He lies sunk deep down in the *asat* and it is only in the *puruṣasūkta* that the idea of a basic substance made out of the body of Primordial Man to fashion the world comes to the fore.

One can see in these few glimpses of several tales on the same theme how the human mind has toyed with these ideas and interpreted them differently, and yet similarly. Of all these versions the most concise one that has come down, based upon the ancient esoteric wisdom, is the *puruṣasūkta*, which encapsulates in its 16 stanzas a whole *secret doctrine* so well hidden in what appears strange and yet simple statements, that none of our Western scholars seem to have detected anything of the kind or any spiritual significance

## FROM THE IMPERSONAL TO THE PERSONAL

Imperceptibly the *śruti* passes from the Waters of Life – the undulating waters as the matrix of space brought to fruition by the flashing forth of the *tapas* of the Unborn, or self-ignited by their own inherent fire, Agni, Son of the Waters, Flame-power or Ray of That, (*tat*) the UNBORN - to a more manifested Deity, Varuṇa, Lord of Cosmic Order, to Viśvakarman the All-maker, to a more and more anthropomorphised Lord of Immortality and sacrificial victim, Puruṣa, to an anthropomorphised Lord of creatures acting as a human being, Prajāpati, to Brahmā the creator and third Person of the Hindu Trimurti. The steps mark out the variations in human insight, outlook and understanding, in the more and more human centred terminology, hence the anthropomorphisation of spiritual insights and the loss of that primeval purely cosmic vision. Man has practically become the be-all and end-all of existence and the proper study of mankind, and Cosmic Man is sung and extolled in the Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads (cf. Muṇ. and Kaṭha Up.) and equated to the *brahman*. To the monotheists this complete anthropomorphisation and exaltation of one Unique God is considered more spiritual. To the eye of the *dangma* it is but a step further down into a more material understanding of what was once a spiritual vision that took its wings from the *tapas* or spiritual exertion/contemplation/vision of seers/sages.

In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa II.2.9.1 the steps from the abstract to the concrete are recorded in a very simple, rational way: thus in the beginning this universe was non-existent, there being neither heaven nor earth nor the mid-region between these. That, *Non-Being*, became *being*, i.e. Mind. Let me be, he thought. That exerted itself in *tapas* and from that exertion that manifests as heating, smoke was born; again That exerted itself even more and from heating emerged fire. The process goes on and on; from that heating emerged light, and from that light emerged flame, etc.

The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (I.23) still remains close to the tenets of the esoteric doctrine as it takes up verse 4 of Ṛgv.X.129 whereby, in the beginning, *desire*<sup>58</sup> developed into the seed of mind, and the seers, seeking truth in their heart, discovered the link between Being and Non-Being, *sat* and *asat*. The philosophical *Non-Being*, or that *Absolute Being* of *The Secret Doctrine*, and *Being*, its relative aspect, radiating forth periodically and causing the birth of the multitudes of things and creatures, were perhaps too much to absorb for the average person. The anthropomorphic figure of Prajāpati now comes to the fore. Whilst the universe was but "waters" Prajāpati, the One, concentrated therein; a more human-orientated way of referring to what Ṛgv.X.129.3 expressed as:

"Enwrapped in voidness, that One which flame-power (*tapas*) kindled to existence, emerged".  
Desire arose in Prajāpati: "May I let this water flow"; so Prajāpati exerts himself through *tapas*.

In its tenth chapter this same Āraṇyaka demonstrates the fundamental equation of Prajāpati with the Universal Principle, Brahman (neuter, hence Absolute): tad *brahman ... sa Prajāpatiḥ* (10.7). In paragraph one of this chapter, once again within the germ or egg (*garbhe antaḥ*), on the endless waters, in the centre of cosmos, on the height of the celestial dome, having with his splendour pervaded the three luminous regions of the universe, Prajāpati exerts himself through *tapas*.

"In the limitless waters Prajāpati toils within the egg" (10.1.1)  
the egg formed by the waters, the radiant waters, hence the matrix of space. Then comes a long panegyric of



*That* which abides in the imperishable, in the supreme empyrean, in all creatures, this unique, unmanifested, whose form is the limitless, the ageless beyond darkness, that which is Cosmic Order, Truth, the Supreme Brahman of the poets, navel of the universe, support of all things.

"That is Agni, That is Vāyu, That is Sūrya, That is Chandramas, That is resplendent amṛta, That is Brahman, That is the primordial Waters wherein Prajāpati exerts himself." (Tait.Ar.10.7)

This chapter, from 1-13 could be described as a superb example of a ṛṣi's exaltation at the discovery of the one universal flame-power at the heart of all, reaching its apotheosis in strophe 13 where the ṛṣi admits, with the Yajurvedic verse (31.18) that he has known this mighty Puruṣa, etc.

A similar outline of the beginnings is found in Śat.Br.II.1.6.1-11 where the effulgent egg or matrix is formed by the coming into activity of the waters as a result of *tapas*, the egg breaking open after one year, that is, after a cycle of development and Prajāpati emerges. In Ṛgv.X.121.7 the Waters broke forth from latency giving birth to Agni. The Taittirīya Saṁhitā (VII.1.4) takes up the theme of the *puruṣasūkta* in terms of Prajāpati sacrificing himself, with a number of variations. The idea of Cosmic Man, now become Lord of Creatures, is travelling, assuming new names, but anchoring itself very solidly in human minds. Many are the variants in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads - e.g. in the Bṛhad.Up. (I. 2.1) the *no thing* is called death, hunger; the Self alone was, in the beginning, in the form of Puruṣa. The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa reduces Prajāpati to a mere human who fell into pieces after producing creatures:

" Being reduced to a (mere) heart he was lying exhausted. He uttered a cry: 'Alas, my life!' The waters heard him. They came to his aid and by means of sacrifice of the Firstborn they restored to him his sovereignty." (Tait.Br.II.3.6.1)

Prajāpati's exhaustion is a self-emptying, a sacrifice, and as well explained by R. Panikkar, from whom these translations are borrowed

"...being reduced to the heart, he was unable to manifest (express). In other words, only the heart of Prajāpati remains, all his other parts having become creation. God is the heart of the world!"<sup>59</sup>

Not just "having become creation", but what is implied, having become smothered by their engulfment in material conditions. In all these versions the act of *tapas* is always present: creation is fundamentally a spiritual act, a selfless exertion, a gift of the Divine Self.

## PURUṢA-PRAKṚTI

But this merging into Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, this identification with *Brahman* the supreme Universal Principle, or with the innermost, the *ātman* in the human heart, is not the end of Puruṣa as such. For he comes out again through that age-old *gnosis* that saw the basic interaction between the active and passive, without which there can be no cosmos as we know it. This in some way was already reflected in the active Agni, fosterer and destroyer, and the passive Vāc, moulder of forms, both interacting, though not explicitly explained in the Ṛgveda. The subtle, almost imperceptible Agni-Vāc interaction now becomes *puruṣa* interacting with *prakṛti*, spirit with matter, of which Dyaus and Pṛthivī are surely the models, the "primeval Parents".

The *puruṣasūkta*, in its exaltation of *puruṣa* as Archetypal Man, may be thought to have ignored

this intimate relationship with *prakṛti* which is brought out in Sāṁkhya philosophy. His expanding to even beyond the heavenly world does not exclude the subtlest expression of *prakṛti* or *ākāśa*, the original "waters of space" of the Ṛgveda. The author of the hymn was concerned only with the self-sacrificing victim from whose action the universe arose. This viewing must have given rise in time to a use of the word *puruṣa* as referring to a transcendent aspect beyond the contrast between spirit and matter and their constant interaction, which comes out in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad:

"Higher than the Mahat is the Unmanifest;  
Higher than the Unmanifest is the Puruṣa,  
than the Puruṣa there is nothing higher,  
He is the end, he the ultimate goal." (Kaṭha.Up.III.11= II.iii.8.)<sup>60</sup>

This Puruṣa is identified with the transcendent Ātman hidden in the *ākāśa* of the heart and beyond the Unmanifest. This evident emphasis on Puruṣa as against Prakṛti in some Upaniṣads has an esoteric significance. According to *The Secret Doctrine*, we are as a whole (that is, all the planetary lives) on the return journey to the Ultimate Source. As a human race, we have passed the point of deepest entombment in matter and because of this, those few who have reached the stage of wisdom such as the sages of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, tend to give greater value to Puruṣa. *Prakṛti* gave us the many levelled contents of experiences necessary for our evolution. Such experiences and the qualities evolved therefrom should by now be assimilated and ready to be transmuted into the rarefied essence of the spiritual pole, Puruṣa. That we fail dismally in this endeavour and retard the process is another question. The teachings remain. Śrī Krishna Prem put it very simply:

"From our point of view, a certain priority has to be conceded to the Unity of the Father-Light or Puruṣa for it is that Light that, reflected down here as it is on all levels of the universe, constitutes the Path by which we reach the goal."<sup>61</sup>

The human spirit or monad seeks "a conscious and illuminated freedom", a complete mastery of all the planes of manifestation, hence of matter, an attainment which "is as near as we can go towards describing the meaning of the whole cosmic process" – which fundamentally centers around that primordial and continuing and ultimate sacrifice! Hence the mighty pilgrimage downward into matter and upward back to spirit and beyond.

To come back to *puruṣa-prakṛti*, the interaction nevertheless remains vital to any manifestation and most of all to us human beings who have hardly passed the turning point in evolution. *Prakṛti*, *ākāśa* and *pradhāna*<sup>62</sup> all mean the same. According to *The Secret Doctrine*, man by his very constitution (e.g. because of the form projecting propensity of the human mind) is incapable of conceiving the Absolute, so "the first abstract idea one can form of Parabrahman" is *pradhāna*, or *ākāśa*. The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* makes it very clear: "*One prādhānika Brahman spirit: That was.*"<sup>63</sup> In other words That which is Brahman is spirit and original matter as one. Spirit and matter differentiate from the One Brahman, hence are ultimately one, becoming two poles of the one underlying basic reality or essence on the planes of manifestation. Hence matter, or form is to be used for a right purpose, not misused. H.P.B. explains this differentiation as viewed in *The Secret Doctrine*:

"...Though one and the same thing in their origin, Spirit and Matter, when once they are on the plane of differentiation, begin each of them their evolutionary progress in contrary directions – Spirit falling gradually into matter, and the latter ascending to its original condition, that of a

pure spiritual substance. Both are inseparable, yet ever separated. In polarity, on the physical plane, two like poles will always repel each other, while the negative and the positive are mutually attracted; so do Spirit and Matter stand to each other – the two poles of the same homogeneous substance, the root-principle of the universe." (S.D.I.p.247)

We meet here the *yin and yang* of Chinese philosophy, depicted as two interlaced figures forming the circle of wholeness, one of the most impressive and meaningful symbols of the ancient wisdom. In terms of esoteric philosophy, spirit and matter form a wholeness that mirrors their ultimate oneness in their Source; in human terms, spirit is ethereal matter, matter crystallised spirit, both disappear as such when resolved back into their original Source at the time of *pralaya* or universal dissolution.

"...Spirit and Matter are two FACETS of the unknowable UNITY, their apparently contrasted aspects depending, (a) on the various degrees of differentiation of the latter, and (b) on the grades of consciousness attained by man himself." (S.D.I.p.543)

This shows the relativity of both and why sages call the material world which seems so real *illusion*.

"...*Spirit is the first differentiation of (and in) SPACE, and Matter the first differentiation of Spirit. That, which is neither Spirit nor matter, that is IT – the Causeless CAUSE of Spirit and Matter, which are the Cause of Kosmos. And, THAT we call the ONE LIFE or the Intra-Cosmic Breath.*"

(S.D.I.p.258)

H.P.B. uses the words *puruṣa-prakṛti* in the sense of spirit-matter or the two polarities as they are used in the Sāṃkhya,<sup>64</sup> but she explains them in terms of the esoteric philosophy:

"The 'Spirit-Matter' and 'Matter-Spirit' extend infinitely *in depth*, and like the 'essence of things' of Leibnitz, our essence of things real is *at the seventh depth*; while the *unreal* and gross matter of Science and the external world, is at the lowest end of our perceptive senses." (S.D.I.p.628)

*Puruṣa* meaning spirit, is equated in *The Secret Doctrine*, as in the *Kātha Upaniṣad*, with the *ātman*, which for H.P.B. was "the seventh principle" which "alone is the divine SELF" (S.D.II. p.574). In an article entitled "What is matter and what is Force" she writes that the "occultist" claims that

"...Life is as infinite and as indestructible as matter itself, since neither can exist without the other, and that electricity is the very essence and origin of – *Life itself*. 'Puruṣa' is non-existent without 'Prakṛti'; nor can Prakṛti, or plastic matter have being or exist without Puruṣa, or spirit, vital energy, LIFE. Puruṣa and Prakṛti are in short the two poles of the one eternal element, and are synonymous and 'convertible terms'." (C.W. IV.p.225-6)

*Puruṣa* is thus considered to be life, the seeder of that which will bring all latent seeds to fruition in the cradle of prakṛti, the very spirit of fire which H.P.B. calls electricity. This passage clarifies what is implied in the Ṛgvedic *puruṣa* hymn (X.90), viz., that *Puruṣa* blends in himself characteristics of the three kin gods, Agni- Sūrya-Viṣṇu expressive of the life, power and pervasiveness of Flame; the human being, as vehicle of Life in its deepest sense, of Agni as both the giver of life and intelligence and the destroyer of forms; of Sūrya, the giver of *prāṇa* and supreme illumination: of Viṣṇu the far pervader, the solar fiery preserving principle encompassing the whole creation. Thus does *Puruṣa* assume the grandeur of Cosmic Man, so deeply anchored in each human being that few are aware of this flame-spirit within, and only some rise to its call and challenge

and give to humanity the fruit of their vision in sacred texts, art or music, in healing, or deeds of courage and self-sacrifice. Puruṣa is the Heavenly, primordial archetypal Man, whom H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* identifies with ADAM- KADMON of the Kabbalah (S.D.I.p.443), a Kabbalistic term referring to the ideal prototype of humanity – as the tree of life, in a sense also similar to the Ṛgvedic Puruṣa. "The Sephīrōthal Tree is the Universe, and Adam- Kadmon represents it in the West, as Brahmā represents it in India." (S.D.I.p.352) Brahmā is the creator, so is Puruṣa in a special sense, for many names are used for the One Spiritual Principle.

## PART I PURUṢA, ARCHETYPE OF CELESTIAL MAN.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Upaniṣads may have interiorized the sacrificial ritual more and more as in time it became more externalized in practice and finally verging on a mere routine; but hints from the Brāhmaṇas remain to show us that there was an age when the teaching emphasised that without the interior sacrificial attitude the external sacrifice has no power and no point. From the Ṛgvedic verses on Agni quoted in the previous chapters it becomes evident that this was the ṛṣis' gnosis. On this subject thanks must be given to H.Aguilar who, in his *Sacrifice in the Ṛgveda*, evinces a remarkable insight into the meaning of Vedic sacrifice:

"Being about to build Agni, he takes him up into his own self...Now were he to build up Agni without taking him up into his own self, he would beget man from man, mortal from mortal, one not free from sin from one not freed from sin; but when he builds up Agni after taking him up into his own self, he causes Agni to be born from Agni, the immortal from the immortal, the sinless from the sinless." (Śat.Br.VII.4.1.1. Quoted by Aguilar, op. cit. p.47-48)

"For by his own mind he purposes to sacrifice and from his own mind he impels it (the sacrifice) when he performs it." (Śat.Br.III.1.4.12. cf. III.1.3.26; III.2.2.12; ibid.p.47)

"And he himself that consecrates himself is the food of the gods." (Śat.Br.III.6.3.19; ibid. p.49)

For in consecrating himself something of his essence is caught up by the devas and there is established a communion between mortal and immortal. As summed up by H. Aguilar, to whom I owe these examples: "In sum, the sacrificer is the sacrifice not only by the fact of sacrificing, but above all by the fact of sacrificing himself. It is this self-sacrifice which gives the right to the attainment of the supreme sacrifice and to the identification with it." (op.cit. p.49)

The supreme sacrifice mentioned here is the universal *ṛta*, the Cosmic Order whose very core is the hearth of that flame-powered contemplation of the ONE. (Ṛgv.X.129.3; 190.1) During the time of the redaction of the Brāhmaṇas, as exemplified e.g. in the Śatapatha Br. and the Aitareya Br. there ensued a gradual degradation in the meaning of the sacrifice and in the gods themselves who are more and more reduced to the level of human pettiness, jealousy, rivalry, selfishness, etc. just as among the Greeks. S. Levi, in his *La Doctrine du Sacrifice dans les Brāhmaṇas*, Paris, 1898, made a meticulous study of the sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇas accompanied by relevant statements in Sanskrit and his translation; an excellent analytical study of the sacrifice in its many aspects, as the "safe vessel", which when firmly under control takes the sacrificer through the difficult ascension to the higher spheres. But he ignores the essential meaning of the answer given in Śat. Br.XI.2.6.13 to the question - which is better: to sacrifice to the *ātman* or to the gods?

<sup>2</sup> Murray Fowler. "Old Norse Religions" in *Forgotten Religions*. Ed. V. Ferm. p.242.

<sup>3</sup> op.cit.p.250.

<sup>4</sup> *Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas*. Vol. 32. p.407. fn.7.

<sup>5</sup> H.P.B. explains:

"The *Āla-maram* [Tamil name for the sacred bo-tree or peepul, the banyan tree is *Aramaram*] the banyan tree, so sacred with the Hindus, since Viṣṇu during one of his incarnations reposed under its mighty shade and there taught humanity philosophy and sciences, is called the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. Under the protecting foliage of this king of the forests, the Gurus teach their pupils their first lessons on immortality and initiate them into the mysteries of life and death..." (Quoted from *Isis Unveiled* in S.D. II.p.215) Similarly

"The symbol of the 'Tree' standing for various Initiates was almost universal. Jesus is called the 'Tree of Life' as are also all the adepts of the good Law, while those of the *left* Path are referred to as the 'withering trees'. John the Baptist speaks of the 'axe' which is 'laid unto the root of the trees' (Math.iii.10)." (S.D. II. p.496)

<sup>6</sup> On the Veda. p.292.

<sup>7</sup> Something of this sacred memorial of a sacred act repeated indefinitely throughout the ages is found in the Gospels in the Last Supper when Christ is reported to have said: 'do this in memory of me'; that is, in memory of the sacrifice of the Son of Man/God (to be nailed on the cross, sacrificed for the redemption of humanity. The underlying significance is the same, only the Christians made it a unique historical event, ignoring its *rootedness* in the Cosmic Order.

<sup>8</sup> *Vedic Experience* p.352-3. Italics my own.

<sup>9</sup> J.A.O.S. 51.1931. pp.108-18.

<sup>10</sup> op.cit.p.109

<sup>11</sup> The Zoroastrians had their own sacrifice at the beginning of creation, but in alignment with the reform of Zoroaster whereby the Vedic devas were changed to demons, what is specifically a creative sacrifice in the Vedas becomes a sacrifice performed by the evil Spirit who immolates the Cosmic Bull whose scattered organs fertilise the ground, and various plants and animals issue therefrom. This evil sacrifice will be offset by a redemptive sacrifice at the end of time with the world as its altar, resulting in the final eradication of evil on earth. In the Mithraic mysteries, however, which are rooted in pre-Zoroastrian reform, the bull sacrifice is both creative and redemptive.

<sup>12</sup> Also equated in Taitt.S. VII.1.1; Pañch.Br. VI.1.6-13; Jaim.Br. I. 68-9.

<sup>13</sup> Ānanda Coomaraswamy has a fifteen page article on the last line of stanza 1 entitled "*Ṛgveda X.90-1 aty atīṣṭhad daśāṅgulam*". (J.A.O.S.66.1946.pp.145-61) giving a whole exegesis on these ten fingers and the various interpretations offered, sweeping far beyond the specific compass of the present hymn, but thereby showing with multiple quotes from other traditions such as the Greek, the Judaic and the Christian, how fundamentally the same is man's insight into all these; for example, how "our Common Man – *not* the average 'man in the street', but *the* Man in 'this man' and 'this woman'; he with respect to whom it is asked 'which self?' and of whom it is said 'That art thou'" (op.cit.p.150.fn.15)

is the same as St John's Logos, St Paul's "Christ in me", etc. For Puruṣa is the towering, spiritual *inner man* 'in every human being (*antaḥ puruṣa*, Ait.Aran.III.2.4, Chānd.Up.III.12.8 and Mait.VI.10)'. The ten fingers are used as a measure of a human head.

"...the specific *daśāṅgulam* of the hymn in which the deity is thought of as if in fact a man...seems to show ... that the length of a man's face amounted to a span of ten inches, ten of his own finger-breadths... RV.X.90.1 ... the Puruṣa, making the whole Earth his footstool, fills the entire universe, and rules over it by means of the powers of vision, etc. that proceed from his face, and to which man's own powers of vision, etc. are analogous; this face, whether of God or man, being, as explained in the cited Brāhmaṇa contexts, itself an image of the whole threefold universe."

<sup>14</sup> *Vedic Experience*. p.74.

<sup>15</sup> In Athv.XIX.27 reference is made to four oceans which have been interpreted variously but which are connected with the four quarters of space, and in the Ṛgveda one finds several mentions of 4 oceans which Lüders thought must be "identical with the four world rivers of the Purāṇas and also with the Buddhist Scriptures... It seems to me there is indeed here not only parallel but really identical imagery." (*Varuṇa* p.286) As I wrote in my *Cosmic Waters*: "These (four) cannot be understood in a literal, physical sense as the learned scholar, like all his peers, tried in vain to do... Thus in *Genesis* which Luders failed to consider, four rivers are also described as watering the Garden of Eden:

"And a river went out of Eden to water the Garden and from thence it was parted and became into four heads" (I Gen.2.10).

...Each of these four is given a name in *Genesis*, which, mystically understood, corresponds to a specific aspect of the fourfold view of the human constitution – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, and the corresponding four planes of the cosmos. The Garden of Eden...is 'watered' by four rivers that make for equilibrium, stability, harmony, completeness...

These four rivers are met with in Scandinavian mythology ..." (op.cit. p.201, 202)

Other enumerations with explanations of 4 are found in fn 17 of Ch. 7.

<sup>16</sup> "Sources and Nature of *puruṣa*". p.116. (A.O.S.J. 51. 1931.) See also Bhagavad Gītā 15:16 where the two *puruṣas* are referred to as *kṣara*, perishable, and *akṣara*, imperishable.

<sup>17</sup> A.C. Bose in his *Hymns from the Vedas* translates the word as "splendour", the verb *virāj* meaning to rule, govern, master, shine forth; the adjective, besides ruling far and wide means sovereign, splendid and is applied to Agni, Sarasvatī, Sūrya; as noun it means pre-eminence, majesty, etc. Monier Williams remarks:

"in the AV.VIII.10.24; XI.8.30 Virāj is spoken of as a female, and regarded as a cow; being elsewhere, however, identified with Prāṇa."

R. Panikkar translates the word as "the Shining One" and enumerates, in a note, the different appellations conferred on her by scholars. (*Vedic Experience*. p.77). For the odyssey of Virāj as the Earth Cow see my "Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Myth: an inquiry into the symbolism of the Vena-Pr̥thu Legend", in *Symbols in Art and Religions*, ed. K.Werner, 1990. In the Yajurveda Virāj is identified with Aditi: "Harm not the cow, Aditi, Virāj." For Jean Varenne Virāj, in X.90.5, represents *śakti*, the creative energy of the universe (*Cosmogonies védiques*.p.148).

<sup>18</sup> Cf. P.S.Deshmukh in *Religion in Vedic Literature*, 1933. p.318, who dismissed this knowledge thus: "The early Ṛgvedic poets had no clear and definite notion on the matter". But all evidence points to a certain knowledge which had no need to be expounded. Thus the asuras are the oldest gods, the devas are called older or younger (Ṛgv.I. 27.13ab; cf.X. 27.23ab); they were not always immortal, they acquired their immortality, implying another cycle than the one of the Ṛgvedic period. The Atharvaveda refers to the "earth which was previous to this one" (Athv.XI.8.7) implying that the previous earth is no more, etc.

See ch. 7. Such obvious evidence is, strangely enough, completely overlooked.

<sup>19</sup> "Theories of Creation in the ṚgVeda." J.A.O.S. 85. 1965. p.25.

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.* p27.

<sup>21</sup> The Sādhyas appear in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* vol.2 p.26 etc. Once again what is related in the *Purāṇas* finds its root, or just a mention in the Ṛgveda. *The Secret Doctrine* explains: "The names of the deities of a certain mystic class change with every Manvantara. Thus the twelve great gods, *Jayas*, created by Brahmā to assist him in the work of creation in the very beginning of the *kalpa*, and who, lost in *samādhi*, neglected to create – whereupon they were cursed to be repeatedly born in each Manvantara till the seventh – are respectively called *Ajitas*, *Tuṣitas*, *Satyas*, *Haris*, *Vaikunthas*, *Sādhyas*, and *Ādityas*: they are *Tuṣitas*, in the second kalpa, and *Ādityas* in this *Vaivasvata* period, besides other names for each age. But they are identical with the *Mānasas* or *Rājasas*, and these with our incarnating Dhyān Chohans." (S.D.II. p.90)

<sup>22</sup> *Cosmogonies védiques*. p.148.

<sup>23</sup> See fn1 for the degradation of the gods as exemplified in the Śatapatha and the Atareya Brāhmaṇas contrasting sharply with those of the Ṛgveda left to their pristine higher order of being.

<sup>24</sup> *Op.cit.* p.82.

- 25 *Op.cit.* In *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la Mémoire de Louis Renou*. Paris, 1968. pp.539-63;  
and in *Indological Studies in Honour of W. Norman Brown*. A.O.S.J. vol.47. 1962. pp. 165-85.
- 26 "Où finit Puruṣa". p.540.
- 27 "Sources and Nature of *puruṣa*". (Ṛgv.X.90). A.O.S.J. 51.1931. pp.108-18.
- 28 *Op.cit.* p.108.
- 29 *ibid.* p.112.
- 30 *ibid.* p.110
- 31 "Du Nouveau sur Ṛgveda X.90". p.170. Translation into English my own.
- 32 *ibid.* p.170
- 33 *ibid.* p.169. Italics my own.
- 34 Ṛgv.X.122.3; 124.3b.
- 35 "Sources and Nature of *puruṣa*." p.110.
- 36 Cf. "Fire and flame destroy the body of an arhat, their essence makes him immortal".  
(*Bodhimōr*. Bk.2) See also fn.9. S.D.I p.679 where the Editor of the S.D.1978 reprint, B. de Zirkoff,  
explains the *Bodhimōr* as a Mongolian translation of a Tibetan Sūtra. (Quoted in S.D. I.p.6.)
- 37 *Op.cit.* p.114. On the other hand, the claim made by J. Muir that the hymn "recognized, though in a  
pantheistic sense" "the unity of the Godhead" (O.S.T. 5. p.367) is certainly misrepresented. *Puruṣa* is  
not the Godhead, which is That *tat*, or the Unborn, *aja*.
- 38 This is Panikkar's translation, in *The Vedic Experience* which is well worth comparing with that of  
A.C. Bose's translation earlier given. Note the "three lights" in the Lord of Life which hint at the  
threefold fire and the esoteric doctrine of *ātmā-buddhi-manas*.
- 39 In *Archiv Orientalni* (J. of the Czechoslovak Oriental Institute of Prague. 1935. Vol.VII. pp.319-23.  
*Op.cit.* p.319,322.
- 40 *ibid.* p.319.
- 41 *ibid.* p.322.
- 42 *ibid.* p.323.
- 43 *ibid.* p.321.
- 44 *ibid.* p.321. fn.2.
- 45 Quoted in J. Muir's O.S.T. vol.V.p.298.
- 46 Reported in J. Gonda's "Soma, amṛta and the moon". p.58.
- 47 *op.cit.* p.118.
- 48 *The Myth of the Goddess.* p.218.
- 49 One is here reminded of the words of the Īśā Upaniṣad:
- 50 "The face of Truth is veiled by the effulgent chalice.  
Remove thou this, O Guardian, that the very eye of Truth  
may perceive its own nature." (15)
- 51 The full explanation of the human sevenfold constitution, as taught in the Trans-Himalayan teaching  
given to H.P.B., has never been given in its fullness, but only an approximation. H.P.B. herself admits this,  
e.g. two of the so called principles are no principles - the human body is not counted as a principle but is  
listed as such. An explanation will be given in part III of the present chapter.
- 52 These views are listed in R. Panikkar's *Vedic Experience.* p.77. fn.7.
- 53 *ibid.* p.75.
- 54 *op.cit.* In *Annales du Musée Guimet. Revue de l'Histoire des Religions.* Tome 175.  
No.2.1969. pp.133-54.
- 55 In *La Pensée Chinoise.* p.508 mentioned by Hoàng-Sy-Quy. *op.cit.*p.543.
- 56 *op.cit.* p.159.
- 57 As set out in Zaehner: *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism.* 1961. Ch.12.
- 58 The esoteric tradition has something of an explanation for this *desire* at the root of manifestation,  
although it states that its ultimate meaning remains unknown. The present solar system is one  
wherein the quality of love is being developed at every level, of which *desire* is the first expression,

*love* the middle, that which attracts and keeps in harmony, and *will* (not self-will) the most hidden and ultimate.

<sup>59</sup> *Vedic Experience*. p.79-80.

<sup>60</sup> Śri Krishna Prem's translation in his *The Yoga of the Kathopanishad*.

<sup>61</sup> *Op.cit.* p.145.

<sup>62</sup> *prakṛti* (from *prakṛ* to make, produce, effect) = original or primary substance;

*pradhāna* (n) original source of the visible or material universe in Sāmkhya = *prakṛti*; primary or unevolved matter; supreme or universal soul. (Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary).

Concerning *pradhāna* the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* explains: "that which is the unevolved cause is emphatically called by the most eminent sages, *pradhāna*, original base, which is subtle *prakṛti*, viz. that which is eternal, and which at once is [or comprehends what is] and [what] is not, or is mere process." (*Viṣṇu P.* I. ii. p.20 fn . Quoted in S.D. 1.p.50.)

<sup>63</sup> *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Wilson vol.1.p.23. Quoted in S.D.I. p.445 (also S.D.1.p.256.) "The 'Prādhānika Brahma Spirit' [adds H.P.B.] is Mūlaprakṛti and Parabrahman".

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* quote is the stand of *The Secret Doctrine*. The One or Universal Source of all, Brahman, comprises in Itself the two poles of manifestation, spirit and matter.

<sup>64</sup> *Puruṣa* in Sāmkhya is said to be "impotent unless he mounts on the shoulders of *Prakṛti* (matter), which, left alone, is - senseless." (S.D.I. p.247)

## PART II. ARCHETYPAL MAN IN THE KABBALAH

### INTRODUCTION

Within the framework of the esoteric tradition as it pervades the ages, prehistoric and historic, there appears another, no less important reflection of Archetypal Man presented in the esotericism of the Hebrew *Kabbalah* - in a different setting yet a fundamentally similar archetype. The *Kabbalah* is the ancient Jewish mystical tradition which purports to interpret esoterically certain books and ideas of the Old Testament, but goes far beyond these in its development of a cosmogony and an esoteric interpretation of Deity, the universe and man. The word *Kabbalah* comes from the Hebrew *qabbalah*, "tradition", what is received, from *qabal*, to receive - a similar idea to the Sanskrit word *śruti*, from *śru* to hear, listen to, or *smṛti*, "that which has been heard or communicated from the beginning, the sacred knowledge orally transmitted by the Brahmans from generation to generation" - in short the *veda* or *vidyā*. (Monier-Williams dictionary). The *Kabbalah* is thus one "tradition", though very much reworked, still extant which can be paralleled to the Hindu *śruti* and *smṛti*. Both the Hindu and the Kabbalistic traditions are still very alive in the sense of being studied and commented upon and both have similarities in their cosmogonies, their ideas on Deity and on human creation and destiny. Whence the origin, except there be an original common source or at least an influence coming through from the older to the more recent version of the ancient gnosis, both expressive of psyche's vision.

In the present study of the *esoteric wisdom* as hidden in the *Vedas* and as being explained in *The Secret Doctrine*, this Hebrew parallel takes its place as it adds another perspective and confirmation to H.P.B.'s contention that an original revelation was given to humanity. It also points to the similar quest of the human psyche that has prodded man throughout the ages to find a satisfying answer to the mystery of the universe and his own ground of being and destiny.

The antiquity of the *Kabbalah* has remained a subject of controversy among scholars, since its historic appearance is in question, as the basic doctrines written down in books do not go back long before the advent of the Christian era, and even that is contested. But all scholars seem to agree more or less that at least some of its root ideas can be traced back to Oriental influence, indeed to Babylonia. However the *Jewish Encyclopedia*



(Funk & Wagnalls, 1947) in its article on the *Kabbalah* (spelled Cabala) traces connections with ancient writings that seem to have been more or less disregarded by modern scholars!

"How old the Cabala is, may be inferred from the fact that as early a writer as Ben Sira warns against it in his saying: ...'Thou shalt have no business with secret things' (Ecclus.Sirach iii.22; compare Hag.13a; Gen.R.viii). In fact, the apocalyptic literature belonging to the second and first pre-Christian centuries contained the chief elements of the Cabala; and as, according to Josephus (l.c.), such writings were in possession of the Essenes, and were jealously guarded by them against disclosure, for which they claimed a hoary antiquity (see Philo, 'De Vita Contemplativa', iii, and Hippolytus, 'Refutation of all Heresies', ix.27), the Essenes have with sufficient reason been assumed by Jellinek... by Plessner ... [etc.] to be the originators of the Cabala.

That many such books containing secret lore were kept hidden by the 'wise' is clearly stated in IV Esdras xiv, 45-46, where Pseudo-Ezra is told to publish the twenty-four books of the canon openly that the worthy and the unworthy may alike read, but to keep the seventy other books hidden in order to 'deliver them only to such as be wise' (compare Dan.xii.10); for in them are the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom and the stream of knowledge (compare Sotah xv.3)."

This reminds one of the Tibetan Buddhist canon of which a certain number of volumes were meant for the general public, but many others were kept for the initiated.

"A study of the few still existing apocryphal books discloses the fact, ignored by most modern writers on the Cabala and Essenism, that 'the mystic lore' occasionally alluded to in the Talmudic or Midrashic literature ... is not only much more systematically presented in these older writings, but gives ample evidence of a continuous cabalistic tradition; inasmuch as the mystic literature of the geonic period is only a fragmentary reproduction of the ancient apocalyptic writings...

The Pythagorean idea of the creative powers of numbers and letters, upon which 'the Sefer Yezirah' is founded, and which was known in tannaitic times... seems to have originated in Chaldea (see Lenormant, 'Chaldean Magic' pp.29-43..." (op.cit. p.457, 458)

Traces of Gnosticism found in the *Kabbalah*, according to the author of this article, "...testify to the antiquity of the *Kabbalah*" which for him is of "Chaldean origin [as it is for H.P.B.] as suggested by Kessler, see 'Mandaeans', and in Herzog-Hauck, 'Real-Encyc.' And definitely shown by Anz ('Die Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnostizismus', 1879...Gnosticism – that is, the cabalistic 'Hokmah' (wisdom), translated into 'Madda' ... seems to have been the first attempt on the part of the Jewish Sages to give the empirical mystic lore, with the help of Platonic and Pythagorean ideas, a speculative turn ..." (op.cit.p.458)<sup>1</sup>

A Chaldean origin is here plainly admitted, but more recent writers content themselves only with vague references to a Babylonian influence and nothing more.

G. Scholem, one of the foremost writers on this subject, defines the word *Kabbalah* as "that form of Jewish mysticism and theosophy that appears to have emerged suddenly in the 13<sup>th</sup> century".<sup>2</sup> Discarding the *Zohar*<sup>3</sup> as not containing any ancient texts, "the entire work" in his opinion, belonged "to the last quarter of the 13<sup>th</sup> century" – despite the perfect possibility that a later "reaction" might find its data based on very ancient doctrines – he dismissed authors such as A. Franck who traced the *Kabbalah* to the influences of various ancient doctrines such as Zoroastrianism, as no longer meriting "serious discussion".

"As an historical phenomenon in medieval Judaism, the *Kabbalah* was born in Provence, or more precisely in its western part, known as the Languedoc."<sup>4</sup>

One may rightly query how could such a phenomenon that brought out the very core of Jewish mysticism and of a gnosis that is easily shown to be similar to the eternal gnosis, have suddenly appeared almost full fledged without any preliminary development, a maturity which takes decades if not centuries? Perhaps with a view to the difficulty Scholem admits that

"...the problem of the origin of the *Kabbalah* and its 'prehistoric' beginnings, which takes us back to the Orient, remains in all its complexity."<sup>5</sup>

The only book he accepts as ancient is the *Bahir* which, according to the testimony of Isaac ben Jacob Cohen of Soria (about 1260-1270)

"...came... from a distant land, whether from Palestine or from abroad, from old sages and holy kabbalists, who possessed a well-ordered tradition (Kabbalah) transmitted to them orally by their fathers and forefathers."<sup>6</sup>

Scholem does not even seem to accept the genuineness of an age old oral transmission of the *Kabbalah*, or "tradition", as given out by Cohen de Soria. For he dismisses it as "strictly a formality", a "correct usage", whereas it is well known from various other Oriental sources, notably the Vedic and the Tibetan Buddhist, that esoteric truths known as "tradition" are first handed down by word of mouth to the "initiated" long before they be committed to the written word which partly destroys their "esotericism".

The fact that the *Bahir* uses Oriental images presupposes an Oriental background. The book "...represented the canonical text upon which the Spanish kabbalists based themselves..."<sup>7</sup> Considered to be the work of the sages of the Talmud, the *Bahir* was later replaced by the *Zohar*, a more extensive work which expressed the Kabbalist view far more fully. Scholem detects two main currents merging to produce the Kabbalah; one concerned with the revelations of the prophet Elijah "and the appearance of the holy spirit in our academy"; the other harps back to "... vestiges of an unarticulated tradition that survived in the form of old notebooks and fragmentary leaves"; whose origin lies in "distant lands or from subterranean levels of the Jewish societies in which they emerged into the light of day."<sup>8</sup> He concludes that this encounter of one "current from above and one from below" produced the *Kabbalah*. It seems that he never looked beyond the *Bahir*, to Babylon which he admits could have been the cradle of some writings in the book, in fact to Chaldea, that ancient region of Babylonia, between the Euphrates delta, the Persian Gulf and the Arabian desert.

Under these conditions of doubts, hypotheses, theories and speculations, some of which are discussed in Scholem's *Origins of the Kabbalah*, it may not be too hazardous to take into consideration what H.P.B. had to contribute to the subject, even though her contribution has so far remained and may still remain unproved. Falling back on the then recent discoveries of Chaldean tablets, Assyrian fragments of tiles – George Smith's *Assyrian Discoveries* and his *Chaldean Account of Genesis* – which proved that long before the Old Testament was written very similar records were held by the Chaldeans describing the beginnings of creation, the creation of man, the so-called war in heaven etc., H.P.B. declared that the Kabbalistic tenets "came to the Jews from the Chaldeans", a Semitic people; that the primitive original *Kabbalah* was the Chaldean *Book of Numbers* with which the Jews must have got acquainted during their exile in Babylon but of which scholars seem to ignore the existence. As a body of doctrines the *Kabbalah* shows, in its earliest remnants, a marked link with the *secret gnosis* which H.P.B. reformulated in her *Secret Doctrine* for the benefit of Western humanity.

"The oldest system [viz. the secret gnosis] and the *Chaldean Kabbalah* were identical... The latest renderings of the *Zohar* are those of the Synagogue in the early centuries – i.e. the *Thorah* dogmatic and uncompromising". (S.D.II.p.461-2)

"...the *Kabbalah* of the Jews is but the distorted echo of *The Secret Doctrine* of the Chaldeans ... the real *Kabbalah* is found only in the *Chaldean Book of Numbers* now in possession of some Persian Sufis..."

and she adds in a note:

"The writer possesses only a few extracts, some dozen pages in all, verbatim quotations from the priceless work, of which but two or three copies, perhaps are still extant" (E.W. p.153,163)

- in her day. But these few pages have not been found either at Adyar or Wheaton. In *Isis Unveiled*, H.P.B. mentions the *Chaldean Book of Numbers* several times:

"... the original of which, if now extant, is certainly not to be found in libraries, as it formed one of the most ancient Books of Hermes, the number of which is at present undetermined." (IU.I.p.32-33)

Again

"We are not aware that a copy of this ancient work is embraced in the catalogue of any European library; but it is one of the Books of Hermes and it is referred to and quotations are made from it in the works of a number of ancient and medieval philosophical authors. Among these authorities are Arnaldus de Villa Nova's *Rosarius philosophorum*; Franciscus Arnolophinus Lucensis' *Tractat de lapide*, etc.; Hermes Trismegistus' *Tractatus de transmutatione metallorum*, and *Tabula smaragdina*,

and above all in the treatise of Raymond Lully, *De angelis opus divinum de quinta essencia.*" (ibid. I. p.254. fn).

Concerning the latter, the Lully Society attributes the authorship of the book, not to Lully, but to his teacher, Arnaldus of Villa Nova.

The Jewish Encyclopedia gives a few more interesting hints:

"The father of the German Cabala was, as is now known, a Babylonian (see Aaron B. Samuel Ha-Nasi), who emigrated to Italy in the first half of the ninth century, whence the Kalonymides later carried their teachings to Germany, where in the thirteenth century an esoteric doctrine, essentially identical with that which prevailed in Babylon about 800, is accordingly found.

While the branch of the Cabala transplanted to Italy remained untouched by foreign influences, the reaction of Greco-Arabic philosophy on Jewish mysticism became apparent in the Arabic-speaking countries. The following doctrines of Arab philosophy especially influenced and modified Jewish mysticism, on account of the close relationship between the two. The 'Faithful Brothers of Basra' as well as the Neoplatonic Aristotelians of the ninth century have left their marks on the Cabala." (op.cit.p.464)

Have the "Faithful Brothers of Basra" any link with the Persian Sufis mentioned by H.P.B?

Although tampered with and so transformed as to have strayed away from its original source, and finally dependent upon the understanding and interpretations of its successive commentators and redactors, (both Jewish and Christians) the *Kabbalah* nevertheless remains one of the closest expressions of the esoteric tradition and the best introduction to it. For its language and abstract presentation of the Tree of Life and Archetypal Man, are closer to our present day mentality than the highly mythological language of the Vedas based mostly on lost frames of reference. Even through the "ruins" and "much distorted remnants" or fragments, one can still detect many traces of the *ancient gnosis*, just as the latter appears through the garbled versions of the Purāṇic tales. Here, the *Kabbalah* is another clear example of the preservation, in some measure, of the age old tradition seeping through those minds capable of grasping and interpreting it.

#### THE KABBALAH

It is evident that Platonic, Neo-Platonic, Gnostic and theosophic ideas all impregnated with the age-old gnosis – prevalent in the early centuries A.D. – influenced the Kabbalistic speculation of that time. Scholem maintains in his *Kabbalah* that Kabbalistic writers endeavoured to differentiate themselves from these influences to produce a doctrine that, whilst remaining on the whole esoteric in its broader views, assumed a Hebrew colouring to finally diverge from the original esoteric source.

The main topics that belong to the *ancient gnosis*, appearing under various presentations are:

2. the Absolute as the Infinite, the No-Thing or Nothing, beyond human speculation; the Kabbalistic Ein Sof.
3. *Contraction* as a preliminary to *emanation*, homologous to the Vedic self-limitation in sacrificial offering for a greater expansion in manifestation, expressed in *tapas*, the divine contemplative exertion exemplified in R̥gv.X.190.1;
4. the Sefirotic Tree image of progressive emanations from the Original Source, outlining the figure of Cosmic Man, reflecting itself in each of the four worlds seen as clustering around the Sefirot;
5. the theory of powers attributed to letters, especially the vowels and their combination and interconnection (really the frequency belonging to each vowel sound) as contributing to the shaping of worlds – the 22 labourers of God referring to the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet;<sup>9</sup> a doctrine whose root goes back to immense antiquity and finds a parallel in the Vedas, but whose basic teachings are never spelled out, and so far are not understood.
6. the notion of the perfect equilibrium between the two main forces of the universe, the active and the passive inherent to the Manifested One, and fully present in the form of Primordial Man, the microcosm of the macrocosm; Adam-Kadmon.
7. the notion of other worlds than our own, their creation and destruction, echoing *The Secret Doctrine's* stand and confirmed in the few hints scattered through *The Vedas*.

Certain aspects of these points will be taken up here for examination in so far as they compare with *The Secret Doctrine* and the Vedic *Puruṣa*, *Brahman*, light or *Aditi* etc. Point d) has been examined in Chapter 5 from the standpoint of the Vedas.

*EIN SOF* (spelled *Ain Soph* in *The Secret Doctrine*)

The first and primary Idea that immediately strikes one in the Kabbalah, is that of DEITY, Ein Sof, as the Boundless, Infinite - "the inscrutable, the unknowable, the unnameable", as H.P.B. defines IT, or No Thing, in striking similarity to the Upaniṣads' Brahman and the Absolute of *The Secret Doctrine*- "a boundless circle, a sphere of which human intellect, with the utmost stretch, could only perceive the vault." (S.D.I.p.429). This is obviously the basic idea of the esoteric doctrine from which the known religions have strayed very far away in an endeavour to give to the masses a God these can relate to, in other words, a God more in man's image than anything else. Scholem examines this concept in his *Kabbalah* and remarks:

"The attitude of the Kabbalah toward God may be defined as a mystical agnosticism, formulated in a more or less extreme way and close to the standpoint of Neoplatonism"<sup>10</sup>

and somewhat reminiscent of the last stanza of Ṛgv.X.129.7. For Scholem, the term Ein Sof was coined by the early Kabbalists of Provence and Spain and cannot be traced to any Latin translation or Arabic philosophical word.<sup>11</sup> But the "neutral, impersonal concept of Ein Sof" of the earlier sources whereby Ein Sof "should not be qualified by any of the attributes or personal epithets of God found in Scripture"<sup>12</sup> – another purely esoteric tenet – gave way to a more theistic concept in the 14<sup>th</sup> century "That which has no end". Originally similar to the unqualified That (*tat*) of the Vedas, so unobtrusive that the early Sanskritists did not realise its supreme value, It came to be changed to "Him who has no end", thus personalising the Absolute; similar also to the personalising of the Ṛgvedic That into Prajāpati toiling in the waters to give birth to the worlds. This could be called the fall of the Godhead into manifestation, into the lap of humanity!

Commenting on the *no-thingness* of Ein Sof, Scholem makes the very perceptive and thoughtful remarks:

"More daring is the concept of the first step in the manifestation of Ein-Sof as *ayin* or *afisah* ("nothing", "nothingness"). Essentially, this nothingness is the barrier confronting the human intellectual faculty when it reaches the limits of its capacity. In other words, it is a subjective statement affirming that there is a realm which no created being can intellectually comprehend, and which, therefore, can only be defined as 'nothingness'... God who is called Ein-Sof in respect of Himself is called *Ayin* in respect of His first self-revelation. This daring symbolism is associated with most mystical theories concerning an understanding of the Divine, and its particular importance is seen in the radical transformation of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* into a mystical theory stating the precise opposite of what appears to be the literal meaning of the phrase. From this point of view it makes no difference whether Ein-Sof itself is the true *Ayin* or whether this *ayin* is the first emanation of Ein-Sof. From either angle, the monotheistic theory of *creatio ex nihilo* loses its original meaning and is completely reversed by the esoteric content of the formula..."<sup>13</sup>

*The Secret Doctrine*, in one of its sibylline statements, reminds us that:

"Deity is not God, it is NOTHING and DARKNESS.

It is nameless and therefore called *Ain-Soph* – 'the word 'Ayin' meaning nothing...' (S.D.I.p.350) a statement misunderstood and derided at the time by critics.

The Absolute of the Upaniṣads as of *The Secret Doctrine* has no attributes, (some Upaniṣads make a distinction between *saguna* Brahman and the *nirguṇa* Brahman); is "beyond the range of human thought" as the original Ein Sof of the *Kabbalah*. Man may rise to a certain depth of insight and reach to the threshold of that state "whence words return, together with the mind, not attaining it" (Taitt.Up.2.4.1) - the barrier confronting the intellect - for beyond it is no mental domain, but the spiritual, the unknowable, beyond our mental grasp, at least in this manvantara! So Ein Sof, says Scholem, in true esoteric tradition,

"... does not reveal itself in a way that makes knowledge of its nature possible and it is not accessible even to the innermost thought... of the contemplative. Only through the finite nature of every existing thing, through the actual existence of creation itself, is it possible to deduce the existence of *Ein-Sof* as the first infinite cause."<sup>14</sup>

This is the very essence of *The Secret Doctrine's* presentation of Deity.

"Take the *Zohar*" writes H.P.B. "and find in it the description relating to Ain Soph, the Western or Semitic Parabrahman. What passages have come so nearly up to the Vedāntic ideal as the following: 'The creation (the evolved Universe) is the garment of that which has no name, the garment *woven from the Deity's own substance.*' (Zohar.1.2a)" (In E.W. p.159)

But according to *The Secret Doctrine*, between that which is "nothing" or *Ayin* and the "Heavenly Man", there is an Impersonal First Cause, of which it is said:

"Before It gave any shape to this world, before It produced any form, It was alone, without form or similitude to anything else. Who, then, can comprehend It, how It was before the creation, since It was formless? Hence it is forbidden to represent It by any form, similitude, or even by Its sacred name, by a single letter or a single point. (Zohar, 4.2b)" (In E.W. p.159)

What is described in the above quotation seems rather to refer to the Kabbalistic Ein Sof in its original presentation, wherein *The Secret Doctrine's* distinction between the Absolute No-Thingness and the First Cause seems to be left vague.<sup>15</sup> Whatever it be, the passage is reminiscent of the ṛṣi who in his awe-inspiring vision asked the question:

"Whence this creation originated, whether He caused it to be or not,  
He who in the Highest empyrean surveys it,  
He alone knows; or else, even He knows not." (Rgv.X.129.7)

The *Zohar* goes on:

"For although to reveal itself to us, the concealed of all the concealed sent forth the Ten Emanations (Sephīroth) called the Form of God, Form of the Heavenly Man, yet since even this luminous form was too dazzling for our vision, it had to assume another form, or had to put on another garment, *which is the Universe.* The universe, therefore, or the visible world, is a farther expansion of the Divine Substance, and is called in the *Kabbalah* 'The Garment of God'."

(Zohar.1, 2a.

In E.W. p.159)

The steps or stepping down process into manifestation are clearly marked and are in keeping with the esoteric doctrine of manifestation as emanations differentiated and stepped down the further one reaches out to more material realms. The "Heavenly Man" or Adam-Kadmon appears before the manifested universe. The process of manifestation is explained in terms of the Sefirot called the "Form of the Heavenly Man". For Scholem

"The Hidden God in the aspect of *Ein Sof* and the God manifested in the emanation of *Sefirot* are one and the same, viewed from different angles."<sup>16</sup>

The *Zohar* has another way of describing the process:

"When the Concealed of the Concealed wanted to reveal Himself, He first made a point (the primordial point, or the first Sephīrōth, Air...) shaped into a sacred form (the ten Sephīrōth or the

Heavenly Man) and covered it with a rich and splendid garment, *that is the world.*" (Zohar, I. fol.1& 2, and 20a; II. fol.105a. Quoted in S.D. I. p.337)

#### THE SEFIROT OR EMANATIONS

So the power of Ein Sof manifests through the various stages of emanations called *Sefirot*, constituting the ten manifestations of Ein Sof and comprising the root of all existence.

"The Kabbalistic book *Sefer Yezirah*, that is the *Number of Creation*, opens with a statement of the hidden wisdom of God (Alhim), in *Sephrim* (Sephīrōth)." (S.D. II.p.39)

The whole process of evolution is given out in numbers

"(Sephrim or Sephīrōth), for Sēpher (or S.ph.r. when unvowelled) means to 'cipher'." (S.D.II.p.39) Further, "*Weight and Measure and Number* are, in the *Sepher Yetzirah*, the attributes of the Sephīrōth (the three *Sephrim*, or figures, ciphers), covering the whole collective number of 10; ... the Sephīrōth are the collective Adam-Kadmon, the 'Heavenly Man' or the *Logos.*" (S.D. II.p.234)

Remembering that *logos* or the word (sound/vibration) contains within itself *ratio* or *measure* (cf. Vedic *māyā*

from *mā* to measure) we have here quite a few hints on the esoteric doctrine of sound/vibration as underlying all creation. (See chapter 5 for the Ṛgvedic indications)

The ten Sefirot are said to compose the body of Adam-Kadmon or Archetypal Man "composed of the host of cosmic powers – the creative Dhyāni-Chohans, beyond which all is darkness" (S.D. I. p443). This Dhyāni Chohan body is a collective body of Light in which the higher Dhyānis are the positive and the lower the negative poles, whose constant interaction produces the web of what we know as light in our earthly realms. For the *Kabbalah* the Sefirot are divine potencies, hence the creative powers responsible for manifestation and themselves divisible as a body into a higher triad and a lower septenary. The parallelism with *The Secret Doctrine* is evident: the potencies of Divinity are equivalent to the Dhyāni Chohans.

One of the best images depicting the conception of emanation from the One Source is found in the *Zohar*: "The Deity (the ever-Invisible Presence) manifests itself through the *ten* Sefirot, which are its radiating witnesses. The Deity is like the sea from which outflows a stream called WISDOM, the waters of which fall into a lake named Intelligence. From the basin, like seven channels, issue the Seven Sefirot ... For *ten equal seven*: the Decad contains *four* Unities and *three* Binaries." (As quoted in S.D. I.p.239. *Zohar*, II. 42-43; Amst.ed.)

One recalls here the Vedic deity, Varuṇa, called an ocean of wisdom.

The ten Sefirot make up the "Tree of emanation" or the Cosmic Tree of the Sefirot that is seen as growing down from KETER, the Crown, or first Sefirah (indeed like the Vedic inverted tree), and as spreading out through all the other Sefirot right down to MALKHUT (Kingdom), the lowest Sefirot. As an image this tree is first found in the *Sefer ha-Bahir*, the first known record of an incipient Kabbalah with the specific symbolism that Kabbalistic writers were to use and whose sources are recognised as being Oriental. There one finds the image of the divine powers resting upon one another, like a tree watered by the waters of wisdom.

Although the ten Sefirot are often thought of as a unity in the *Bahir*, a fundamental division can already be discerned of two groups, the upper three and the lower seven, going back to a *midrash* stating: "these are Wisdom, Understanding and Gnosis or divine Knowledge."<sup>17</sup>

The first Sefirah has been the subject of a great deal of speculation. In the *Bahir* it is also designated as *Thought (maḥshabah)* or "the primordial idea...the inner point that can be reached by all meditation and all comprehension of God" as S. Gershom qualifies it, which makes him ask whether this terminology owes something to a gnostic tradition where thought (*ennoia*) is "conceived as the supreme aeon of the pleroma". He qualifies it further as that "primordial divine idea that precedes everything and embraces everything within itself", whose quality is boundlessness,<sup>18</sup> in other words the COSMIC IDEATION of *The Secret Doctrine*.

"Within it (i.e. within the primordial divine idea) there existed, in potentia and hidden, the two 'highest principles' or 'supreme roots', that is original *matter* and original *form*, until the divine will combined them."<sup>19</sup>

Cosmic Ideation and Cosmic root Substance in *The Secret Doctrine* lie merged and in potentia until the hour of manifestation has struck. An obvious divergence occurs in the *Bahir's* conception.

The first Sefirah being hidden, uncreated, is not considered a "beginning"; the latter starts with the second Sefirah, HOKHMAH, WISDOM, which in accordance with Proverbs 8:22 is said to have been first created by the Lord "at the beginning of his course". The *pleroma*, the fullness or cosmos as against chaos, begins here, the Cosmic Tree is watered from here, the primordial Torah is rooted in this ultimate divine WISDOM. The third Sefirah, BINAH, UNDERSTANDING, "Mother of the world" emerges here where the Cosmic Tree of worlds is rooted, and with her the seven lower sefirot unfold.

"... Below the three supreme 'words' in the hierarchy of the pleroma are the seven other words identical with the seven voices with which the Torah was given and with the seven voices mentioned in Psalm 29... But above all, they are the seven 'holy forms' of God in accordance with which God created man in his image."<sup>20</sup>

Should these seven "holy forms" refer to the "angelic powers" or the preexistent forms of the *hokhmah* or Wisdom (which for Scholem remains unclear) then they would be quite in line with *The Secret Doctrine* which refers to the hosts of cosmic powers as being expressive of COSMIC MAN. With regard to Cosmic Man, Scholem shows how

"... In connection with these seven forms, mention is always made (in the *Bahir*) ... of the seven

limbs that principally constitute man... The concept of an '*adam qadmon* or *makroanthropos*...which contains in its totality the kabbalistic pleroma of all the aeons and potencies, is not yet clearly expressed in the *Bahir*; but the basic idea is certainly present. For even the three supreme logoi can, ... be characterized if not as anatomical limbs of the primordial man, then at least as the highest intellectual powers, Thought, Wisdom, and Understanding, that act in him."<sup>21</sup>

Various are the ways in which the Sefirotic Tree has been presented. The following is one of the earliest:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>1. KETER (CROWN)</p> <p>2. HOKHMAH (WISDOM)</p> <p>4. GEDULLAH (GREATNESS)<br/>or<br/>HESED (LOVE)</p> <p>6. TIFERET (BEAUTY)<br/>or<br/>RAHAMIM (COMPASSION)</p> <p>8. HOD (MAJESTY)</p> | <p>3. BINAH (INTELLIGENCE)</p> <p>5. GEVURAH (POWER)<br/>or<br/>DIN (JUDGMENT or RIGOUR)</p> <p>7. NEZAH (ENDURANCE)</p> <p>9. ZADDIK (RIGHTEOUSNESS)<br/>or<br/>YESOD OLAM<br/>(FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD)</p> |
| <p>10. MALKHUT (KINGDOM)</p>   |   |

The Sefirotic Tree, image of the divine Life or emanation, image of Archetypal Man, is presented in terms of abstract qualities which, on first confrontation, may hide the essential imagery. The interpretations and explanations vary, as may vary the nomenclature of the qualities, for example Rigour or Justice, Mercy or Love or Compassion. Obviously Keter and Malkhut can give rise to a great variety of interpretations, the basic substratum, however remains the same. As explained by Shimon Halevi: "The pattern thus called forth is the model on which everything that is to come into manifestation is based. It has been named the Image of God, but it is more generally known as the Tree of Life". Again

"The relationship set forth in the Tree underlies the whole of existence; and so the properties of the Sefirot may be seen in terms of any branch of knowledge. Thus while their basic definition is as Attributes of God, they can be defined in terms of human experience because we too are cast in the Image of God. This anthropomorphic method is common in the *Kabbalah* as elsewhere, and is freely applied as a symbolic language in metaphysical areas which pure abstractions cannot explain."<sup>22</sup>

The Sefirot were divided according to various groupings, one of these viewing the first three Sefirot (Keter, Hokhmah, Binah) as pertaining to the spiritual-intellectual domain, the next three (Gedullah, Gevurah, Tiferet) to the psycho-mental and the next three (Nezah, Hod, Yesod) to the natural, the last as the basis or vehicle of it all, thereby outlining the human constitution. An esoteric tenet, however, underlies the twofold division which demarcates the upper triad of Keter, Hokhmah and Binah from the lower seven. Interestingly, these first three, according to Scholem

"...represent the progress from will to thought and thence to intellect, where the general content of wisdom or thought is more precisely individuated."<sup>23</sup>

There is here evidenced a shift from the Bahir's "profundity" of "Thought" as the CROWN to Divine WILL as though a new awareness has come that Will is even beyond Thought. There lurks behind this Triad and its subsequent seven emanations the hardly known esoteric doctrine of the threefold Fire from which emanate the seven fires and that of the Seven Cosmic Rays or Powers, called by various names.

One of the most esoteric tenets – esoteric in that it cannot be grasped in terms of concept that the mind can deal with – pertains to the Triple Fire, purely formless and invisible in the highest sphere, yet metaphysically triple, concealed in the Central Spiritual Sun, (touched upon in Ch.4) and its septenary manifestations at the differentiated levels. This doctrine is reflected in Vedic Agni's threefold radiance, his seven flames and his lordship over the seven rivers (equivalent in one of their esoteric meanings to the races of humanity and its seven hosts of progenitors).

"I am the threefold radiance, traverser of the firmament;  
everlasting heat, my name is burnt-offering." (Ṛgv.III.26.7cd)

Parallel to this threefold Fire which also has in the Vedas its reflection in solar fire with its three aspects – light, life or *prāṇa* and intelligence - and intimately linked to it, are the three aspectual Rays: Will, Love/Wisdom, Intelligence. Of these Primordial Seven Rays, the first three aspects, so far as human perception/conception can register them, are identified as WILL, WISDOM/LOVE and INTELLIGENCE/ACTIVITY, homologous to the Hindu system *ātman*, *buddhi*, *manas* (spirit, spiritual or intuitive insight, mind or intelligent activity), these three forming the core of our spiritual aspect, which with our desire nature and physical body make of us human beings the microcosm of the macrocosm. Furthermore, *ātman* is homologous to Śiva of the Hindu Trinity, for in its first Ray activity it destroys but to regenerate, renew, redeem; *buddhi* to Viṣṇu in its preserving activity for love encompasses and shelters but to bring forth, and wisdom garners the essence of knowledge to ripen the fruit of experience into wisdom; and *manas* to Brahmā, the active organiser that acts directly upon matter. It is only when viewed from such esoteric perspective that the full meaning of Genesis verse 1. 27 becomes apparent:

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created He him;  
male and female created He them." (Gen .1.27)

- in God's own image, that is, with the threefold divine attributes that human beings recognise as WILL, the instigating and regenerative power; love/wisdom, the cohesive, building and fruitful power; and intelligence, the implementing, organising activity; also with the polarities inherent in Man who is the measure of all things; the microcosm of the macrocosm, in Biblical terms, *made in the image of God*.

Will, esoterically, is viewed as the *transcending Will* which, in its transmitting the required energies, *transforms* all processes in accordance with the WILL-TO-GOOD inherent to the *all consuming WILL*; conditions, overcomes and transforms little by little, by establishing the divine Order (*ṛta*, Cosmic Harmony) within the confines of restrictive matter; thereby bringing about what is esoterically called the redemption of matter; a conception which St Paul understood and tried to express thus:

"For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.  
Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.  
For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.  
And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:19, 21, 22, 28)

To them that love God refers to those willing to toil together towards the establishment of harmony, hence good-will among humans, as well as all creatures here below.

The second Ray, Love/Wisdom, as the great attractive, holding and fusing power of the universe, produces cohesion and harmony, heralding the synthesising vision of Divine Purpose which the Will aspect outlines, as well as that at-one-ment for which the "whole creation is moaning in the pangs of birth". The third aspect is represented by that Intelligent activity present throughout Nature and the universe, that on earth develops in the three higher kingdoms as awareness, sensitivity, response to environment and suitable transformations in accordance with surrounding conditions; transmutes sensory perception in humanity into knowledge and, with the help of the Second Ray, knowledge into Wisdom; which finally, with the impact of First Ray Directive transforms the whole into a purposeful WILL-TO-GOOD, the human reflection of which is good-will. These are basic data of the esoteric wisdom that find their reflection, dim or widely divergent, in all the triads – whether abstract or more often anthropomorphised into father, mother, son – of the ancient religious systems.

The four other rays, called rays of attributes, have not been so pervasive and can hardly be analysed in terms of homology with the Sefirot. Apart from the first three Sefirot, obviously esoteric in their



implication as they govern cosmic and human life, the seven others are very abstract in their presentation. What is exactly meant by greatness,<sup>24</sup> power, endurance, majesty, beauty, with reference to the cosmos and man? These are descriptive epithets centred around the regal form of the divine. The nomenclature of the 7 last Sefirot must have been partially inspired by 1.Chronicles 29:11 which is a praise of God's mightiness, emphasising greatness, power, majesty, glory:

"Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all."

The Sefirotic tree gives a schema of the exalted vision of a divine kingdom to which is added *love*, judgment, beauty, endurance, righteousness, the loftiest human aspirations that reflect this kingdom. Love and mercy are synonymous for the *Aggadah*; mercy in the *Bahir* is equivalent to Grace or Love (=hesed) and in Kabbalistic texts is viewed as representing equilibrium between love and stern judgment, hence *love – mercy – judgment*, this equilibrium being representative of *truth* (in the *Bahir*). Here we find the ancient *gnosis* of *ṛta*, *truth*, harmony, expressed in the Balance of Nature, the equilibrium of the worlds moving in majestic orderly array around the heavenly vault as a mirror of the inner world out of which all emerges and into which all reemerges. Truth, righteousness, equilibrium are the human expression of that Cosmic Order which the ancients visioned and gave us as a model on which to frame our human social order, but which we have totally forgotten.

Scholem's interpretation of the first three Sefirot as representing "the progress from will to thought to intellect" earlier quoted, is reflected in the Kabbalistic consideration of the "workings of God", some maintaining that God works through "pure thought", that "thought which has no end of finality" and is "impenetrable to merely human thought",<sup>25</sup> from whose exalted state everything else has emanated. The human mind is here seen searching in its very depth for an answer to one of the greatest of life's mysteries and at pains to reach out to what H.P.B. called "Cosmic Ideation". This *Ideation* as stepped right down to the human level, manifests in human beings as consciousness welling up as 'I am I', reflective or self-consciousness. From this Divine Ideation reflected in the Universal Mind or collective hosts of celestial Beings,<sup>26</sup> the "blueprint" becomes the "pattern" in the heavens according to which the universe-to-be is to be fashioned. This conception is well marked in the R̥gvedic verse that tells us of the "ordainers" that "vision the Cosmic Order and shining forth have established their wonder-works." (R̥gv. IV.55.2cd).

Other Kabbalists thought in terms of the hidden God working through the "Primal Will", the "Will which activates thought" and "constitutes the ultimate level to which thought can penetrate" or "that which thought can never attain".<sup>27</sup> There was however no ultimate agreement as to this Primal Will being co-eternal with Ein Sof or originating from Ein Sof at the time of emanations.

#### ADAM KADMON AND PURUṢA: A COMPARISON

The Sefirotic Tree, conceived as emanating from Ein Sof, the Infinite, the No-Thing, was presented in its underlying structure as Cosmic Man, Adam-Kadmon.<sup>28</sup> For *The Secret Doctrine* "the Sefirōth are the collective Adam-Kadmon, the 'Heavenly Man' or the *Logos*". (S.D.II.p.234). A somewhat similar conception of Cosmic Man emanating from the Supreme Source is expressed in *Manu* where

"From the (first) Cause, indistinct, eternal, including in  
Itself Being and no-Being, came Puruṣa..." (*Manu* 1.11)

- Archetypal Man embodying in himself the two polarities at the highest and at the lowest level.

Adam-Kadmon's presentation, however, may seem on the one hand more abstract than that of Puruṣa in the *puruṣasūkta*, in the particular sense of the ten cyphers, splendours, vessels, or tools, the ten abstractions as variously interpreted, but on the other hand, as concrete since they are made to correspond to the "limbs" of Cosmic Man. Furthermore, Adam-Kadmon is equated with primordial Light, as will be explained, and is androgyne, aspects not clarified in Puruṣa.

Quoting from the *Zohar*:

"When I framed Adam-Kadmon, [the Elōhīm are made to say], the Spirit of the Eternal shot out of his Body like a sheet of lightning that radiated at once on the billows of the *Seven* millions of skies, and my *ten* splendours were his limbs." (*Zohar* 1.158. Quoted in S.D.I. p.239)

One could criticise the use of the word "body" for the Eternal ... H.P.B. explains the Sefirot of the upper Triad:

" '1, *Kether* (the Crown), represented by the brow of Macroprosopus;<sup>29</sup> 2, *Ḥokhmāh* (Wisdom, a male Principle), by his right shoulder; and 3, *Bīnāh* (Intelligence, a female Principle), by the left shoulder'. Then come the *seven* limbs, (or Sephīrōth); on the planes of manifestation, the totality of these four planes being represented by *Microprosopus*, (the Lesser Face) or Tetragrammaton, the 'four-lettered' Mystery. 'The seven manifested and the *three* concealed Limbs are the Body of the Deity.' " (S.D.I. p.239-40)

The upper three considered as purely esoteric and the lower seven as the manifested ones, though all are expressions of the "splendours" of the outflow of Deity, forming the decad, are conceived as being inherent to man in certain measures, though according to the Trans-Himalayan esotericism man is said to be a "sevenfold plant", not a tenfold one as are the Sefirot in their manifestations of the Divine Outflow. Man has within himself the upper triad, or perhaps its reflection, KETHER or CROWN (first Ray), ḤOKHMĀH or WISDOM (2<sup>nd</sup> Ray), BĪNĀH or INTELLIGENCE (3<sup>rd</sup> Ray). As explained, the esoteric doctrine of the Rays appears hinted at in this upper triad of the Sefirot, concerning which H.P.B. quotes from the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*:

"The first triad of the body of Adam-Kadmon... cannot be seen before the soul stands in the presence of the Ancient of Days." (S.D.I. p.239)

To stand in the presence of the Ancient of Days means to have taken the first steps towards transcending the human condition. Cognition of the Upper Triad (equivalent to *ātman-buddhi-manas*) signifies the human being's capacity to enter into another, a subtler dimension of his being, to face a more dazzling light without being blinded, a capacity to confront and transmute one's own shadow or "dweller on the threshold" with all that this implies, to be more and more attuned to the Inner Monitor; the capacity to climb and stand, unafraid, on the mount of "transfiguration". It signifies the realisation of the oneness of the soul with the Universal Soul. This one little phrase shows at what level the *Book of Numbers* operates, and H.P.B.'s choice of this quotation is quite revealing of her insight into the mysteries of the human soul.

Adam-Kadmon's presentation, first in terms of the circle, the line, and the various attributes or qualities such as wisdom, intelligence, greatness, judgment, etc. forms the

"... Adam-Kadmon who is the (Sephīrōthal) Tree... who becomes the 'Tree of knowledge of good and evil' esoterically. And that 'tree hath around it seven columns (seven pillars) of the world, or *Rectores*'; the same '*Progenitors*' or 'Sephīrōth' again 'operating through the respective orders of Angels in the spheres of the seven planets' ..." (S.D.II. p.293)

With this Sefirotic Tree was worked out a complete homologation with the human body wherein the purely physical parts were emphasised, in contradistinction to the Vedic focus on the organs of perception and action rather than physical parts of the body. Thus in the Kabbalah Sefirah corresponds to the head

"and, in the Zohar, the three cavities of the brain; the fourth and the fifth, the arms; the sixth, the torso; the seventh and eighth the legs; the ninth, the sexual organ; and the tenth refers either to the all-embracing totality of the image, or (as in the *Bahir*) to the female as companion to the male, since both together are needed to constitute a perfect man."<sup>30</sup>

Both Puruṣa and Adam-Kadmon, as archetypal Man, are cosmically integrated, their essential oneness with the root of manifestation comes out in the very delineation of the several corresponding aspects based upon the esoteric law of correspondences. The *puruṣasūkta*, through a specific terminology that pertains to the three solar divinities agni-sūrya-viṣṇu, examined in Part I, hints at the inner link of these gods with Puruṣa: the three expressive of the flame-power that rules the universe and of which Archetypal Man, Puruṣa, is the torch-bearer in his creative and sacrificial activity. This fact alone reveals the full integration of Puruṣa in the Cosmic Order in his very activity, the cosmos being the song of the divine sacrificial offering. The social order within humanity as a mirror of the Cosmic Order, is symbolised through the body of Puruṣa from which emerge the four main classes, inserted in the body, as the human social order is inserted into the Cosmic Order. The *Kabbalistic Tree of Life*, as represented by the ten Sefirot expressive of the ten divine attributes, inscribes Adam-Kadmon as the mirror and model in which vibrates the pulse of the divine attributes, in which all human aspirations and future achievements are rooted; it outlines a cosmos where divine principles translated as highest human virtues spell out the Kabbalistic vision of Cosmic Truth; it integrates Adam-Kadmon as the

very core of cosmos. The human social order is not so much sketched but it is implied in Adam-Kadmon as the Tree of knowledge of good and evil, the field of experience wherein man learns to align himself on the side of harmony, justice, truth, to create his own social order, mirror of the divine Order.

For the Hebrew sages, as for the Vedic ṛṣis, the world was based upon "righteousness" - translated in Vedic terms, "ṛta". Thus the *aggadah* in Hagigah 12b: "The world rests on one pillar, and its name is righteous, for it is said (Prov.10:25) that the righteous is the foundation of the world". So also the *Bahir*, sect. 71, where occurs this remarkable passage:

"A column goes from the earth up to heaven, and its name is righteous, after the (earthly) righteous. When there are righteous upon earth, it is strong, but when there are not, it grows slack; and it bears the entire world, for it is said: 'the righteous is the foundation of the world'. But if it is slack, the world cannot exist ..."

This can also be fruitfully compared with "Truth is the foundation that bears the earth; by law the sons of the Infinite stand secure" (Ṛgv.X.85.1) and with the "Support of the universe" hymn of the Atharvaveda (X.7) especially stanzas 11&12, or with Atharvaveda XII.1.1:

"Vast truth, mighty Order, consecration, contemplative exertion (*tapas*) invocation (*brahman*), offering, uphold the earth."

These are all not merely expressions of, but revelation inherent to, the human psyche. The *underlying thought* in these presentations is similar, their description differs with different emphasis; each is unique, yet a fundamental reflection of psyche's aspiration, deepest knowledge and stand for truth. Puruṣa and Adam-Kadmon represent the *positive active principle* within the cosmos and as such embody the two inter-related and complementary creative forces, the positive and the negative. Whether one views them as Archetypal Man, as model for humanity, or as embodying the hosts of creative celestial beings, the image is grandiose.

There is mapped out in the Sefirotic Tree of emanations a "charter" of an anthropogony superimposed upon a cosmogony that goes back to the very ancient view of the universe, with the Absolute beyond human conception and beyond time, from whose hearth of power kindled to activity [in accordance with the universal law of periodicity] are sparked off progressive emanations into more and more dense expressions of *being*, existence out of quiescence, until our own most material plane is reached. As described by G. Scholem from the *Zohar*, in striking similarity to the Ṛgvedic focus on *Agni* and *tapas* (Ṛgv.X.129.1-3; 190.1-3) and to the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad with its image of the blazing fire from which innumerable sparks fly up:

"From the mystery of *Ein-Sof* a flame is kindled and inside the flame a hidden well comes into being. The primordial point shines forth in being when the well breaks through the ether (1:15a).

It is as if all the possible images were assembled together within this description."<sup>31</sup>

These emanations in Kabbalistic garb embody so to speak "mathematical concepts and organic imagery"<sup>32</sup>-mathematical in that the first Sefirah signifies nothingness or zero, the second the primordial point containing within itself all measures and possibilities expressive of the Divine Will, expanding into a circle in the third Sefirah, etc.; organic in that the "primordial point" is equated "with the seed sown in the womb of 'the supernal mother' who is Binah"<sup>33</sup>: the third Sefirah. Both aspects of manifestation are therein included. Another view of the first Sefirah takes it as the "primordial ether (*avir kadmon*) which surrounds EIN SOF like an eternal aura",<sup>34</sup> a view similar to the Upaniṣads *ākāśa*, the Ṛgvedic "waters" of space, the fathomless depths of Ṛgv.X.129, and the fire-mist of the Stanzas of Dzyan. These archetypal images, going back to the very night of time, aim at describing a transcendent vision to which no words can give the essence.

Thus with the *Kabbalah*: once again a Tree of Life emerges to sight, a tree that assumes the figure of Archetypal Man, Adam-Kadmon, who himself is the *Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil*, through the experience of which each human spark may finally return in full consciousness, knowledge and wisdom from its peregrination through the spheres to the Source, now capable of radiating the full glory of Archetypal Man.

The imagery develops for not only is Adam-Kadmon the Cosmic Tree of Life and of Knowledge, but also the very chariot, the vehicle of Deity. From the *Zohar*:

"The Infinite Unity, formless and without similitude, after the Form of the Heavenly Man was created, used it. The Unknown Light (Darkness) used the Heavenly Form... as a Chariot (...Mercabah), through which to descend, and wished to be called by this Form, which is the sacred name YHVH [Jehovah]." (Quoted in S.D.I. p.356. *Zohar* II, 42b-43a.)

The Infinite Unity, which is the Unknown Light or, in esoteric terminology Darkness, is here shown as using the form of the Heavenly Man as a chariot, as a means of manifestation, and this form or chariot is called Jehovah. This proves that kabbalistically Jehovah is not recognised as the supreme living God, but merely a manifestation and that certain rabbis were well aware of this. He betrays his significance both in his being revealed to be a vehicle or chariot, and in the very meaning of the letters of his name: when analysed one finds *jod* father; *he* mother; *vau* son; *he* generation; i.e. dual sexed humanity fallen into generation, hence quite removed from its pristine source. The chariot used by Deity is humanity itself. Archetypal Man is the vehicle through which Deity reveals Itself, and humanity the instrument through whom this revelation is due to come about. This is also the essential meaning of the *puruṣasūkta*.

#### ADAM KADMON AND LIGHT, AND THE FEMININE ASPECT

One aspect of profound interest emerges in Adam-Kadmon but not so openly emphasised in Puruṣa (R̥gv.X.90, or Manu 1.11), except in the hidden sense of *embodied flame* (as explained) missed by Western exegesists, implying the light-bearer of cosmos, flame power of illumination and fully expressed in the Yajurveda as the Heavenly Man "refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness" (Yjv.31.18). That aspect which concerns *light* is in the *Zohar* made to explain a verse of Genesis: "and God said, let there be Light and there was Light" (Gen.1.7), once again revealing the cosmic integration of Adam-Kadmon.

*The Secret Doctrine* posits that it is through the "power and light" (called *daivi-prakṛti* in the Bhagavad Gītā) of the Logos that everything is created, hence

"...this light is the permutation, in our manifested world, of Mūlaprakṛti [root matter or *ākāśa*] called *Aditi* in the *Vedas*. In its third aspect it becomes *Vāc*, the daughter and the mother of the Logos... In the *Kabbalah* *Sephīrāh* is the same as *Shekhīnah*..." (S.D.I. p.430)

The origin of light is thus to be sought in supra-physical or supra-atomic levels, in supersensuous planes which cannot be weighed, quantified or measured by any human method or instrument. When it is stated that *light is substance*, the latter refers to an essential aspect of what the Upaniṣads called *ākāśa*<sup>35</sup> not in the later sense of the fifth element, ether, (which is only a differentiation on our plane of manifestation) but as the basis of the form aspect of all manifestations, *ākāśa* identified with sound-vibration, within and around which "the universe is woven warp and woof". Notice the third aspect of light called *Vāc*.

"... there are three kinds of light in Occultism, as in the *Kabbalah*. (1) The Abstract and Absolute Light, which is Darkness; (2) the Light of the Manifested-Unmanifested, called by some the Logos; and (3) The latter light reflected in the Dhyāni-Chohans, the minor *Logoi* (the Elōhīm, collectively), who, in their turn, shed it on the objective Universe." (S.D. II.p.37)

For the first abstract and absolute light H.P.B. quotes from the Chaldean *Book of Numbers*:

"The One Universal Light, which to Man is *Darkness*, is ever existent'..."

Of this light some of the great Christian mystics had an inkling, calling it the "dazzling light". H.P.B. goes on with her own explanation:

"From it proceeds periodically the ENERGY, which is reflected in the 'Deep' or Chaos, the store-house of future worlds, and, once awakened, stirs up and fructifies the latent Forces, which are the ever present eternal potentialities in it. Then awake anew the Brahmās and Buddhas – the co-eternal Forces – and a new Universe springs into being." (S.D. I.p.337)

That differentiations do occur along all scales of manifestation appear even at the observable physical level where light differentiates into various component aspects. First, it is considered either as colliding particles, or as standing waves that possess positive and negative values called phases. But light, when stepped down through its various electromagnetic frequencies called angstrom's units, becomes at its lower end transformed into heat, fire, electricity, magnetism, electrostatic and electro-magnetic force, and on its lower counterpart *sound*. We separate its many aspects for purposes of observation and application. The marshalling of electrons can produce various effects, one of which, when applied to circuits, produces energy within the circuit that can be translated into heat and frequency which is sound.

From the esoteric standpoint, light, in its higher reaches, clothes or outlines the forms of the celestial entities at a level which physical eyes cannot perceive. These entities are divided into many categories, but of the latter there are two main divisions: the positive or active, called Greater Builders, and the passive or



'Fallen Angel', a god in exile ..." (S.D.I. p.450)

fallen into the lower planes of the circle of manifestation, who through his desire for more and more material existence and its conquest, has forgotten his divine origin, and reduced himself to lowliness, hence puny man.

Archetypal Man, whether as Puruṣa or as Adam-Kadmon, is thus revealed as a blazing Centre of Light, Intelligence and Creativity, embracing the two polarities of creation, far reaching in its implications; and the hidden connection between Aditi "father and mother and son" who is "what has been and what will be", the very substance of creation, and Puruṣa who also "is all this, what has been and what will be" becomes evident and a pointer to that ineradicable *archetype* centred in the very depth of the human psyche. Surely the spiritual origin of humanity is here unequivocal.

#### THE FEMININE ASPECT IN THE KABBALAH

The *Kabbalah* understood the creative role of light and the part the feminine power plays in the cosmos which it exemplified and developed in its conception of Shekhinah, a part which the monotheistic religions crushed out of existence -but not completely (observe the worship of the madonna). Somewhat comparable to Aditi even though the latter towers far higher as the goddess of truth, righteousness and light, whilst Shekhinah became far more anthropomorphised in course of time, Shekhinah first appears in Talmudic and Midrashim texts as the mere presence or indwelling of God, or at best the "luminous splendour of God". In the mystical Merkabah literature,<sup>36</sup> which focusses on the mysteries of the "throne on its chariot" inspired from Ezekiel ch.1, the Shekhinah is viewed as hidden in the celestial realm of the Merkabah and identified with the "Glory of God". From the "presence of God" to the "hidden Shekhinah" that appears to the vision of the illuminated seer as seated on the Throne and from whom emanates a voice taken to be the voice of God, to the hypostatizing of the Shekhinah into a divine quality separate from and engaging in a dialogue with God, the steps gradually lead to a more marked differentiation from God and finally to the image of the daughter, or bride of God, a symbolism surely influenced by the Gnostic aeons - the spiritual creative powers.

G. Scholem traces the conception of a feminine element in the Godhead to pagan mythology. It may be so outwardly and as a historic record, but its root is deeply embedded in the human psyche, however crushed by outward male conditioning. The link with the Gnostics is however quite striking. Thus

"... The similes employed in the book *Bahir* to describe the Shekhinah are extremely revelatory in this respect. For some Gnostics, the 'lower Sophia', the last aeon on the rim of the *pleroma*, represents the 'daughter of light' who falls into the abyss of matter. In close parallel with this idea, the Shekhinah, as the last of the Sefiroth, becomes the 'daughter' who, although her home is the 'form of light' must wander into far lands."<sup>37</sup>

This could be compared with what H.P.B. has to say concerning

"...the Gnostic doctrine found in *Pistis Sophia* (Knowledge-Wisdom), in which treatise Sophia-Akhamōth [daughter of Sophia] is shown lost in the waters of Chaos (matter), on her way to Supreme Light, and Christos delivering and helping her on the right Path. Note well, 'Christos' with the Gnostics meant the impersonal principle, the Atman of the Universe, and the Atman within every man's soul - not Jesus; though in the old Coptic MSS ... 'Christos' is almost constantly replaced by 'Jesus'." (S.D.I.p.132. fn)

This Sophia-Akhamoth, daughter of Universal Wisdom (Sophia) is obviously the human soul lost in the quicksands of matter. Shekhinah finally represents the mystical idea of Israel, Queen, daughter and bride of God and mother of everyone in Israel. Mary is also queen of heaven, mother of God and bride of Christ.

The archetype of the feminine<sup>38</sup> is as indestructible as that of the masculine, for in their very core both constitute the centrifugal and centripetal universal movement of life, the outgoing and ingoing rhythm of all, the constant interaction of the positive and negative. To accept one and refuse the other is to fail to recognise the universal ebb and flow of life and the constant interaction of its polarities. However crushed and buried away, the eternal Feminine dwells in silence in the depth of the human psyche but to surface again and again under various circumstances and in various practices (the worship e.g. of the Virgin Mary, of KwanYin, of Tara and their reported miracles) and under various symbols, such as the crescent moon and the holy stone of Mecca in Islam. Finally acknowledged by the Kabbalists, the feminine element of the Divine as Shekhinah goes back to the concept of the "luminous splendour of God", the "light" of the Godhead, his "presence" called *kabhod* or "glory", a radiance and a splendour which shine upon all creatures, reminiscent of Aditi whose great gift is that of *Light*, the transparency of *Truth*. For it is out of the depth of the archetype of Light and its profound significance, coalescing in the Vedic and Kabbalistic case, with the archetype of the Feminine, that arose (in the

Vedic case) that grand vision of divine light and Truth: Aditi, the Infinite cradle of life, Queen of Cosmic Order and Protectress of men; (in the Kabbalistic case) the vision of light as glory and presence of God assuming the form of Shekhinah who surely joins Aditi in her celestial light that upholds the people, the very essence of righteousness and guide to her worshippers. H.P.B. identifies

"...Aditi, the mother of the gods" with "Shekhinah eternal light – in the world of Spirit, the 'Great Deep' and CHAOS, or primordial Substance in its first remove from the UNKNOWN, in the manifested Kosmos." (S.D. II.p.527)<sup>39</sup>

From the esoteric standpoint

"When Sēphirāh emerges like an active power from within the latent Deity, she is female; when she assumes the office of a Creator, she becomes a male; hence she is androgyne. She is the 'Father and Mother Aditi' of the Hindu cosmogony and of *The Secret Doctrine*". (S.D. I.p.354-5)  
 "Sēphirāh is the Crown, KETHER, in the abstract principle only, as a mathematical x (the unknown quantity). On the plane of differentiated nature, she is the female counterpart of Adam-Kadmon - the first Androgyne. The *Kabbalah* teaches that the word 'Fiat Lux' (*Genesis* ch.1) referred to the formation and evolution of the Sēphirōth, and not to light as opposed to darkness." (S.D. I.p.215 fn)

Comparing the Kabbalistic and the Hindu doctrines with the ancient gnosis, H.P.B. points to certain similarities:

"The ten Sēphiroth, the *three* and the Seven, are called in the *Kabbalah* the ten words, DBRIM (Debarim), the numbers and the Emanations of the heavenly light, which is both Adam-Kadmon and Sēphirāh or (Brahmā) Prajāpati-Vāc. Light, Sound, Number, are the three factors of creation in the *Kabbalah*.

Parabrahman cannot be known except through the luminous Point, (the LOGOS) which knows not *Parabrahman* but only *Mūlaprakṛti*.

Similarly Adam-Kadmon knew only Shekhinah, though he was the *vehicle* of Ain Soph. And, as Adam-Kadmon, he is in the esoteric interpretation the total of the number ten, the Sēphirōth (himself a trinity, or the three attributes of the *incognizable* DEITY in one). 'When the Heavenly Man (or Logos) first assumed the form of the Crown (Kether) and identified himself with Sēphirāh, he caused seven splendid lights to emanate from it (the Crown) [*Chaldean Book of Numbers*], which made in their totality ten; so Brahmā-Prajāpati, once he became separated from, yet identical with Vāc, caused the seven ṛṣis, the seven Manus or Prajāpatis, to issue from that Crown. In *exotericism* one will always find 10 and 7, of either Sēphirōth or Prajāpatis; in *esoteric* rendering always 3 and 7, which yield also 10. Only when divided, in the manifested sphere, into 3 and 7, they form...the androgyne..." (S.D. I.p.432-3)

"Whence then" asks H.P.B. "all this identity of ideas, if there were no primeval, UNIVERSAL Revelation?" (S.D. I.p.356) -

and no visionaries to receive and interpret it, or no fundamental archetypes that served as basis for revelations and from which constellate the many similar visions?

Connections and similarities in these age old ideas may not be at first sight apparent but they underlie the whole edifice of thought. Adam-Kadmon, Primordial Man is inclusive of the masculine or positive and the feminine or negative, and even the word Adam is generic, however little known to the general public. Is the vision of Puruṣa, as extant in the *puruṣasūkta* and in Manu wholly masculine? Most would answer in the affirmative for it apparently seems to be, and the translation is 'the Man' even though, since Puruṣa extends everywhere, the subtle essence (*ākāśa = aditi*) that constitutes the form of all must be part of his own essence. Prajāpati who is the equivalent to Puruṣa in the Brāhmaṇas is seen in the Yajurveda (V.S.xxxi.19) as "moving in the womb" (whose womb?) (*tasya yoniṃ paripaśyanti*) This rather implies the two complementary forces of the universe at work within the all. The issue remains blurred but the Sāṃkhya philosophy took it up and showed how, in our manifested world, one cannot work without the other. Similarly for Aditi as Universal Mother, also "father and mother and son" - like Puruṣa who is all this, etc. And man/woman on earth, though puny, mirrors it all in his/her essential being. Aditi is equivalent to *ākāśa* the cradle of worlds out of which all things emerge; Adam-Kadmon is equivalent to *primordial light*, the light of the Logos by which all things are created. In this light the two complementary forces are united. The basic ideas may be painted differently but the underlying insight converges on the same fundamental truth. Whether coming from the *Vedas*, the *Chaldean Book of Numbers* or the *Kabbalah*, we tread on the sacred ground of archetypes and of revelations to which the human mind once had access and to which the ancient religions bore witness.

#### FROM ARCHETYPAL MAN TO PERFECT MAN

In deep meditation sensitive minds contact basic symbols and patterns expressive of the archetypes that

scintillate behind all forms which the mind projects on the screen of consciousness. Behind these archetypes lie tremendous energies radiating from spiritual centres which are veritable vortices of power, whirling hearths that bring to birth on the innermost plane, or web of cosmos, the archetypal blueprints of cosmic unfoldment as well as human development; blueprints that the sages of all times and races have contacted as they were being impressed on their consciousness, and which they translated as ideas and ideals, as symbols that set the pace for each stage of evolution. So the soul reaches out to the realm of divine ideas and then endeavours, through creative imagination, to impress these upon the receptive mind and in the process step them down to within the reach of human consciousness. Fundamental ideas such as *harmony, solidarity, freedom, brotherhood, goodwill, peace, service*, belong to the world of the soul and to its best mirror, the higher aspect of the mind. Thus from symbols visioned in the depth of the inner silence, developed ideals which fed the best among human beings, slowly working through them as goals to be pursued.

So Archetypal Man emerges out of the darkness of cyclic time - of mind's unfoldment embodying the very essence of humanity; of that creative mind, the torch bearer, able to illuminate the goal of transcendence and create the necessary conditions to that ultimate end. From Puruṣa, Universal Man, the Sacrificial Creator's gift of his own life that all might be, embodied Flame consumed eternally, yet unconsumed, to Adam-Kadmon, embodied Light, the Light of all lights, the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil, to the Heavenly Man incarnate as Son of God, offering his life for the redemption of humanity, the facets are various and profoundly significant; but now the vision narrows down step by step to focus, as with a lens, on the purely human in its ideal form: the Perfect Man. The lens now concentrates on specific aspects hitherto not brought sufficiently to light.

Cosmic Man, present in ideal outline in every human being, took shape as "perfect man" in the mind of one of the greatest of mystic philosophers, Ibn Arabi. This ideal he found embodied in Mohammed through whom the divine Consciousness could manifest Itself to Itself. In his *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ("Bezels of Wisdom") Ibn Arabi concentrated the main ideas of his metaphysical thought and indeed the revelations he received through his visions: thus "oneness of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*; here the English translation falls far short of the Arabic dynamic expression); "pre-eternal suchness"; the "Perfect Man" (*inṣān kamil*), etc. His doctrine of the Perfect Man, as indeed his understanding of the implications of the Godhead, or as he calls God "the Reality", (*al-haqq*, the Truth) shows a profound insight into the deepest revelations accorded to humanity. It was, he tells us, the wish of "the Reality", or God, that Its Essence should be seen through a "microcosmic" being through whom the "inmost consciousness of God" could become manifested to Him.

"This He did, because the vision that consists in a thing's seeing itself by means of itself is not like its vision of itself in something else that serves as a mirror for it..."

(Nicholson's translation p.154)

The universe had been brought into existence, but it was "like an unpolished mirror"; the "Divine Order needed the clarifying of the world's mirror" (Burckhart's translation p.24) and the creation of the human essence as Adam

"... was the very polishing of that mirror and the soul of that form, and the angels are some of the faculties of that form, viz., the form<sup>40</sup> of the universe which the Sufis in their technical language describe as the Great Man,<sup>41</sup> for the angels in relation to it are as the spiritual and corporeal faculties in the human organism..." Each faculty being as it were veiled by its own nature cannot conceive anything superior to its own essence, yet holds within itself a power that allows it to share in the Divine Synthesis.

This "microcosmic being is named a Man (*inṣān*), and a Vicegerent (*Khalifa*).<sup>42</sup> He is named a Man on account of the universality of his organism and because he comprises all realities. Moreover, he stands to God as the pupil (*inṣān*), which is the instrument of vision, to the eye; and for this reason he is named a Man. By means of him God beheld his creatures and had mercy on them (by bringing them into existence). He is Man, the originated (in his body), the eternal (in his spirit); the organism everlasting (in his essence), the Word that divides and unites. The universe was completed by his existence, for he is to the universe what the bezel is to the seal – the bezel whereon is graven the signature that the King seals on his treasures. Therefore He named him a Vicegerent, because he guards the creatures (of God) just as the King guards his treasures by sealing them..."<sup>43</sup>

So Ibn Arabi sees God as

"having created us as combining awe (of His majesty) and intimacy, and so on with all His attributes and Names. He has expressed this polarity of qualities (in the Qur'an) as being His Hands devoted to the creation of the Perfect Man who integrates in himself all cosmic realities and their individual (manifestations). [Qur'an XXXVIII.75]"<sup>44</sup>



Since man recognises that the Divine Essence is by its very nature unknowable, he also recognises that it can be known indirectly, through our perception of things; hence the Divine Essence becomes known to us in its capacity of *Lord of something* equivalent to what has been called in the present study the innermost centre of light, the all consuming unconsumed flame or spiritual hearth. This Lord, or *rabb*, is Ibn Arabi's divine Name or attribute of God. From this it follows that what man can know of God is his own *rabb*:

"The goal is to know God in His capacity as Lord of the World, and this knowledge only becomes accessible once prior knowledge of the world has already been obtained. This is something that is understood by the most perfect among the men of God, and it is why the messenger of God said 'He who knows himself knows his Lord'."<sup>45</sup>

Ibn Arabi gives us, through his own experience, an insight into the psyche's process of visioning. He demarcates three stages in human spiritual perception:

- a) he who "sees God in things";
- b) he who "sees things and God in them"; the former "knows and sees nothing but God"; hence denies any reality to the world; the latter "sees the face of God in everything";
- c) "the vision of God is the very vision of the world"; this is the highest of the three for Ibn Arabi. C. Addas in his *Quest for the Red Sulphur* comments: "The being who attains to this stage never ceases contemplating the multiple in the One and the One in the Multiple."<sup>46</sup>

This stage is fully reminiscent of Arjuna's vision of Kṛṣṇa in his Cosmic form, (Bh. Gītā XI.5-46) and indeed the teachings of the Bhagavad Gītā, and of the Buddhist equation: *nirvāṇa = saṁsāra*.

"If the splendour of a thousand suns  
were to blaze out together in the sky,  
that might resemble the glory of that Mahātman.

... ..

There Pāṇḍava beheld the whole universe,  
divided into manifold parts, standing in one  
in the body of the Deity of Deities. (Bh. Gītā XI.12,13)

... ..

First of the Gods, most ancient Man thou art,  
Supreme receptacle of all that lives;  
Knower and known, the dwelling-place on high;  
In thy vast form the universe is spread.

... ..

The Blessed Lord said: this Form of Mine  
beholden by thee is very hard to see.  
Verily the Shining Ones ever long to behold this form." (Bh.Gītā XI.38;52)

The ideal of Perfect Man was, for Ibn Arabi, embodied in Mohammed through whom the Divine Consciousness could manifest Itself to Itself, who was therefore vicegerent or logos: "who unites the Essence, the Attributes, and the Names in his single nature".<sup>47</sup> Through this Divine Consciousness as Vicegerent, creation is manifested, all ideas of things-to-be have existence, God knows Himself, and so long as this Perfect Man is there, so long will the universe endure.

But Ibn Arabi's description of the angels as faculties of the human form, if it should apply to all the categories of angels without differentiating these, falls far short of *The Secret Doctrine's* revelations and those of the *Treatise on Cosmic Fire*, both of which treat of these various categories of angels and, in certain respects, elucidate certain Vedic enigmatic verses. However, Ibn Arabi shows remarkable intuition insofar as Man's place in manifestation is concerned, his relationship to the Reality, the fact that because man links the higher spiritual sphere and the lower earthly realm in himself, he contains all the attributes of created nature, the higher and the lower, and the capacity to embrace all essential truths, he will eventually surpass the angels, as St Paul also declared. Obviously, if we give credence to *The Secret Doctrine's* teachings, man cannot surpass, as man, those highest of the Dhyānis who have passed through human evolution ages ago and gone onwards far beyond human ken, but only those angels who have not yet gone through the human stage, whom Ibn Arabi describes and claims

"do not enjoy the comprehensiveness of Adam and comprehend only those Divine Names peculiar to them, by which they glorify and sanctify the Reality..."

The compass of the sheer human vision here stops at a specific boundary which those two treatises mentioned above were capable of covering. Ibn Arabi draws attention to the psychological fact that we cannot conceive, imagine or design anything that is not already present in ourselves:

"...God draws our attention to what is originated as an aid to knowledge of Him and says (in the Quran) that He will show forth His signs in it (Quran XL1:53). Thus he suggests that knowledge of Him is inferred in knowledge of ourselves. Whenever we ascribe any quality to Him, we are ourselves (representative of) that quality, except it be the quality of His Self-sufficient Being. Since we know Him through ourselves and from ourselves, we attribute to Him all we attribute to ourselves. It is for this reason that the divine revelations come to us through the mouths of the Interpreters (the prophets), for He describes Himself to us through us. If we witness Him we witness ourselves, and when He sees us He looks on Himself."<sup>48</sup>

Obviously this seeing of God through us, i.e. through the mirror of psyche, can only apply to those highly evolved souls, the great seers and saints and servers of humanity, souls in whom God or rather the higher consciousness, is Man's *hearing and his sight*, not to say his *eye and his ear*, who live in the higher consciousness in more or less full awareness. Here we might remember Meister Eckhart's highly mystical statement which the Church could not tolerate, and perhaps better understand it:

"The eye by which I see God is the same as the eye by which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one and the same – one in seeing, one in knowing, and one in loving." (From Sermon 23.25)

That two totally different mystics from different races and religious traditions should come to the same conclusion is at least suggestive of that basic oneness in the depth of our being with *al-haqq!*

A. Schimmel understood the implications of all this. To realize in one's self all innate possibilities of being signifies to have reached the status of the *Perfect Man*. Such a call to higher levels applies to every human being. But few besides prophets or saints reach that goal.<sup>49</sup>

From Cosmic Man as embodied Flame Divine, as Light of all lights, as embodied Son of God, to the Perfect Man in whom the Divine Consciousness desires to know itself, is added the important new factor of the self-reflective consciousness which is our human specific attribute. Thus does the "lens" of the human mind move in its search for deeper understanding. Here again, the ancient archetypal image, now translated as Perfect Man, assumes its ancient role of primordial essence as the spirit to whom all things owe their origin; but with this difference, that Mohammed, as "created spirit", is nevertheless "a mode of the Uncreated Divine Spirit"<sup>50</sup> and the means or vehicle whereby the Divine Consciousness can reflect Itself in its own creation. Through the Perfect Man God contemplates his own Creation.

This idea of the Deity wishing to manifest Itself to Itself through humanity recalls a very ancient esoteric teaching on spiritual consciousness endeavouring to reflect itself in the lower realms of the pleroma and finding its "lens" in two kingdoms of nature; the human and the animal; its purpose being to achieve clarity of vision at the lowest level. Through the animal kingdom it looks out on to our world by means of one eye, at first blind, then slowly opening out; through the human, by means of two eyes, at first dim, but slowly becoming keener. The vehicles of both kingdoms have for this purpose to be more and more refined in order for full clarity of vision to be achieved, or for "divine lucidity", to be expressed through earth's beings, before the inner radiance, the "Light of lights" portrayed in Adam Kadmon, before the innermost hearth or "Lord", to use Ibn Arabi's term, may shine forth fully and cast its lucid understanding upon all things and all mysteries. Hence the two kingdoms have been described as the two eyes of the Divine as It manifests in our terrestrial sphere. One finds a dim reflection of this standpoint in the Ancient Egyptian enigmatic reference to "the almost forgotten deity, a man or just a face known as 'He who commands both eyes', or in his alternative form 'the sightless One'"; and perhaps also in the Eye of the Solar Deity, Re, sent out to probe the depths of the abyss of the Waters of Space in search of the two forces of the manifested universe-to-be, the positive and the negative; and perhaps also in the "presentation of the Eye" of Horus to Osiris which "signifies the achievement of full consciousness".<sup>51</sup> Strange coincidence of insights, so veiled they remain unrecognised, not understood, dismissed as fancy.

In Ibn Arabi's visionary insight expressed in philosophical, rational terminology to which our modern mind can relate, far removed as it is from the poetic, metaphoric images, the myths, invocations and prayers of very ancient scriptures, we have the testimony of a great visionary who, within the past millennium, probed the dark recesses of psyche to bring to the light of consciousness an aspect of Cosmic Man that was to develop in time in humanity to make of man the self-conscious being that he now is; an aspect which Ibn Arabi saw as

God looking at Himself and his creation through the human mirror of consciousness. The great thinkers of the past all discovered something not of this earth in our human inner equipment and related it to the Divine. Each visionary will see and record his seeing only in accordance with the measure and conditioning of his mind and therefore will differ from another, but only superficially. Whether Ibn Arabi was influenced by Gnostic, Judaic or Christian prevalent ideas which might have coloured his insights, and about which scholars argue, is of less import than the most important factor of his thought rooted in his capacity to *perceive* at his own soul level and transmit his vision to the mind where various influences would colour it. There is no doubt that he was a great visionary able to raise his consciousness far beyond the level of common mortals; this comes out fully in C. Addas' deeply researched biography of Ibn Arabi, *Quest for the Red Sulphur*; there is no doubt that his perception was coloured by his Islamic faith as well as various philosophical influences; indubitably the basis of it all was his vision, and the fact remains that his analysis of Man and man's relationship to his Source adds a new dimension to our own insight into the workings of psyche as the mirror trying to capture and reflect something far grander than itself in all its encompassing might and knowledge. In Ibn Arabi<sup>52</sup> we have a relatively recent example of those seers who in the past received *revelation* and handed it down to humanity to enlighten its mind and lead it step by step to the understanding and the living of the age-old gnosis. That only a few may have responded to the call and managed to measure up to the challenge is no fault of the great seers, prophets and "saviours" who have appeared from time to time through the millennia and handed down their message in accordance with the needs of the time.

After having explored this dimension of self-conscious reflection with regard to the relation of Man and Deity, whither will the search-light of the mind be cast in its pursuit of divine knowledge? *Experience, perception, Being, are vital keynotes* expressive of *human unfoldment* at all levels of life, two of which are being pushed to their ultimate limits, even though not yet at the subjective level. What of the third, pure *Being* which so far, for most of us, is but an abstraction? As pioneering human consciousness unfolds its potentialities, powers of perception and absorption, an increasing range of awareness and capacity to move towards the centre of spiritual fusion eventuates; vision widens and deepens its scope so that the *very essence of Being* can be grasped. The focus of consciousness in the truly higher types of human beings, is no longer just the physical, or just the emotional or intellectual - these are mere separative aspects; but all these three phases of human conscious understanding are being absorbed, integrated into a single, all inclusive spiritual, visionary insight which points to the essential unity of life, cosmic and terrestrial, its sacred sacrificial core deeply embedded in that mystery of mysteries, *spiritual Being*.

## PART II. ARCHETYPAL MAN IN THE KABBALAH.

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> H.P.B. uses the spelling *sephirōth* for what modern transliteration favours as *sefirot*. I have left her spelling in her text, except for "Kabbalah" which has so many spellings it was best to keep to one only; and in my text used current transliteration, such as "sefirot" or Ein Sof and changed titles of books to their modern version for easier reference should the reader wish to look up these books.

H.P.B. pointed out:

"It has become undeniable of late that the Jews, who obtained their primitive ideas about creation from Moses, who had them from the Egyptians, compiled their *Genesis* and first Cosmogonic traditions - when these were rewritten by Ezra and others - from the Chaldeo-Akkadian account. It is therefore, sufficient to examine the Babylonian and Assyrian cuneiform and other inscriptions to find also therein, scattered here and there, not only the original meaning of the name Adam, Admi, or Adami, but also the creation of seven Adams or roots of men, born of Mother-Earth, physically, and of the *divine fire* of the progenitors, spiritually or astrally. The Assyriologists, ignorant of the esoteric teachings, could hardly be expected to pay any greater attention to the mysterious and ever-recurring number *seven* in the Babylonian cylinders, than they paid to it on finding the same in *Genesis* and the Bible. Yet the number of the ancestral spirits and their seven groups of human progeny are there, notwithstanding the dilapidated condition of the fragments, as plainly as they are to be found in *Poimandrēs* and in the *Book of the Concealed Mystery* of the *Kabbalah*. In the latter Adam-Kadmon is the *Sephirōthal TREE*, as also the 'Tree of knowledge of Good and Evil'. And that 'tree', says ch.V.verse 32, 'hath around it seven columns', or palaces, of the seven creative Angels operating in the spheres of the seven planets of our Globe. As Adam-Kadmon is a *collective* name, so

also is the name of the man Adam. Says George Smith, in his *Chaldean Account of the Genesis*:

"The word Adam used in these legends for the first human being is evidently *not a proper name, but is only used as a term for mankind*. Adam appears as a proper name in *Genesis*, but certainly in some passages is only used in the same sense as the Assyrian word." (op.cit.p.86)" (Quoted in S.D. II.3-4) See also S.D.I.p.xxvi.

2 *Origins of the Kabbalah*. p.3

3 The *Zohar* or *Book of Splendour* is central to the kabbalistic writings, but, according to Scholem, its "...sources...among kabbalistic works which preceded it are...unclear." (*Kabbalah*. p.224.) In his *Origins of the Kabbalah* he mentions: "The *Zohar* is based entirely upon rabbinic and kabbalistic literature composed before 1275." (p.6) For H.P.B. Ibn Gebirol "gave out the same philosophical teaching 225 years before the day of Moses de Leon" (S.D. II.p.461.fn), the sometimes presumed author or redactor of the *Zohar*. "It is certain [she writes in that same footnote] that Ibn Gebirol based his doctrines upon the oldest Kabbalistic sources, namely, the *Chaldean Book of Numbers*..." For her, "Mistaken is he who accepts the Kabbalistic works of to-day, and the interpretations of the *Zohar* by the Rabbis, for the genuine Kabbalistic lore of old! For no more today than in the day of Frederick von Schelling does the *Kabbalah* accessible to Europe and America contain much more than

"Ruins and fragments, much distorted remnants still of that *primitive system which is the key to all religious systems*." (Quoted from A. Franck's *La Kabbale*. Preface. S.D. II.p.461)

Interesting to note that the author, A. Franck, criticised by later scholars, at least noticed that however much reduced to ruins and fragments, the *Kabbalah* could still be seen as holding a key to religions.

"The oldest system and the *Chaldean Kabbalah* were identical," claims H.P.B. (S.D.II.p.461-2)

4 *Op.cit.* p.12.

5 *ibid.* p.13.

6 Quoted in *Origins of the Kabbalah*. p.41.

7 *ibid.* p.44.

8 *ibid.* p.45.

9 See *Kabbalah*. p.25. The basis of this doctrine is the frequency inherent to each vowel sound, the power of vibration inherent to the vocalised letters, similar to the sounds emitted by the violin strings capable of shaping grains of sand into geometrical patterns (Chladni's experiments). To word the whole idea as Scholem does, namely

"... the world process is essentially a linguistic one, based on the unlimited combinations of letters" (p.125)

shows ignorance of the fundamentals of the esoteric doctrine and really makes a laughing stock of it. The world process is essentially a process of *frequency* shaping matter into form, hence analogically the unlimited combination of letters, hence of vocalised sounds, shaping both the human and mental world and through their mantric quality the material world as well as the world of human feelings. Linguistics is the wrong word and the wrong idea.

10 *ibid.* p.88.

11 *ibid.* p.88.

12 *ibid.* p.88.

13 *ibid.* p.94.

14 *ibid.* p.89.

15 Note that what is shortened to "God" the Creator in Kabbalistic writings is in *The Secret*

*Doctrine* already distinctly three removes from its original Source, the NO-THING or ABSOLUTE equivalent to EIN SOF (The Causeless Cause), its emanating Ray or Unmanifest Deity, and the Logos or Creative Deity. In true Kabbalistic thought Ein Sof is not the manifested God of the monotheistic religions, nor is it Jehovah, even though writers may use the term God for convenience sake. In respect to the question of Ein Sof H.P.B. writes:

"...the Kabbalists neither make it plain how the ABSOLUTE can use anything, or exercise any attribute whatever, since, as the Absolute, it is devoid of attributes; nor do they explain that in reality it is the First Cause (Plato's *Logos*) the original and eternal IDEA, that manifests through Adam-Kadmon, the *Second Logos*, so to speak. In the *Book of Numbers*, it is explained that EN (or Ain, Aiōr) is the only self-existent, whereas its 'Depth' (*Bythos* or *Buthon* of the Gnostics, called *Propatōr*) [forefather or founder] is only periodical. The latter is Brahmā as differentiated from Brahma or Parabrahman. It is the Depth, the Source of Light, or Propatōr, which is the Unmanifested Logos, or the abstract *Idea*, and not Ain Sof, whose ray uses Adam-Kadmon or the *manifested* Logos (the objective Universe), 'male and female', as a chariot, through which to manifest." (S.D. I.p.214)

16 *ibid.* p.98."

17 For the various divisions of the Sefirot see Scholem's *Kabbalah* pp.108ff.

18 *Origins.* p.126, 127.

19 *ibid.* p.127.

20 *ibid.* p.138.

21 *ibid.* p.139.

22 *Kabbalah* (Halevi) p.6.

23 *Kabbalah* (Scholem) p.110.

24 Are we to interpret "greatness" in terms of a physical "measure", remembering the fragments in the Merkabah literature where measurements of the body of the creator appear? Can a spiritual Creator, invisible and intangible be measured, or is there a hidden meaning in this measure? Scholem explains that "the verse which holds the key to the enumeration is Psalm 147:5: 'Great is our Lord and mighty in power', the 'mighty in power' being measured by a series of calculations which multiply 236 x10,000 celestial leagues which Scholem sums up in these words:

"The teaching on the 'measure of the body' of the Creator institutes a great enigma." (*Kabbalah* p.16.)

Perhaps that enigma is concerned with the meaning of Kabbalistic figures which do need a key for their understanding.

Note also how Puruṣa in the *puruṣasūkta* is said to grow beyond all through the length of ten fingers which has aroused endless debates, and how P. Mus in his article "Où finit Puruṣa" interprets Puruṣa's mightiness (*mahiman*) as the "measure" of Puruṣa rather than his power, it is the extent or compass "over which his power is exercised", "the domain of his law", his "religious and social" *plenitude* (*kṛṣnatā*) which, for him, are at stake. (*Mélanges d'Indianisme à la mémoire de Louis Renou.* Paris, 1968. p.555) Nevertheless, Puruṣa is above everything else the *towering, spiritual inner man in every human being.* See Pt.1. fn.13.

25 *Kabbalah.* (Scholem) p.93.

26 Analogically to our brain made of hosts of cells, yet a perfect unit in itself.

27 *ibid.* p.91-92.

28 "... *Ad-am-ak-ad-mon* became Adam-Kadmon in the Kabbalah (*Zohar*), meaning, as it did, the 'One (Son) of the divine Father, or the creator', for the words 'am' and 'om' meant at one time in nearly every language the *divine*, or the *deity*. Thus Adam-Kadmon and Adam-Adami came to mean 'The first emanation of the Father-Mother or divine nature', and literally the 'first divine one'." (S.D. II. p.43)

29 "Macroprosopus" is according to *The Secret Doctrine*, "in the Chaldean Kabbalah, a pure abstraction; the Word or LOGOS, or DABAR (in Hebrew), which Word, though it becomes in fact a plural number, or 'words' - D(e)B(a)RIM when it reflects itself, or falls into the aspect of a Host (of angels, or Sephirōth, 'numbers'), is still collectively ONE, and on the ideal plane a nought - O a 'Nothing.' ...Deity is not God. It is NOTHING, and DARKNESS. It is nameless, and therefore called *Ain-Soph* - 'the word *Ayīn* meaning nothing.' The Highest God (The unmanifested Logos) is its Son." (S.D. I.p.350)

30 *Kabbalah* (Scholem) p.107.

31 *ibid.* p.109-10.

32 *ibid.* p.109.

33 *ibid.* p.110.

34 *ibid.* p.109.

35 Ākāśa is "the *noumenon* of the sevenfold differentiated Prakṛti - the ever-immaculate 'Mother'..." (S.D. I.p.256)

36 *Merkabah* means chariot. A whole mystical literature developed around the image of the Divine throne on its chariot. "The term was used by the rabbis to designate the complex of speculations, homilies and visions connected with the Throne of Glory and the chariot which bears it and all that is embodied in this divine world."

The term is "derived from 1.Chronicles 28:18 and is first found with the meaning of "Merkabah" mysticism at the end of Ecclesiasticus 49:8..." (*Kabbalah* p.373)

37 *Jewish Mysticism.* p.230.

38 See Raphael Patai, *The Hebrew Goddess*, for the Jewish idea of the feminine in Divinity.

In so far as an introduction of a feminine element in the Godhead among the Jewish orthodox circles is concerned, the insurmountable obstacle was the established unity of the Godhead which implied the rigid conception of a purely masculine God, a conception which subsequently completely dominated the Christian and Muslim new religions. *The Secret Doctrine* reconciles this obstacle and the unity of the Godhead in its Impersonal, Transcendental Absolute, of which Ein Sof is surely the reflection, like "That" of the Ṛgveda, an Absolute which does not create but from whose radiation or Ray or Shadow, call it how you will, emerges that bi-polar Power or Logos or Creative God that in our lower planes of manifestation differentiates into the two principal or polar forces with their hosts of energy principles that weave the fabric of the universe. Does this imply a Godhead and a lower God? This depends on the human being's insight. From *The Secret Doctrine's* standpoint, the only Deity that is from everlasting is the Absolute or the Kabbalistic Ein Sof, or the Ṛgvedic That, or the Vedantic One without a Second. The manifested Deity is but that Overseer in the highest empyrean who, even He, may not know the ultimate secret of creation. (Ṛgv.X.129.7).

39 The feminine logoi, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, such as Vedic Aditi, Vāc, or Shekhīnah in the Kabbalah "... are all correlations in their *noumenal* aspect of Light, and Sound and Ether" (S.D. I. p.431), in other words, of *ākāśa* in its pristine sense, (equivalent to *mūlaprakṛti*) .

"The Shekhinah is always considered in the *Kabbalah* as feminine"(Isaac Myer *Qabbalah*, p.175)

"And so it is considered in the *exoteric Purāṇas*, for Shekhīnah is no more than *śakti* the female double or lining of any god...[i.e. the feminine element in manifestation]...But in the transcendental Chaldean Kabbalah or *Book of Numbers* Shekhīnah is sexless, and the purest abstraction, a State, like Nirvāṇa, not subject or object or anything except an absolute PRESENCE." (S.D. I.p.618)

40 Titus Burckhardt, in his French translation of *Bezels of Wisdom* (in "La Sagesse des Prophètes", 1974), explains in a footnote that the word for form has various meanings besides the usual one of "delimitation"; the form of a thing has a purely qualitative aspect and as form of a being contrasts with its soul and is therefore symbolic of the receptive function of matter. (op.cit. p.25)

41 According to the Sufis Man is a microcosm and the cosmos is like a vast man called by

them the Great man, or Universal Man, indeed like Puruṣa or Adam-Kadmon.

42 As pointed out by Rom Landau, Ibn Arabi's Logos (or vicegerent) "represents the 'agent' through whom God can emerge from His absoluteness, his unknowableness (and in a sense, unknowingness) into manifestation". (*The Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*. p.55. 1959) Here again we find an equivalence in idea to *The Secret Doctrine's* Logos as active manifested Deity through whom the Unknowable emerges from his absoluteness and yet remains hidden and unknowable! These are all visionary expressions of the mind attempting to probe the mystery of Deity. Landau explains that

"...according to Ibn Arabi, the Divine consciousness reaches its supreme point in the Perfect Man. So it is in the Perfect man that God knows Himself perfectly. It is to Him that God says (according to a hadith): 'I have not created a creature dearer to me than thee. With thee I give and with thee I take, and with thee I punish.' " (ibid.p.55)

The exaltation of Man here reaches its pinnacle, but this view has its dangers for the weak-minded.

43 Translated by R.A. Nicholson in his *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. 1921. p.155-56. Two other translations may cast further light on this passage from *The Bezels of Wisdom*; that by Titus Burckhardt in *La Sagesse des Prophètes*, 1974, p.24-26 and that by R.W.J. Austin in *The Bezels of Wisdom*. 1980, p.51 ff.

44 Austin's translation, op.cit. p.55.

45 From *Futūhāt*. Quoted in the *Quest for the Red Sulphur*. p.139.

46 *ibid.* p.140.

47 Nicholson notes that "single" here "is equivalent to 'threefold'. Op.cit. p.157 fn.3.

48 Austin's translation, op.cit. p.55. "Through us" refers to the prophets who being human are "us".

49 See A. Schimmel's *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, 1975, especially pp.259-86.

50 *ibid.* p.224.

51 Rundle Clark, *Myth and Symbol in Ancient Egypt*. p.219; 179-180.

52 Gerhard Bowering, in his article on *Ensān-e Kāmel* (the Perfect Human being) (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*. Vol.VIII. fasc.5, 1998, pp.457-61) sums up the many complex ideas among Iranian Sufis as converging on the idea of the *Perfect Human Being* as found in Ibn- Ārabī's conception, whereby God created the universe like a mirror which, when polished by the divine command, reflected the Perfect Human Being. God enshrined in this Perfect Human Being the names and realities of all things in creation; hence made him *the truth of truths*. This is the Muhammedan reality, the divine light irradiating all and preceding Adam. One recalls here the Kabbalistic doctrine of Adam Kadmon. The esoteric doctrine is that Archetypal Man was irradiated from the divine light, before all creation.

Jāmī's own idea of an original perfection descending into material conditions and ascending back to its pristine state (with all the experience garnered) is also an esoteric tenet explained in *The Secret Doctrine*, but the latter does not make man the crown of cosmic creation, but only of earthly creation, whilst his soul's destiny, as stated in *The Idyll of the White Lotus*, "is the future of a thing whose growth and splendour has no limit." For his destiny is to fuse spirit and matter by means of his soul's evolution and to reach out to the highest consciousness quite beyond our space-time-continuum.

### PART III. THE CREATION OF HUMANITY AND ITS HISTORY ACCORDING TO THE SECRET TRADITION

#### INTRODUCTION

The history of the human race as appears in the Stanzas of Dzyan is so out of relation to 19th and 20th century rationalist and scientific attitude that takes no account of a spiritual dimension, that a warning should be sounded at the outset: it can only be appreciated by those whose vision can extend beyond the physical to the metaphysical and even beyond. But in order to get a holistic over-view of the ancient gnosis

whose main premises percolated in myths and legends, it has seemed necessary to attempt here at least a short outline of this peculiar history. The difficulties in such a survey concern: first the different standpoint of the Stanzas of Dzyan versus modern inacceptance of what cannot be weighed, quantified and measured as another kind of reality. Yet there is already a trend in modern thinking that meets this standpoint more than half-way. Thus it appears in Ken Wilber's *Up from Eden: a transpersonal view of human evolution*, and some of his other books influenced by the perennial philosophy - what is here called the ancient gnosis. Even his half humorous criticism of the strictly scientific and positivist standpoint bears this out. Thus

"...no scientist, layman, or mathematician, has ever seen a pure bit of matter. We see wood, or aluminium, or zinc, or plastic, but never matter. Yet I doubt any scientist would say, 'Therefore, matter doesn't exist'. All sorts of intuitive and nonscientific certainties led the scientist to state that matter is real - and, in fact, for the great majority of scientists, matter is the only real, even though they have never seen it, touched it, or tasted it. The same thing, of course, holds for Energy, since mass and energy are interconvertible. No scientist has ever seen energy, nuclear binding energy, and so on. Although he has never seen just pure plain energy, he certainly doesn't say, 'Thus energy isn't real'." (1)

And this equally applies to the substratum of all, the atoms. If we accept these implications, why is there such a tenacious prejudice against an underlying subtler reality, a noumenon behind every phenomenon? *Secondly*, the fact that this tradition of an invisible, intangible reality underlying the physical world, has come down to us through the visionaries of the past and their records, corroborated by others through the ages, is also subject to prejudice. Visionaries are not acceptable as giving facts since their visions cannot be tangibly proved. These records given out for long aeons as oral teachings were kept as a heirloom and imparted in ancient times only through the higher initiations, during which they were *impressed* upon the minds of the candidates. Traces of these are found in the Vedas, 2) in the Egyptian lore, and openly admitted in Greek and Roman historical and philosophical records. The question of *initiation* into the ancient gnosis, the mysteries of life and death, of healing and sound, of light and flame, which not so long ago was dismissed by scholars out of hand, without the slightest serious investigation, is now being looked into and admitted by the younger generations in the face of evidence such as certain texts of the Ancient Egyptians 3) until now misunderstood, of the Vedas e.g. Vasiṣṭha's being made a seer, a ṛṣi, by his "god":

"For Varuṇa placed Vasiṣṭha into the boat and with his skill and power made him a seer."

(R̥gv.VII.88.4)

*Thirdly*, the fact that certain confirmation of what the Stanzas narrate, e.g. the floods and immersions of continents, races of giants, existence of monsters, the Egyptian records listing gods as their divine dynasties, may be found in world mythologies and scriptures. Although still dismissed as fables by the majority, these build up quite a case for a substratum of historical reality behind the apparent "myths". The problem remains that physical facts, such as are alone accepted, whether they be measured, weighed and quantified, or are historically recorded, are quite the opposite of that intangible, psycho-spiritual level of experience which escapes all measurement but which weaves the substance of myth. And it is this intangible "reality" rooted in psyche that meets us at every step in the Stanzas. *Mythology*, declared C. Kerényi, "is the repository of man's *cosmic sentiency*". Cosmic sentiency does not apply to physical facts or to history as such, but to their *psycho-spiritual counterpart*, existing in the human psyche, woven in the form of tales and dramas projected on the cosmic screen. The whole history of humanity as told in the Stanzas may appear as such a dramatic tale based upon past happenings; such tales cannot be certified except through the proof of fossils e.g. of huge animals; and through the similarities of many myths and legends throughout the world, experienced and handed down the ages by the ancient visionaries. Their testimony, given in the form of hymns or precepts, is the record of *man's cosmic sentiency*. Two widely different approaches and perspectives called the *exoteric* based on physical appearances or historical records and what can be logically deduced from these; and the *esoteric*, based upon psyche's intuitive knowledge and visionary insights, as well as specific initiations, going back for millennia - all too nebulous for the rational mind - but confirmed in the myths and legends of humanity, will be examined and evaluated in ch.10.

Looked at from a holistic viewpoint that embraces the vast panorama of Nature in all its activities and inter-relationships as well as the convergence in meaning of so many myths, the history of humanity as outlined in *The Secret doctrine* is far from a tissue of fables. Whether we believe or reject this, it is



irrelevant to the main issue which traces *the inner springs* of human evolution set against the background of planetary activities. In so doing H.P.B. highlights the underlying meaning of the *Purāṇas* and perhaps restores them to a *sensible* tale of past occurrences written by means of exaggerated anecdotes and confusing statements. Above all, the many strands that serve to complete the human being as such spell out the reason why man is not only of an extraordinary complexity, but also has ever been considered the microcosm of the macrocosm. It is only since we lost our holistic vision and opted for a myopic view of only what can be discerned by the senses and worked out by reason, that this vision almost vanished from the Western world with a disastrous effect on our planet and humanity, on our morals and psychological health, bringing desecration and pollution everywhere; a vision still difficult for most to consider, although a resurgence of deeper awareness seems to be developing.

*The Secret Doctrine* reveals meaningful insights inherent to the world myths. H.P.B. uses to support her exposition not only the *Purāṇas*, but also the Hermetic *Poimandrēs*, the *Vendādād*, the *Kabbalah*, and other such known *sacred texts*. Whence all those tales world wide, concerning the flood, the ark of Noah (which some historians seem to take literally), the ship of Vaivasvata Manu with the seven ṛṣis, each of whom is the progenitor of certain animals, reptiles, etc., of the *vara* or enclosure that in the *Vendādād* of the Parsis, Yima, the first man or Manu, had to fill with seeds of men and women and animals, etc., whence the Greek legends of half human, half animal beings; whence the divine dynasties recorded in the historic tablets of Egypt confronting Champollion, with their clearly named gods as earlier rulers of Egypt, dismissed as too fabulous for credence; divine dynasties also recorded in ancient Sumer? What underlies all this?

#### VARIOUS CREATIONS OF WORLDS AND MEN

For the esoteric tradition, there can be no manifestation of worlds and creatures except as starting from within a latent source or centre at a much subtler level; thus from within without; this being transposed to: from the highest to the lowest. Hence one speaks of the descent of spiritual entities from the innermost to the outermost or denser planes, and similarly of emanations of worlds, and also of the creation of man and other beings in like manner, from spiritual centres, all being interwoven in a network of correlations, subservient to the ONE LAW, the Great Breath – outgoing and ingoing. Since the ancient gnosis implies that all things have unfolded from the One Source, all things must in one way or another be inter-related and interdependent, and eventually return to the One Source. Archetypal Man as first taking shape within and by means of Light as it differentiates within and from *ākāśa*, would necessarily imply that man, in H.P.B.'s words

"... evolved primarily as a *luminous incorporeal form*, over which, like the molten brass round the clay model of the sculptor, the physical frame of his body was built by, through and from, the lower forms and types of animal terrestrial life." (S.D. II. p.112) This immediately admits the human dual nature - spiritual/physical. So the Zohar explains:

"The Soul and the *Form* when descending on Earth put on an earthly garment... When Adam dwelt in the garden of Eden, he was dressed in the celestial garment, which is the garment of heavenly light... light of that light which was used in the Garden of Eden." (Zohar. ii.229b, Brody ed. Quoted in S.D. II.p.112.)

"Man, (the Heavenly Adam) was created by the ten Sephīrōth of the Yetzīratīc World, and by their common power the seven Angels of a still lower world engendered the Earthly Adam..." (cf. I. Myer Qabbalah pp.426, 347-8. S.D.II. p.112. fn)

Thus humanity owes its psycho-spiritual nature to beings of a much higher order, and the ethereal pattern of its physical body-to-be to entities of a lower order, but still spiritual in the sense of intangible; the body condensing and acquiring its animal aspects in time. Here the Kabbalah is in full agreement with *The Secret Doctrine*. The

"*Primary* Creation is called the *creation of Light* (Spirit); and the *Secondary*, that of Darkness (Matter) [not to be confused with Pre-cosmic Darkness, or the Absolute All]. Both are found in *Genesis* (i, 2) and at the beginning of ch.ii. The first [creation] is the emanation of *self-born* gods (Elōhīm); the second of physical nature". (S.D. I. p.450)

At the physical level, one discovers that "Man was the store-house.... of all the seeds of life for this Round (cycle), vegetable and animal alike." (S.D. II.p.289-90)

The human form – the vehicle for divine Man – the result of previous cycles, gives the new type at the start of each new cycle: man's "cast-off clothes", reduced to atoms but still impregnated with the human stamp and embedded in the ether of the inner dimension, in the new cycle act as a prototype or blueprint upon which physical animal frames are modelled in the new cycle. The vegetable and mineral kingdoms were quite ethereal before man and animal appeared physically on earth (note the Ṛgvedic mention of cycles -"the plants came into being three ages before the gods" Ṛgv.X.97.1) - at the etheric level - for no vegetation could have been physical before animals breathed out the carbonic acid necessary for vegetation's nutrition and development at the physical level. Thus the human remains of a previous cycle become the type assumed by the animal kingdom of the next cycle.

"... Man became the living and animal UNIT, from which the 'cast-off clothes' determined the shape of every life and animal in this Round." (S.D.II. p.290)

The whole of animal life is encapsulated in the human physical body as indeed is revealed in the development of the embryo which goes even further than what is generally acknowledged, since the two preceding kingdoms, plant and mineral, are also represented. This is human genealogy at the physical level. Whilst the *pattern* of the physical body is modelled by spiritual ancestors, on the subtler plane, man's genealogy at the mental-spiritual level involves a host of other, higher creators, to make of him the complex being that he is.

So the *Zohar* teaches that "the *human* form contains everything; and as it did not yet exist, [on the lower levels] the worlds were destroyed" (*Zohar* III. Folio 292 a & b, Brody ed.). "As soon as Man was created, everything was complete ... for everything is comprised in the Man. He *unites in himself all the forms.*" (*Zohar* III.48a, Brody ed.. Both quotes in S.D. II.p.290).

According to a Midrashic legend there were worlds created and destroyed before our own, but the nature of these earlier creations which have been presented in terms of the "Kings of Edom", or "the Primeval Kings" is hardly understood, for it "is not made plain".

"It was only" writes Scholem, "when the form of Primordial Man was fashioned perfectly, with a harmonious balance between the male and the female forces, that creation was able to sustain itself. This balance is called in the *Zohar matkela* ('the scales'), and only through its power did our world come into being. The Biblical list of the kings of Edom (Gen.35.31ff) was interpreted in the light of this doctrine, for Edom was understood to represent the principle of 'judgment'. " 4) - e.g. a creation dominated solely by the forces of stern "judgment" could not survive, it needed the 'softening,' by the female principle.

H.P.B. remarks in her *The Secret Doctrine*:

"The *Zohar* speaks of primordial worlds which perished as soon as they came into existence. And the same is said in the Midrash, Rabbi Abbahū explaining distinctly that 'the Holy One' had successively created and destroyed sundry worlds, before he succeeded in the present one. This does not relate only to other worlds in space, but to a mystery of our own globe contained in the allegory about the 'kings of Edōm'. For the words

'this one pleases me' are repeated in Genesis i.31, though in disfigured terms, as usual. The Chaldean fragments of Cosmogony on the Cuneiform inscriptions, and elsewhere, show two distinct creations of animals and men, the first being destroyed, as it was a failure ..." (S.D. II.p.53-54)

In the Hindu *Purānas*, Brahmā is also shown creating several worlds, the primary and the secondary creations are mentioned which should not be confused with the seven creations in each *kalpa*. These two are the Padma and the Varāha, the present one when the earth is lifted out of the waters by Brahmā as a boar. (In Taitt. Sam. and Br. and Śat. Br. Prajāpati is the creator). Brahmā in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* is displeased with his first two creations, and though pleased with the third "still found it incompetent to fulfill his end." (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. bk.1.ch.5.p.31)

Whence the origin of these accounts which, however they may differ in their details, are all based upon the idea of various creations having been attempted before this one? The earthly throes of manifestations are described in the Stanzas of Dzyan depicting Nature's creation unaided by the wisdom of the celestial beings:

"The wheel whirled for thirty crores more. (Three hundred million years). It constructed *rūpas* (*forms*); soft stones that hardened (*minerals*); hard plants that softened (*vegetation*). Visible from invisible, insects and small lives ... She (*the Earth*) shook them off her back whenever they overran the Mother ... After thirty crores of years, she turned round. She lay on her back; on her side ... she would call no sons of Heaven, she would ask no sons of Wisdom. She created from her own bosom. She evolved water-men, terrible and bad." (S.D. II.p.52. stanza.2:5)

H.P.B. explains that the stanza refers to an inclination of the earth's axis bringing deluge and chaos on earth in which monsters were generated - subsequently destroyed - but she emphasised that this is "... not even an allegory. Here we have *facts*, that are found repeated in the account of *Poimandrēs*, as well as in the Chaldean tablets of creation. The verses may almost be checked by the Cosmogony, as given by Berosus ... 'The watermen terrible and bad', who were the production of physical nature alone, a result of the 'evolutionary impulse' and the first attempt to create man, the "crown", and the aim and goal of all animal life on Earth – are shown to be failures in our Stanzas... who of the Evolutionists can say that things in the beginning have not come to pass as they are described? That, as maintained in the *Purāṇas*, the Egyptian and Chaldean fragments, and even in *Genesis*, there have not been two, and even more 'creations' before the last formation of the Globe; which, changing its geological and atmospheric conditions, changed also its flora, its fauna, and its men?" (S.D. II.p.53)

Monsters were bred because of the as yet very plastic nature of the physical material that could easily be transformed. So huge animals of species now unknown are said to have tampered with the egg-like shells before these hardened wherein the future physical human being gestated, thereby giving birth to monsters, half animals, half human, called failures that did not survive for long, but of which the Greek legends of satyrs and fauns and others, like the Jewish Lilith, are the dim reminiscences.

This aspect of the ancient records could be compared to M. Eliade's comments in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion* in connection with the Greek myth of Uranus' s hateful fecundity and his subsequent mutilation that put an end to it; comments which show an intuition of what might have occurred as seen

"This singularity of Ouranos, at least as Hesiod's myth presents it, has not been fully explained. Why should he, alone among the sky gods, go on indefinitely procreating monstrous creatures while 'hating' them, and going to the length of 'chaining' them to Tartarus or in the belly of the earth? Could it be some reminiscence, some negative caricature, of that mythical day, that illud tempus, when creation had as yet no fixed norms, when anything might be born of anything else ... A good many traditions speak of the fluid and monstrous quality of the beings created when the world first began. One wonders whether this strange monster breeding of Ouranos might be a rationalization produced by the Greek mind to show the value of the regime brought about by Aphrodite and later governed by Zeus, in which the species are fixed, there is order, balance, and hierarchy." (op.cit.p.77).

Here H.P.B.'s remark is quite appropriate: "As Ouranos destroyed his children from *Gaia* ... by confining them in the bosom of the Earth, *Titaea*, so *Kronos*, at this second stage of creation, destroyed his children from *Rhea* – by devouring them. This is an allusion to the fruitless efforts of Earth, or Nature, alone to create real *human* men. Time swallows its own fruitless work." (S.D. II.p.269)

The Kings of Edom mentioned in Scholem's quotation earlier given, and found in the *Old Testament* and the *Kabbalah*, are interpreted in *The Secret Doctrine* in terms of the *seeded seven races of humanity*. Writes H.P.B.:

"The Secret Doctrine is not alone in speaking of primeval MEN born simultaneously on the seven divisions of our Globe. In the *Divine Poimandrēs* of Hermes we find the same Seven primeval men evolving from Nature and 'Heavenly Man', in the collective sense of the word, namely, from the Creative Spirits; and in the fragments (collected by George Smith) of Chaldean tablets on which is inscribed the Babylonian Legend of Creation ... seven human beings 'with the faces of ravens', (black, swarthy complexions) whom 'the [Seven] great gods created', are mentioned ... 'In the midst of the earth they grew up and became great, and increased in number, Seven kings, brothers of the same family.' [*Chaldean Account of Genesis*. p.103] These are the Seven Kings of Edom to whom reference is made in the *Kabbalah*: the first race, which was *imperfect*, i.e., was born before 'the balance' (sexes) existed, and which was therefore destroyed. ... They were 'destroyed' as a race, by being merged in their own progeny (by exudation) ... " (S.D.II. p.2)

According to the *Kabbalah* of "Shimon ben Yoḥai" (Simeon Ben Jochai, Agrippa mss)

"The wisdom of the *Kabbalah* rests in the science of equilibrium and Harmony. Forces that manifest without having been first equilibrated perish in space [equilibrated meaning differentiated].

[H.P.B.'s explanation] Thus perished the first Kings of the ancient world, the *self-produced* Princes of giants. They fell like rootless trees, and were seen no more: for *they were the Shadow of the Shadow ...* "

(Quoted in S.D.II. p.487) For they were the shadow [*chhāhyā*] of the *shadowy* Pitris (from the materialist standpoint) as the *Purānas* explain.

The first two races disappeared absorbed in their progeny. The sexless race re-appeared in the potentially bisexual which became the androgynes and then the sexual in the later third Race. Death came only after man became physically encased. The *Kabbalah* of Simeon Ben Jochai seems very close to the archaic records from which H.P.B. quotes, the "shadow of the shadow" is quite a telling expression harping back to the ethereal forms of humans emitted by ethereal beings, of the Stanzas of Dzyan.

#### CREATION OR FASHIONING OF MAN

Thus *The Secret Doctrine* teaches "... that the first human stock was projected by higher and semi-divine Beings out of their own essences" (S.D. II.p.87). A pattern of a vehicle had to be provided for the wave of divine sparks or "monads" undertaking the next stage of their pilgrimage of cosmic experience through all the planes of cosmos down to the lowest, the material, back to the highest.

"There was a spiritual, a psychic, an intellectual, and an animal evolution, from the highest to the lowest, as well as a physical development – from the simple and homogeneous, up to the more complex and heterogeneous ..." (S.D. II.p.87) - man being the meeting point of a physical evolution as well as a psycho-mental and spiritual evolution. This accounts for his complexity. For H.P.B. no esoterist can accept "the unreasonable proposition that all the now existing forms, 'from the structureless Amoeba to man,' are the direct lineal descendants of organisms which lived millions and millions of years before the birth of man, in the pre-Silurian epochs ..." (S.D. II. p.259)

*The Secret Doctrine* posits the seeding on seven divisions of our globe of seven human races by seven different categories of celestial beings, generally termed Dhyāni Chohans, specifically called in the Hindu sacred texts "pitris" or progenitors, the "fathers". These set the pattern for the seven human root races to manifest in due course of time.

"The Seven Hosts, the 'Will (or *Mind*)-born Lords', propelled by the Spirit of Life-giving (*Fohat*), separate men from themselves, each on his own Zone". (S.D.II.p.86. Stanza of Dzyan 4:14)

The Pitris are said to have shot out of themselves still more ethereal forms or doubles as a model for Nature and the lower forms of terrestrial life to work upon, a "tabernacle" for the spiritual spark or monad to enshrine itself into a form, however tenuous, for otherwise it could have no link with our astro-terrestrial world. This is the first stage of human creation, the pattern is set by higher beings (than we know on earth) out of their own subtle substance. Much later, still higher celestial beings, we are told, came on earth and activated the latent mind principle in human beings and, in some cases, incarnated in the prepared forms. (See S.D.I.p.246 ff)

The progenitors of humanity are in the *Purānas* divided into seven classes. Three of these are considered formless (*arūpa*) or too subtle for what we consider form, and four of these are with form (*rūpa*); and there are two kinds of progenitors, the *Agnisvāttas* and the *barhiṣad*. H.P.B. explains the differentiation thus:

"The Pitris are *lunar* deities and our ancestors, because they *created the physical man*. The *Agniṣvāttas*, the *Kumāras* (the seven mystic sages) are solar deities, though the former are Pitris also; and these are the 'fashioners of the *Inner Man*' ... They are: the 'Sons of Fire', because they are the first Beings (... called 'Minds'), evolved from the Primordial Fire." (S.D.I. p.86-7)

The "lunar pitris" are those who, according to the gnosis, had evolved on the moon aeons ago; but had not yet completed their evolution. It is the host of the *rūpa* classes who create the shadowy forms for men simultaneously on the seven zones, as model for a future physical body. These are, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, the *Barhiṣads* whom Hindu orthodoxy regards as the keepers of the sacred fire, but whom the secret gnosis regards as having only the lower fire of procreation. Contrary to Hindu orthodoxy, the *Agniṣvāttas* or the Fire Dhyānis who had evolved far beyond the *rūpa* classes, are esoterically considered as having the higher creative fire, in accordance with the Ṛgvedic meaning of *asura*, the possessor and bestower of the life-

breath – in the case of the *agniṣvāttas* this life-breath being the creative fire of mental life, hence intelligence. As a consequence, these *agniṣvāttas* endowed men with, or activated the mind principle, *manas*. "*The Sons of Mahat are the quickeners of the human plant.*" (S.D. II. p.103) Here is granted a glimpse into the various gradations of evolution among beings.

"The human *Ego* is neither *Ātman* nor *Buddhi*, but the *higher Manas*; the intellectual fruition and the efflorescence of the intellectual self-conscious Egotism – in the higher spiritual sense. The ancient works refer to it as *Kāraṇa Śarīra* [causal body] on the plane of *Sūtrātman*, which is the golden thread on which, like beads, the various personalities of the Higher *Ego* are strung... " (S.D. II. p.79)

At the present stage of our evolution, the desire principle forming with the lower aspect of the mind one unit, constitutes the real human being or person, hence *kāma-manas*, capable and desirous of experiencing life in all its intricacies, and the fruit from the tree of knowledge. Hence H.P.B. writes:

"... the two higher 'principles' [ātmā-buddhi] *can have no individuality on Earth*, cannot be *man*, unless there is (a) the Mind, the *Manas-Ego*, to cognize itself, and (b) the terrestrial *false* personality, or the body of egotistical desires and personal Will, to cement the whole, as if round a pivot (which it is, truly) to the physical form of man. It is the *Fifth* and the *Fourth* principles – *Manas* and *Kāma-rūpa* that contain the dual personality..." (S.D. II. p.241)

Further *manas* and its vehicle, the *kāma-rūpa*, form the two elements of *ahaṅkāra*, the I-making faculty, or individualised consciousness. The two have to be "closely blended for purposes of a full terrestrial existence." (ibid.p.242).

In short, the *Agniṣvāttas* are the fiery angels of *transmutation*, who by giving man of their own essence, endowed him not only with reflective self consciousness but also with that capacity for self transformation towards ever higher, deeper and more beneficial goals. According to the Commentary from which H.P.B. quotes:

" 'Our earth and man ... [are] the products of the three Fires.' – whose three names answer, in Sanskrit, to 'the *electric fire*, the *Solar fire*, and the *fire produced by friction*'... explained on the Cosmic and human planes, [they] are Spirit, Soul, and Body, the three great Root-groups, with their four additional divisions. These vary with the Schools, and become – according to their applications – the *upādhis* and the *vehicles*, or the *noumena* of these." (S.D.II. p.247)

Through the "gift" to men of the *Agniṣvāttas*' essential nature, man became the thinker (Sanskrit *manu* from *man* to think). In uniting man's higher principles to his lower ones with their own substance, the *Agniṣvāttas* made of human beings the quickeners of life who, through the power of thought, and later orderly meditation and selflessness, could change their environment, their life's direction, even the puny "self". Unfortunately, excessive development of the lower aspect of the mind, at the expense of the higher and thereby of psyche's intimations, has resulted in selfishness, separateness, cruelty, all the ills that man is heir to – the very opposite of what was in nature's plan. That this urge to create and change conditions for the better has now widely degenerated to the basest ends of greed and profits for the few, regardless of human misery, is a stain on humanity, another "fall", and has nought in common with the lofty manasic progenitors of humankind. For the lower aspect of the mind in arrogating to itself supremacy over psyche denies access to its spiritual monitor, and thereby opens the door to evil.

It is, according to the gnosis, only with the advent of the Third Race that human beings became physical, and only after the first half of its cycle had passed, that from androgyne they separated into the two sexes. Hence the allegory in *Genesis* of (androgyne) Adam (not recognized as such by Jewish orthodoxy) plunged in deep sleep (mental faculties undeveloped) from whose body Eve is separated, and allegories of *Brahmā* creating progeny as well as dividing himself into male and female (See *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. ch.6 & 7).

6)

In her comments on the belief in androgynous forbears of humanity H.P.B. quotes from Plato's *Banquet*:

"Our nature of old was not the same as it is now. It was *androgynous*, the form and name partaking of, and being common to, both the male and female ... Their bodies were round, and the manner of their running circular. They were terrible in force and strength, and had prodigious ambition.

Hence Zeus *divided each of them into two*, making them weaker; Apollo, under his direction, closed up the skin". (op.cit. 189,190. S.D.II. p.133-4)

She draws attention to Ezekiel's vision, Ch.1 where the four divine beings who "had the likeness of a man" yet appeared like a wheel, "when they went, they went upon their four sides", for the spirit of the living creature was in the wheels. Also

"In the Book of the Generations (*Tōledōth*) of Adam, the verse: 'God created (*bārā*, brought forth) man in his image, in the image of God created he him, male and female created he them,' if read esoterically will yield the true sense, viz.: 'The *Elōhīm* (Gods) brought forth from themselves (by modification) man in their image ... created they *him* (collective humanity, or *Adam*) male and female, created *he* (collective Deity) them.' " (ibid.p.134).

H.P.B. goes on giving a glimpse of the four preceding root-races:

"The *Sexless* Race was their first production, a modification *of* and *from* themselves, the pure spiritual existences; and this was Adam *solus*. Thence came the *Second* Race: Adam-Eve, or *Yōd-Havāh*, inactive androgynes; and finally the Third, or the '*Separating* Hermaphrodite,' Cain and Abel, [esoterically considered male and female] who produce the Fourth, Seth-Enos, etc. It is that Third, the last semi-spiritual *race*, which was also the last vehicle of the divine and innate Wisdom, ingenerate in the Enochs, the Seers of that Mankind. The *Fourth*, which had tasted from the fruit of the Tree of Good and Evil – Wisdom united already to earthy, and therefore *impure* intelligence – had consequently to acquire that Wisdom by initiation and great struggle."

Her esoteric reading of the creation of Man in *Genesis* follows:

" . . . it is only the 'Heavenly Man', Adam-Kadmon, of the first chapter of *Genesis*, who is made 'in the image and likeness of God'. ['And God said, let us make man in our image, and after our likeness' ch.1.26]. Adam, of chapter ii, is not said to be made in that *image* ... before he ate of the forbidden fruit. The former Adam is the Sēphīrōthal Host; the second Adam is the Mindless first human Root Race; the third Adam is the race that separated [into male and female sexes] whose eyes are opened [3<sup>rd</sup> root race] "(S.D. II. p.46 fn) i.e. whose mind has awakened to the objective plane and its opposite, and to complementary polarities.

The Fourth Race was fully physical, hence human, but far more psychic than we are; it had great powers and grew tall in pride as recounted in the Old Testament. Their descendants (from its 7th sub-race) are the much reduced in size Chinese, Japanese, Mongolians, Tibetans, Hungarians, Finns and American Indians, etc. The present Fifth Root-Race, developing the lower aspect of mind, includes the Western races, Semitic as well as Indo-European. The last two root-races have yet to develop. Such are the esoteric teachings, as gleaned from the Stanzas of Dzyan and their Commentary.

To sum up: the First Race is shown "as spiritual within and ethereal without", hence had no physical body as yet. This is the Adam in paradise before the separation into sexes. The Second Race is shown as "psycho-spiritual mentally and ethereo-physical bodily". The Third race is astro-physical in its body, and lives an inner life, in which the psycho-spiritual element is in no way as yet interfered with by the hardly nascent physiological senses (S.D.II.p.299.fn.) but this changes towards its middle period when the physical body develops and assumes predominance. H.P.B. points out how the human organism was adapted to its surroundings. Not being physical, at first, they "required no purified gases to breathe and live upon". "From the higher or subtler sphere, the human being slowly descended to the lowest material sphere to become man and woman. Such is the teaching."

The "history" of the unfolding of the human races is contained in the *fables* of the *Purāṇas*, unintelligible to most scholars because of their intentional mixing up of cycles, continents and races, but containing substantial though garbled accounts of humanity's past. H.P.B., with a masterly hand, unravels the many knots that prevent rational understanding, and makes sense out of these. The *Purāṇas* obviously wove their tales around a nucleus of an ancient lore kept undissemated, but subsequently thought to be best preserved in so-called fables. This ancient lore could, for all we know, be rooted in an original teaching given out in stages to the *initiates* - seen by the seers of ancient India, or priests of ancient Egypt, Sumer and elsewhere, teachings which form the basis of the Stanzas of Dzyan and their Commentaries. H.P.B. felt obliged to turn to the tales of the *Purāṇas* for comparison with the Stanzas, and to prove that legends and

myths do contain a core of realities so far dismissed by 19th and 20th century intelligentsia. The doctrine of human and terrestrial evolution that underlies them, however tampered with and even totally distorted in some instances, reappears in her explanations as possibilities worth considering.

Thus Dakṣa, now degraded from his high estate as the active polarity of Aditi (Ṛgv.X.72.7) to the creator of physical man, in the *Purāṇas*, is considered in *The Secret Doctrine* as "the synthesis of all the preceding Races and the progenitor of all the *human* Races after the Third" (S.D.II.p.178). Obeying Brahmā, he "made 'inferior and superior' (*avara* and *vara*) progeny (*putra*), *bipeds* and *quadrupeds*" (ibid.p.183) and gave birth to females, i.e. separated the androgynes. In the fable which shows him losing "his head from his body in the general strife between the gods and the *Raumas*", the head is replaced by that of a ram (*Skanda Purāṇa*), symbol of generating power (ibid.p.182). Dakṣa is thus shown to have introduced the era of sexual generation which developed slowly not without interruptions and difficulties, for other modes were still going on. A hint is given in the incident of Rudra-Śiva creating the "thousand-headed, thousand-armed 'monster', to destroy the sacrifices of Dakṣa, which monster creates "from *the pores of his skin (romakūpas)* powerful Raumas." The Mahābhārata refers to Raumas and other races springing from the *romakūpas* or skin pores. In the *Vāyu Purāṇa* as mentioned by H.P.B. (S.D. II.p.183) Dakṣa's sacrifice is said to have "taken place in the presence of creatures *born from the egg*, from the vapour, vegetation, pores of the skin and, finally only, from the womb"(ibid.p.183). H.P.B. does not mention, possibly did not know, that the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, one of the earliest Upaniṣads, corroborates this almost fully:

"Now of these beings here, there are just three origins: born from an egg (*aṇḍaja*), born from a living thing (*jīvajā*), born from a sprout (*udbhijja*)." (Chānd.Up.VI.3.1)

The *Atharvaveda* mentions yet another way: *sweat-born* (Athv.III.3). These enumerations of the various ways Nature used in order to procreate her species do point to an ancient common lore preserved in the Hindu scriptures. The Stanzas of Dzryan tally pretty well with the data found in these ancient texts. Whence the origin of such similar data?

The *Viṣṇu Purāṇa* ends this period thus:

"From that period forwards, living creatures were engendered by sexual intercourse. Before the time of Dakṣa, they were variously propagated - by the will, by sight, by touch, and by the influence of religious austerities practised by devout sages and holy saints." (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa*. Bk1.ch.15, p.96 of 3rd ed. reprinted 1979) This would date Dakṣa as belonging to the later part of the Third Root Race, the time when the higher celestial beings, impelled by karmic law had to come down to the terrestrial sphere. Creation "by will" could only apply to highly evolved, holy beings, the devout sages, etc. as mentioned above. H.P.B. writes:

"THE THIRD RACE FELL - and created no longer; it *begat* its progeny. Being still mindless at the period of separation, it begat, moreover, anomalous offspring, until its physiological nature had adjusted its instincts in the right direction. Like the 'Lords Gods' of the Bible, the 'Sons of Wisdom', the Dhyāni-Chohans, had warned them to leave alone the fruit forbidden by Nature; but the warning proved of no value. Men realized the unfitness - we must not say sin - of what they had done, only when too late; after the angelic monads from higher spheres had incarnated in, and endowed them with understanding. To that day they had remained simply physical, like the animals generated from them". (S.D. II. p.267)

Thus the *descent* into human physical incarnation was achieved during the Third Root Race, but as the mental principle, *manas*, had not as yet developed within the human frame, mishaps occurred, described in the Stanzas. This can be summed up as: humans bred with animals, for their physiological differences were not as pronounced as they are now, and there was as yet no obvious *taboo*. This is considered the first fall of man into generation and one might add, into transgression of the law.

Once the earth had been prepared by the lower powers and its four kingdoms started on their evolutionary journey, the Higher Powers, the Dhyāni-Chohans had, in their turn, to descend on earth in accordance with the evolutionary law, in order to complete the fashioning of man and spur him on his forward journey. Man was to form the link between the higher and the lower, to be the meeting point of these two, and himself to give the impetus to the lower kingdoms. Had he remained the "pale shadow" of his progenitors, his life on earth would have been spent as in a dream with no possibility of any higher progress for himself and his descendants for ages.

The Fire Dhyānis or *agniṣvāttas*, called the 'heart' of the Dhyān Chohanīc Body, complete man by fanning the fire of mind, or actually incarnating in the human forms. H.P.B. remarks on the mystery that "every physical organ and psychic and spiritual function" in man "is a reflection...on the terrestrial plane, of the model or prototype above" which is none other than the sevenfold essence of the "angelic heart". (S.D. II. p.92) A mystery indeed, but one which must account for man being called the *saptaparnṇa* or seven-leafed plant and for the esoteric division of the human constitution into seven principles or rather three principles and four vehicles or *upādhi* (*upa + dhā* to put on; hence what is placed for another thing or substitute; a vehicle or veil, or even basis) as what one stands on and acts from in order to cope with specific conditions. Man is that being that develops fully the principle of *kāma* in this cycle, which means not only desire, the lower aspect of will, but love, the hidden aspect of the Divine Will, as a prior step to further developing the mind which will not be fully unfolded until the next manvantara. 7)

In her summing up the evolution of man H.P.B. remarks:

"It now becomes plain that there exists in Nature a triple evolutionary scheme, for the formation of the three *periodical Upādhis*; or rather three separate schemes of evolution, which in our system are inextricably interwoven and interblended at every point. These are the Monadic (or spiritual), the intellectual, and the physical evolutions ..." (S.D. I.p.181)

It is also plain that not only is man a complex being because of his physical, intellectual and spiritual dimensions, all taken into account by the ancient sages; but also that for both the esoteric doctrine and the whole of antiquity, man's procreators are beings of a higher calibre than himself. Evolution does not stop at humanity, nor is the human being evolved from an ape ancestor 8) so insisted upon nowadays, regardless of his intellect and spiritual aspirations. So according to Hesiod:

"Gods and mortals have one common origin; [Opera et Dies v.108] ... and Pindar echoes the statement" [Nemeonikai.vi.i] (quoted from S.D. II.p.270) and interestingly so does the Ṛgveda, so does the Atharvaveda. Thus

"For of one spirit are the gods with mortal man, co-sharers all of gracious gifts". (Ṛgv. VIII.27.14ab Griffith's translation.) They are "born from the same mother's womb" (Ṛgv. VIII.83.8), from the same Father (Prajāpati).

"*Brahman* entered the body and on the body is Prajāpati. Therefore indeed, one who knows man (*puruṣa*) thinks this is brahman'; for all deities are seated in him like cows in a cow-stall." (Athv.XI.8.32) (The devas in man usually refer to the senses, both physical and subtle, the senses considered divine gifts)

"*Having poured together the whole mortal, the gods entered man*". (Athv.XI.8.13cd)

The *Atharvaveda* quaintly expresses what *The Secret Doctrine* explains as the bright spirits animating "the man of clay by endowing each of his inner principles" with a reflection of their own essence. The last quote succinctly shows the gods moulding the mortal and then entering into him as the divine monitors. The ancient records, Egyptian, Vedic, Chaldean, Purāṇic, the Pyramider, the Kabbalah, all of one voice, claim the same divine ancestry for humanity. Man is "dust of the dust" only in his physical body. They all recognised his spiritual and intellectual dimensions as coming from some far higher source to endow him with the capacity to at least somewhat conceive the Infinite, the Ineffable, the Absolute. Can it be that we have regressed so much that we can no longer look up to anything higher than "dust of the dust" or descent from an ape?

The ancient specific perspective, differing so fundamentally from any of the evolutionist schemes promulgated in the past two centuries, which, in their purely materialistic vistas, disregard any possibility of intervention from subtler and higher evolutions, may still be dismissed out of hand. Nevertheless, the spiritual dimension of humanity, even though still generally rather rudimentary, will one day have to be fully explained. *The Secret Doctrine* in this respect offers data that take into account the whole nature of man, his fullness, even at this stage of human evolution. It states that, had higher beings not intervened, our modern human races would never have reached their present stage of mental awareness. Although the time length of development allotted to each race is enormous, still without such external help humanity would not have been able to produce a flowering of artists, thinkers and mystics such as have already made their mark within the evolution of human beings. Since there are, according to the esoteric tradition, parallel evolutions, some far higher than our own, and since all in the planetary scheme, and in the final analysis, are interdependent and



subservient to the one Law of Cosmic Order, ṛta, the more highly evolved beings would, at a certain time in the cycle, necessarily be called upon by the law to help their lower brethren, for instance by teaching them the arts of civilization, etc. So in India, the original ṛṣis are said to have taught the *Veda* to humanity at the beginning of each of the three yugas; so the Egyptians, as in the tales of Osiris and Isis, teaching the arts of civilisation; so the Egyptian and the Sumerian records of their divine dynasties, etc.

#### THE HUMAN CONSTITUTION IN VEDIC TEXTS, AND THE PROCESS OF DYING

The subtler or inner constitution of human beings, as first given out by H.P.B., has proved to be incomplete and far from precise. (See diagram) She herself admitted that

"... neither Ātmā, which is no individual 'principle' but a radiation *from and one* with the Unmanifested Logos; nor the body, which is the material rind or shell, of the spiritual Man, can be, in strict truth, referred to as 'principles'. Moreover, the chief 'principle' of all, one not even mentioned heretofore, is the 'Luminous Egg' (*Hiraṇyagarbha*), or the invisible magnetic sphere in which every man is enveloped. It is the direct emanation:

a) from the Ātmic ray in its triple aspect of Creator, Preserver and Destroyer (Regenerator); and b) from Buddhi-Manas ...the spiritual Man consists of only five principles, as taught by the Vedāntins who substitute, tacitly, for the physical [body] this sixth, or auric, body, and merge the dual Manas (the dual mind, or consciousness) into one. Thus they speak of five *kośas* (sheaths or principles) and call Ātmā the sixth yet no 'principle'." (E.W. p.356)

No public mention of the auric body was allowed because it was held so sacred. A diagram of the human principles is reproduced on p.440. The principle of *kāma*, desire, is so linked in this manvantara to the lower aspect of mind that it is here presented as *kāma-manas*. The *liṅga* is the subtle body on which the physical body is modelled (as with the Egyptians), hence sometimes named the model body, now usually called the etheric body which absorbs and circulates *prāṇa* into the physical body. In vol.II of *The Secret Doctrine* H.P.B. describes it as "the inert vehicle or form on which the body is moulded; the vehicle of Life [*prāṇa*]. It is dissipated very shortly after the disintegration of the body". (ibid. p.593) One may thus refer to the seven detailed "divisions" of the human constitution, but to only four or five "principles", depending on whether the body (or the ātman) is counted a principle. The *liṅga śarīra* is not even mentioned in the Tāraka and has a different name in the Vedānta. The Vedānta thinks in terms of "sheaths" assumed, and the Tāraka Rāja Yoga in terms of a basic platform, or vehicle. Each gives its version as shown in the following plan, as recorded in S.D. I. p.157.

VEDĀNTA	TĀRAKA RĀJA YOGA
Annamayakośa (sheath of food, the body)	Sthūlopādhi (gross body)
Prāṇamayakośa (sheath of prāṇa)	Sūkṣmopādhi (subtle body)
Manomayakośa (sheath of mind)	
Vijñānamayakośa (spiritual insight)	Kāraṇopādhi (causal body)
Ānandamayakośa (sheath of bliss)	
Ātman	Ātman

Each version looks from a slightly different standpoint, the Tāraka Rāja Yoga being the simplest, but in its lack of details less clear. Thus what does it exactly mean by the subtle body? Does it represent a combination of mind plus desire, *kāma* being a most important principle at this stage of evolution which it does not even mention. If so, what about *prāṇa* which is not mentioned but could also be the subtle body? Similarly the Causal body would involve spiritual insight and mind, mind like desire being, in this cycle, extremely important as it is being developed specifically. But both tables admit that the essential being manifests on each plane through a vehicle, a basis which enables the being to get to grips with each plane.

The two tables plus that of H.P.B. admit *ātmā*, *buddhi* or spiritual insight, and *manas* or mind, as the fundamental, higher principles of man; whether we see *ātman* as a principle or not, does not make any difference for our understanding of the human constitution as a whole. The Tāraka includes *prāṇa*, *manas* and *buddhi* under the subtle and the causal body heading. The "sheath of bliss" and the "causal body" are quite different but they could be homologated with, though not equivalent to, the Auric Egg of H.P.B.'s admission, which she described as taking up the Light of Ātmā. The *kāma* principle all important in the present cycle is not even mentioned in either table. Can we find any inkling of a definite view of the human constitution in the early Veda, such as the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda? Western exegesis does not credit Vedic India with the conception of the *kośas* or *śarīras* of the later schools, nor did it credit Vedic India with any knowledge of yoga; this latter has been proved completely wrong.

From the stray hints scattered in some funeral hymns of the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda, one gathers that dying was considered a complex process, thus implying a certain knowledge of what occurs at death and a certain complexity to the human constitution, all of which, again, implies seership and probably initiation into the mysteries of death. The Atharvaveda tells us of a "first dying"; if first, there must be a second dying and perhaps a third? Would this, or these mean a discarding of "sheaths", as death means a discarding of the physical body? Most likely.

"By the first dying it goes apart dividing threefold. Yonder goes it with one (part);  
yonder goes it with one; here with one it dwells." (Athv. XI.8.33. Whitney's trans.)

This dividing threefold could refer to the division of three constituents of the human person that separate, or to three groups of constituent elements. There is no explanation, but obviously a doctrine is implied here. The previous verse had shown that "all deities are seated in (man) as cows in a cow-stall"- our sense organs, outer and inner, being the divine gifts. The dividing threefold would then mean that the grosser constituents would go to the grosser elements, the physical body to earth, the subtler body to the subtler plane. Ṛgveda X.16.3 tells us:

"Let the eye go to the sun, the spirit (*ātman*) to the wind;  
go thou according to thy nature, to heaven and to earth, or go to the waters ...  
take thy stand with thy body among the plants."

This enigmatic verse does not give a clear idea of division, but that there is division is obvious. "Let the eye go to the sun" implies a principle of perception, whether of soul or mind, for the mention of the sun shows that this perception is more than physical. Behind these few words lies an ancient doctrine known to Plato and touched upon in section 1 on Puruṣa. Behind the directed gaze of the eye lurks not only the directed will of him who gazes but also the eye of the conscious, illumined gazer, the mind-soul, or *manas*. This principle transmits its power through the eye which radiates as much of the soul's energy as the person is capable of, as well as the spiritual energy of that which is higher than psyche, whether called *ātman* as here, or *asu* (life breath), or *aja* (unborn) as elsewhere.

The spiritual spark in human beings (following the image of sparks within the One Flame), is considered the Eye of Divine Consciousness radiating life and light; psyche is considered the eye of the monad on the soul's own plane; the physical eye which receives the soul's light becomes the soul's eye at the physical level - the outpost of the spiritual spark or monad. That some human eyes transmit tremendous light and love, whilst others only transmit hatred or cunning, etc. also indicate where the light comes from - either psyche or the lower, separative mind. Hence the line, "let the eye go to the sun", implies the wish that the eye should go to the representative of the Divine Eye, the Giver of life, light and illumination (explained in ch.6). The devas, through the sun, "*ātman* of what moves and moves not" (Ṛgv.I.115.1), who generated the luminary as their organ of sight and insight, observe the world and the deeds and misdeeds of humans. Thereby they brought about an all blazing *manifestation* of that cosmic principle that we cannot even fix with our eyes!

In those very ancient days it could be that *prāṇa*, *asu*, *vāta* were not so distinct from each other but were certainly considered agents of *ātman*. The sun as *ātman* of all things would mean to us the Universal Soul, *anima mundi*. The link between the eye and the sun, organ of life, light, insight, vision, illumination, is thus not so absurd as our ignorance and usual superficial reading would have it, but it follows the law of analogy. The eye is really an image of psyche, the perceiver. Therefore that which perceives must go back to

the perceiver from whom it received its perception, viz. the sun, or *ātman* as spiritual principle in the human being. Such homologation is difficult for us to conceive, for we have deprived the sun of everything, except its obvious existence and light, and have forgotten that light implies consciousness. In the present verse, the *ātman* refers to the impalpable breath of life which returns to the impalpable Cosmic Breath, called the wind.

The waters here may stand for the Ṛgvedic *waters of space*, the *svarvatīr āpaḥ* equivalent to the later *ākāśa*, the cradle of worlds; hence to *anima mundi*; if so, the meaning would be "go thou to the infinite reservoir of life"; but water also symbolises the emotional and its higher counterpart, the intuitional nature, in the human being. To what does the *thou* refer? The body made of various tissues, muscles, nerves, etc. goes (in its atoms) to the plant kingdom. But one's good deeds, and rightly performed religious rites, would take the middle principle, *kāma-manas*, to heaven, though this is not told. Nor does the reference to earth coupled with heaven give its hint, even though "according to thy nature" seems to imply the middle principle. The *thou* would then refer to the latter, hence the person. However that may be, we detect here the four elements, fire (sun, in other verses, Agni); water which would point to the emotional element in the human being, or else to the source of life; earth (the physical body with its various connections) and air which in the Ṛgveda is wind, either *vāta*, or *vāyu*, air implying life, the life-breath, *prāṇa*. Man is a composite of the four known elements, (the fifth also, but that applies to the subtler nature), whether these physical elements be taken at their physical level, or in their more subtle psychic and spiritual connotation. H.P.B. makes in this respect an interesting remark which repays pondering upon:

"Matter [earth] is the vehicle for the manifestation of soul on this plane of existence, and soul [water, symbol of emotions, feelings and, at the higher level, intuition, hence soul] is the vehicle on a higher plane [fire] for the manifestation of spirit, and these three are a trinity synthesised by life [air] which pervades them all." (S.D.I. p.49)

The next verse (Ṛgv.X.16.4) tells us that there is an *unborn (aja)* aspect in us, an eternal principle: "As for his unborn part, do thou (Agni) kindle it with thy heat, let thy flame and thy lustre kindle it ... convey it to the world of the righteous." (Muir's trans. O.S.T. V.p.298)

Quite extraordinary that this *aja* principle should be kindled by Agni and led to the world of righteousness, i.e. the heaven world, the reward of the righteous. Perhaps the unborn was never at home in this our terrestrial field and was only half aware, so that now it needs guidance, from the lower plane to its own "home"? Agni, giver of intelligence, would kindle it to awakening from its terrestrial sleep and convey it across the shoals of the various levels of the immediate beyond to the level where it belongs. There may be various interpretations for the subject is intricate. Compare the Atharvaveda:

"Let him, [the departed one] understanding (*prajānan*) go to the world of the righteous" (Athv.IX.5.1)

which implies that not everyone *understands* what is happening. This is part of the doctrine of the after death transit, viz., that only those who have given thought to death, its process and its levels of consciousness, and have lived their life in accordance with Truth and piety, can understand and pass through death in full awareness and relatively quickly to reach their appointed *loka*, i.e. the level to which their evolution has brought them. These are esoteric touches and a doctrine that has come down the ages, but which philology cannot help intuit. But such words as *prajānan* give the hint. Moreover, three lights are ascribed to the one who is to be cherished by the gods in the highest birthplace:

"This one (light is) thine; yonder is one for thee too; with the third light unite thyself". (Ṛgv. X.56.1ab)

This parallels the Atharvavedic threefold division quoted above; a threefold division which may here be inferred from the three lights, each dying to the preceding light implying a going more and more *within* away from the form towards the formless world. We are not told to what the three lights refer, for the seers knew. The inference could be to three types of consciousness: physical awareness which disappears with death; mental (inclusive of feeling = *kāma-manas*) awareness or what is described here as *yonder*, whose light lasts a further time; and spiritual insight or light with which the departed one is to *unite* in the highest heaven (*parame vyoman*) with the reward of his good deeds (X.14.8) - the highest place of origin (*parame janitre*): "In mergence with thyself be thou beloved and cherished of the gods in the highest birthplace" (X.56.1cd). This

*janitra* - i.e. whence we, as essentially spiritual beings, originate - being the third and highest sphere where the third light will be apprehended, must be in the third step of Viṣṇu or third heaven (I.154.5).

As all too obvious from the above quotes and discussion, an investigation into the human principles in the *Ṛgveda* and the *Atharvaveda* reveals at least a belief in after death existence and, moreover, a discarding of what can only be called "veils" assumed for earthly existence. There was no doubt for the ṛṣis of the continuity of consciousness in the various dimensions of the "beyond", only orientation was needed. Despite different elements composing the human constitution and their being dispersed one after another after death, something still remained.

#### AFTER DEATH STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS

When consciousness has left the physical body, its focus would presumably be the *kāma-mental* principle from which in due time, it will then gravitate to its new centre. The next verse (X.56.2) enjoins on the departed one to "measure out", or establish his own light in heaven unflinchingly; again a strange injunction. One wonders whether these stray hints were part of a guideline preserved for a long time orally by the ṛṣis to guide the departed person in the beyond, much in the same way as the Tibetan *Book of the Dead* acts as a guide for the dying and those already gone, or indeed some of the Egyptian *Coffin Texts* which seem to be more guides for the living to know the steps to be taken in the beyond, texts which find themselves reproduced and sometimes somewhat transformed in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, or rather *The Book of Coming Forth by Day*.

The Chāndogya Upaniṣad mentions

"the light which shines above this heaven ... is the same as that which is here within the person". (III.13.7)

If "above this heaven" be taken as the spiritual realm, beyond the average human conception of paradise, then it would mean that this light in the spiritual domain is also lodged in the human being, in the heart, a typical Upaniṣadic teaching. Furthermore, Gonda also draws attention to the Bṛhad. Upaniṣad (I.5.12) where "heaven is considered to be the body of 'mind' and the sun its 'light form'." (*Vision*, p.270.) a most important hint, mostly disregarded, but of course well known to Śri Aurobindo. One may here quite appropriately ask: would that "body" of mind which seems to be the celestial light in its spiritual sense, be the Upaniṣads' equivalent to the *sukṣmopādhi* (subtle body) or better to the *karaṇopādhi* (causal body) of the Tāraka Rāja Yoga system in its conception of the human constitution? Or to the *manomaya kośa* or *viññānamaya kośa* of the Vedānta system? The description suits these terms, implying a knowledge of subtler vehicles. Both systems, the Tāraka and the Vedānta, cannot but have their roots in the ancient gnosis of the ṛṣis, probably still kept more or less secret in the early days, as the doctrine of *karma* was. (Bṛhd.Up.III. 2.13) Further, the departing one is to unite with a body (*tanu*) or form in the beyond: "Putting on life", or "enduing life as a vesture (*ayur vāsanaḥ*) rejoin a form" (Ṛgv. X.16.5), or as Ṛgv.X.14.8 expresses it "unite with a form of splendour" (*samgachasva tanvā suvarcāḥ*), a line which could also be translated as "unite with thy most glorious self", *suvarcas* meaning brilliance, lustre, light, the illuminating power of sun or fire (Monier-Williams). The word ṛbeen translated as body, the word used is *tanu* (Ṛgv.X.16.5 and X.14.8); but when Agni is asked to seize and burn the body of the departed one (Athv.XVIII.3.71) or not to dissolve it (Ṛgv.X.16.1) the word used is *śarīra*; thus a difference must have been made between the two. One may conclude that *śarīra* refers to the tangible form or the objective physical body, whereas *tanu* refers to a subjective form which now becomes an outer envelope on the subtler level. There is not enough detail to tell us whether this subjective form could include the *prāṇa*, the mind and that principle of spiritual insight *viññāna* which forms the higher aspect of the human being. The departed are endowed with lustre, and heaven is the realm of eternal light (*jyotir ajasram* Ṛgv.IX.113.7). One highly interesting remark, in Ṛgv.X.14.8 states: "leaving behind (*hitvāya*) (whatever be) blameworthy (*avadyam*), go again - or back (*punar*) to thy home (*astam*)", whether *punar* means back or again, the implication is the same: the human being's true home is in the subtler realm to which he goes back after earthly existence - probably not just once, though this has also been denied (cf. IV.54. 2).

As the usual threefold Vedic cosmogonic division is interlinked with the human constitution (man the microcosm in the image of the macrocosm), we might find here a key to the early Vedic conception. As

we saw in ch.3 (section on Aditi), the threefold division comprises *pṛthivī*, translated earth, *antarikṣa*, translated middle region, and *dyaus* or heaven. Transferring the threefold division to the human being: these as physical, vital and mental; and beyond these three is placed the fourth, *svar*, the spiritual equivalent to the Chāndogya Upaniṣad's "light which shines above this heaven" which Sri Aurobindo describes as the plane of "consciousness which directly receives the illumination". (*On the Veda* 1964.p.78.) He enumerates "the vital, mental and causal or ideal body" (ibid.p.356. Cf. the Hindu four states of consciousness of which the fourth is *samādhi*.)

One may observe that, according to the legend, Nature's artisan Tvaṣṭṛ fashioned a bowl or chalice from which the devas quaffed Soma which is not just the nectar of immortality, but as well that which releases the mind-yoked vision and gives divine insight and ecstasy. But the Ṛbhūṣ called by Śri Aurobindo "artisans of immortality", were commissioned by the devas, through the agency of Agni, to fashion four cups out of the one chalice. I do not follow Śri Aurobindo here, as for him Tvaṣṭṛ's bowl is the physical body. Cosmically this one chalice is what H.P.B. calls the Mundane Egg, symbol of space as matrix of all, wherein the gods drink with exhilaration their life-vitality (Ṛgv.VII.49.4 *ūrjaṃ madanti*). This is the Ṛgvedic *hiraṇyagarbha* at the cosmic level. Microcosmically this chalice is what H.P.B. calls the *auric egg* in the human constitution which, as a container of all that is to occur in life and be engraved in the book of human life, may be compared to a chalice or to the causal body of the Tāraka Rāja Yoga. This chalice, in the course of evolution - during the human descent into more physical conditions - is unfolded into four divisions reflected in 1) the mind, 2) the desire principle or *kāma-manas*, 3) the subtle or vital envelope, and 4) the physical body. Each of these is like a bowl in which one may *read* certain aspects of the human being. These images describe a coming out of the state of divine undifferentiation or integration, represented by the one chalice, into a differentiated fourfold state of consciousness in the human being symbolised by the four cups. The Adam of light has now become the Adam of earth with a fourfold division.

A certain hymn in the Ṛgveda, generally considered a funeral hymn (Ṛgv.X.135), concerns the transit of a boy beyond the gates of death; but it is capable of another interpretation: that of an initiatory process in consciousness, in the death encounter and the passage through death towards the subtler levels of being with their counterpart in consciousness. Whichever way one considers the hymn, the perspective received complements the data already gathered concerning the complexity of human beings; life and death being two aspects of one and the same phenomenon. The boy is said to mount a wheel-less new chariot which he fashioned during life by means of mind (v.3 *manasā kṛṇoh*). It is simply described: wheel-less, one-poled, facing all directions, hence no earthly vehicle. Its being fashioned implies quite clearly that the thinking principle is responsible for this vehicle which acts during the transit from death to the new life, or from physical to subtler aspects of the beyond, hence of consciousness - the journey through death to the discovery of other dimensions of consciousness. The chariot to be used for the inner journey, built by thought power, is the Vedic way of depicting the path traced during life by the mind through its *thought life*. Thought was fully taken into account by the ṛṣis. By concentrating on higher and purer thoughts the mind creates a channel between the personality and the soul whereby contact can be established and an outflow of soul energy can reach the personality. This is helpful for the journey through the gates of death, for without such a channel awareness is slow to come. Even though fashioned during life, the use of the vehicle of thought occurs, for the average law-abiding person, after death; for the initiatory process, during life. For the average person, at death it is ascended *seeing not (apaśyan)*, i.e. unconsciously; the centre of consciousness requires time to focus itself upon the "new" level of awareness. In this respect the Atharvaveda states very clearly: "One man departing from this world knows himself that it is I myself (*ayam aham asmi*). Another does not recognise his own world." (Athv.III.10.11) Self-consciousness has to be established, ignorance of subtler dimensions does not help the departed soul/mind, hence the non recognition. These are *guide-lines* given out in this rather misunderstood Veda.

One may infer from X.135.5 where the word *anudeyi* is used, explained by Macdonell in the sense of what is "to be handed over", that in the chariot is placed the harvest yield of life; the chariot bears the essence of the life just lived which is harvested at the mental level, this whether after death, or during the

initiatory process where all the previous experiences and mental achievements must bear their fruit. This could equal the symbolic chariot to the causal body of the Tāraka Rāja yoga system, the *anudeyi* representing that which has been generated from the life just lived but which at the same time may give rise to future *seeds* for a new harvest. The hymn is full of what may appear as enigmas which need a key for their understanding. A third level of interpretation involving the Vedic sacrificial year is also possible, but this is not relevant to the present study.

Four subtle elements are enumerated in the Atharvaveda which seem to be of vital importance:

"Here (be) thy life (*asu*), here breath (*Prāṇa*), here life-time (*āyu*), here thy mind (*manas*) "

(Athv.VIII.1.3)

These subtle shades of meaning as they occur in the above verse are lost to us and thus to Whitney's translation. *Āyu* is generally the span of life or just life, but also vigour, vital power. Thus in the Ṛgveda: "like *Prāṇa* which is life" (I.66.1. *āyur na Prāṇah*). *Prāṇa* as breath is a poor rendering as it is really the vital power behind the breath which manifests exteriorly as the breath. *Asu* the breath of life expresses life in its *sublimated* aspect, thus:

"Let those ancestors who, harmless and righteous-minded, went to life (*asu*), favour us" etc.

(Ṛgv.X.15.1)

Our rather materialistic terminology does not account for the differences the poet must have seen between *asu*, *prāṇa*, *āyu*. But there is here (Athv.VIII.1.3) in question the sublimated life or essence of life (*asu*), the vital energy behind the breath (*prāṇa*) and the life span (*āyu*), as well as the *mind*, four distinct elements considered as belonging to the human constitution. If *aja* be equivalent to *ātman*, we would have in this verse (Athv.VIII.1.3) at least three *principles* of the Vedānta system and of H.P.B.'s presentation of the human constitution. Thus the departed one after the first dying, is still a composite being of 1) *aja*, the unborn or *ātman*, 2) *asu*, the breath of sublimated life, 3) *manas* the mind principle, 4) *prāṇa*, the vital energy. Is there a further casting off of veils on the way to heaven? In one of the three spheres of the third heaven is concealed the elixir of immortality. Apparently more discarding must occur and the discarding of veils or sheaths or vehicles on the way back to the original source, or the highest place of origin (*parame janitre*) is quite in keeping with age old gnosis. It reminds us of Innana who on the way to the "underworld" had to shed her adornments and garments one by one before she could face its regent. So has the soul to discard all the veils it had assumed to reach out to earth, before it can stand in the presence of the *Ancient of Days*.

A further great pointer to a vital spiritual knowledge of the human being appears in the Atharvaveda. Thus within the human constitution is a "golden vessel" (Athv.X. 2.32), "heaven going, covered with light" (verse 31). Into this "resplendent, golden, unconquered stronghold, that was surrounded with glory", "the *brahman* entered" (v.33). "Whoever know the *brahman* in man, they know the most exalted one." (Athv.X.7.17) - *brahman* being in the Vedas the supreme evocative word or Logos, the *divine creative power*, in the universe but also in the human being. This is if anything, a description of the human psyche that both conceals and aspires to the pure spirit whose illuminating principle is the logos spark, *ātman*. This power is shown as the exalted core of the "golden vessel", the latter being psyche or *buddhi* of the Hindus - and it points to the later meaning of *brahman* and the *ātman*. From a Yajurvedic hymn (34.1-6) considered an *upaniṣad*, an "ageless light" is said to be the "unfailing light among creatures", "without which there can be no action", and that "within which the mind (*citta*, consciousness) of creatures is established"; that whereby "all that was, that is and that will be is embraced" (the *causal body*) "that which is wisdom" as well as the splendour of an "illuminated-consciousness" (*cetas*) and "steadfastness". The essential being in the golden vessel, called variously *puruṣa*, *brahman*, *ātman*, is the golden Āditya who dwells beyond the reach of darkness in the human citadel, the bestower of insight (cf. Ṛgv.VIII.6.10), of seership to the ṛṣis, the solar splendour that extends with its rays "immortal light" (Athv.XII.1.15). It is of this that the Atharvaveda priest sang:

"Desireless, wise, immortal, self-existent, contented with the essence, lacking nothing is He.

One fears not death who has known him, the *ātman*, serene, ageless, youthful." (Athv.X.8.4)

For the ṛṣis of ancient India, man was already considered a composite being, whose *principles* or "sheaths" separated at death. The terminology was either not fixed, or with different shades of meaning completely lost to us, which points to our lack of subtle insight and makes it difficult to assess what was the

exact significance of words that appear to us synonymous, and to exactly what part of the human constitution did the three after death divisions refer. The *mind* for the ṛṣis, not the mere brain, was the centre of human consciousness with its core - psyche - in the spiritual sphere. That these findings were factual to the ṛṣis is evident from the Vedic verses quoted and in full agreement with the esoteric teachings. Thus, despite the paucity of precise details, one gathers that the ṛṣis knew far more about our spiritual dimensions than our modern generations who pride themselves on their mere physical knowledge as the only possible knowledge and who, when death comes, are at a complete loss.

The subject of survival has been taken up seriously as a research for the past 50 years or more in U.S.A. and U.K., through psychical enquiries, near death and out of body experience, etc. conducted by accredited scientists and doctors - R. Moody, E.Kubla-Ross, M.Rawlings, R. Kastenbaum, M.Saborn & S.Kreutzigger, F. Schoonmaker, etc. But findings end up with one reason or other being adduced to show that those experiences may not mean survival at all. However, fundamental proof will always be subject to mental obstacles and doubts, until man becomes capable of probing deeper and deeper into his psyche to its very core. The essence of such experience was encapsulated by the ṛṣi of Aryāvarta as: "I have known this mighty *puruṣa* refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness; only by knowing him does one overcome death; no other way is there to go" (Yjv. 31;18) showing absolute certainty, as well as in Athvaveda.X.8.4 previously quoted.

### THE MYTH OF THE FALL OF THE ANGELS

The myth of the Fall of the Angels is found in various distorted guises in a number of ancient texts. Whence the origin and the similarity? A myth depends for its *vitality*, its *acceptance* and *influence* on a *living inner core*, be this a dream making a psychological statement, or a deep-seated vision, or intuition of certain archetypal truths struggling to surface and be expressed, or the conflict of polarities within the psyche/mind, or a mystical experience. Any of these, projected as a dramatic tale, will open up profounder insights, vaster horizons on a given question to those capable of the deeper understanding. Myth is never an untruth, a figment of the imagination, a mere invention with no substantial reality as many in their ignorance keep thinking. The kernel of its Truth may be psychological, but it also may include cosmological happenings perceived in vision. We should realise first that to ancient man there was no question but that celestial beings did exist. Their *reality*, in the sight of human beings, goes back to the very beginnings of our human races, during their ethereal evolution, before they became too encased in physical bodies which finally shut them out of subtler dimensions. Evolved on subtler planes they found no difficulty in communing with celestial beings. These, not made of flesh and bone, operated on a level to which human beings once had access and which is still accessible to psyche (hence certain dreams), though not to the brain consciousness.

From the esoteric standpoint, the highly controversial account of the Fall of the Angels refers to certain categories of celestial beings and their descent into human generation through self-sacrifice. This, H.P.B. claims, was misconstrued by the Hindus and the Christians in their presentation. According to the *Stanzas of Dzyan* the higher celestial beings found the vehicles prepared by their younger celestial brethren unsuitable for themselves and delayed their incarnation. Some refused, delaying even more.

The whole account as given in the Stanzas does not appear as such in the Hindu or Christian scriptures. Stanza 7:24 gives the crux of the whole drama:

"The Sons of Wisdom, the Sons of Night ... ready for rebirth, came down. They saw the (intellectually) vile forms of the first Third [Race] ... 'We can choose', said the Lords, 'we have wisdom'. Some entered the *chhāyās* [shadows]. Some projected a spark. Some deferred till the fourth (*Race*). From their own essence they filled (*intensified*) the Kāma (the vehicle of desire). Those who entered became *Arhats*. Those who received but a spark remained destitute of (*higher*) knowledge. The spark burned low. The third remained mindless. Their *jīvas* (*Monads*) were not ready. These were set apart among the seven (*primitive humanspecies*). They became the narrow-headed [=with little mind]. The third were ready. 'In these shall we dwell' said the Lords of the Flame and of the Dark Wisdom". (S.D.II.161)

This stanza, according to H.P.B., contains the "whole key to the mysteries of evil, the so-called Fall of the angels, and the many problems" such as the inequalities of life conditions among humans, of intellectual capacity, and the unforeseeable course of karma, the whole set a pace before the dawn of history. The words *the first Third* refer to the first races of the Third Root Race. The words "their *jīvas* were not ready" mean that "the karmic development of these monads had not yet fitted them to occupy the forms of man destined for incarnation in higher intellectual races". The "Sons of Night" refer here to the *asuras*, the gods of the *secret wisdom*, said to have been created by Brahmā in his *body of night*, or darkness, esoterically *supreme wisdom*, beyond human capacity to understand. The Ṛgvedic meaning of *asura* refers to the highest celestial beings but there is no statement of an actual fall of these beings, only in one hymn (X.124) of a passing away of their hegemony. Similarly the *dark wisdom* refers to the highest wisdom, expressed as the *Black Fire* in the *Zohar*, which is *Absolute Light-Wisdom*. One has to understand the inner meaning of these terms. The *asuras* were later transformed by the Brahmans into demonic forces, a degrading which also recalls Zoroaster's transformation of the *devas* into demons.

The angels were "commanded" to create, the Stanza affirms. One-third refused. The *Purāṇas* show the Will or Mind-born sons of Brahmā as having "acquired entire exemption from passion" (*Viṣṇu Purāṇa* p.34) and declining to create. The "Rebels", H.P.B. remarks, would not create "will-less, irresponsible men, as the 'obedient' angels did, nor could they endow human beings with only the temporary reflections of their own attributes" (S.D.II.p.243) for these were of too high an order for men to benefit from. Men were just not ready in their eyes. The sin of pride has been thrown at the "rebellious angels" and Lucifer, in the Christian legend, has been made the scapegoat of them all, *Lucifer*, the *Light-bringer* as his name signifies. The wording of Stanza 7:24 may give the impression that pride motivated the *Dhyānis* (equivalent to the Archangels): "We can choose, we have wisdom". The claim to the right to choose may be considered a sign of pride, though not necessarily so, for choice or freewill is not linked to pride, but the motive for its use may be. So the exoteric accounts "chose" to interpret this use of choice as pride which is really a degradation of the archangels. It has been advanced that the main reason for the *Dhyānis'* refusal was that they could not accept the forms projected as these were of a similar polarity to their own, though of a lower quality. 9) The esoteric doctrine shows them later as sacrificing themselves for the sake of humanity by incarnating on earth, thereby giving up the bliss of higher spheres for the toil and shackles of the lower, in order to enlighten humanity.

That group of the *Dhyānis* who had already acquired in past cycles "that degree of intellect which enabled them to become independent and self conscious entities, on this plane of matter" entered those forms that were "ready". They became the Arhats or great sages of the Third Race. To become "all-wise" they had to return to earth and pass through human experience after which they would be free of this terrestrial realm to go to other much higher spheres. Those among humans who were half ready received but a spark and are now average humanity in the process of developing mental capacities. Such are the teachings as expounded in *The Secret Doctrine* (see S.D.II.p.167ff). As for those celestial beings who delayed the most, they realised their error in the fact that their future abode or form had been defiled by the transgression of the "mindless". So they incarnated to prevent further transgression; "then all men became endowed with *Manas*" (Stanza 9.35).

"The Secret Doctrine teaches that the Fire-Devas, the Rudras and the Kumāras ... preferred the *curse of incarnation* and the long cycle of terrestrial existence and rebirths, to seeing the misery, (even if unconscious) of the beings (evolved as shadows out of their Brethen) ... This voluntary sacrifice of the Fiery Angels, whose nature was *Knowledge and Love* was construed by the exoteric theologies into a statement that shows 'the rebel angels hurled down from heaven into the darkness of Hell' - our Earth. Hindu philosophy hints at the truth, by teaching that the Asuras hurled down by Siva are only in an intermediate state in which they prepare for higher degrees of purification and redemption from their wretched conditions." (S.D.II. p.246-7)

There are seven keys, claims H.P.B. , to the unravelling of the full meaning of every great myth; and "two ' ... karmic effects, and both belong to the law of Evolution: intellectual and spiritual on the one hand, physical and psychic on the other. The 'Fall' is a universal allegory. It sets forth at one end of the ladder of Evolution the 'rebellion', i.e. the action of differentiating intellection or consciousness on its various planes, seeking union with matter; and at the other, the lower end, the



rebellion of matter against Spirit, or of action Falls' in Theology: the rebellion of the Archangels and their 'Fall', and the 'Fall' of Adam and Eve", the higher and the lower presented as having fallen. Both "supposed" falls are considered as against spiritual inertia. And here lies the germ of an error which has had such disastrous effect on the

intelligence of civilised societies for over 1,800 years... " (S.D. II. p.62)

The meaning of *failed*, nowadays could be interpreted as implying that, although the *rebels* endowed men with mind and thereby opened their eyes to all the implications of the knowledge of good and evil, the result, after ages of evolution, shows men still struggling with themselves and among themselves, at a rather low level of mental development - exemplified by the ignominious mass destruction of humans and animals for perfidious or hypocritical reasons, the ruthless rush for material profits at all cost, even that of the misery of three quarters of humanity, and by the worst kinds of perversity. But this is human fault *by-passing all basic morality*, not that of the celestial beings.

The War in Heaven 10), H.P.B., considers, refers to several events, a conglomeration of astronomical, cosmogonical and human factors - as is often the case with legends. "... The 'War of the Titans against the Gods' in Hesiod, and also the war of the Asuras, (or the Tāarakamaya) against the devas in Purāṇic legend, are identical in all save the names". (S.D. II. p.63) But these wars, however embroidered into legends, are also echoes of the "strife between the 'Sons of God' and the 'Sons of the Shadow' of the Fourth and the Fifth Races" (S.D. II. p.500). For the conflicts that occurred between the righteous and the unrighteous and those waged in the depth of the psyche of humanity in its struggle for good instead of evil, form the basis of legendary tradition - a conflict still raging nowadays as never before. Such tradition is imaged in the dragon and the sun upon which H.P.B. comments:

"Bel and the Dragon, Apollo and Python, Kṛṣṇa and Kāliya, Osiris and Typhon are all one under many names - the latest of which are Michael and the Red Dragon, and St George and his Dragon. . . . Whatever the Cosmic or astronomical event that first gave rise to the allegory of the 'War in Heaven', its earthly origin has to be sought in the temples of Initiation and archaic crypts."

(S.D.II.p.379) 11) In one of its meanings the *War in Heaven* referred to the struggles in store "for the candidate for adeptship" who had to overcome all his human passions or fail; to become the "Dragon-slayer" as having happily overcome all the temptations; and a 'Son of the Serpent', and a Serpent himself", "becoming a Son of Wisdom and Immortality in Eternity." (ibid. p.380) Few are those who acquire the real gnosis.

The pleroma or fullness of space was also the abode of wisdom in Vedic times. We have seen it personified in Aditi, the Infinite, whose luminosity was her Truth, whose truth was expressed as the Cosmic Order, whose sons were the luminous gods of righteousness. From Aditi/*ākāśa*, to Sarparājñī, the serpent queen, (*Aitareya Br.* bk 5, ch.4 parag.23), the undulating living embodiment of all that space represents as cradle of pulsating, celestial lives, to dragon of wisdom, the steps are evident. But because Aditi/*ākāśa*, however sublimated, represents the ultimate essence of matter on which all things are woven *warp and woof*, nevertheless matter in this cycle has become the tempter to evil in human theological sight, and thus the necessity to conquer it. Hence the dual meaning of dragon and serpent, the *dragon of wisdom* being he who has conquered his own lower aspect, matter; and so Michael, as spiritual entity, is depicted as conqueror of the dragon as matter, his lower self; and Mary the Virgin Mother of the Man God tramples upon the serpent of matter; - a transformation indeed of the primeval abode of wisdom, the Great Deep where Ea ruled supreme, now changed to gross matter or Satan in the astral waves. However, since from the esoteric standpoint "matter is spirit at the lowest point of its cyclic activity" it cannot in essence be evil. Only, man by pandering to his lower nature projects on matter the evil within himself which he generally refuses to see and conquer. Nowadays, sheer materialism is glorified at the expense of the spiritual, bringing endless evil in its wake.

Man, it has been said, mounts the ladder of evolution "by putting his foot upon the serpent of matter". i.e. by dominating matter through experience of it; hence those age old archetypal images; he thereby becomes "himself a serpent of wisdom"; for that which was originally known as the *abode of wisdom*, and now degraded to the tempter, once it is experienced, understood, mastered, hence conquered, makes man a serpent of wisdom, the *nagas* of Hindu lore. In the next solar system, ages or *mahamanvantaras* henceforth, so it is prophesied, man of those times will mount even higher "by means of

the 'serpent of wisdom', and by domination and control of the Agnisvāttas", 12) the fiery angels through whose self sacrifice, in the present solar system, man received the principle of self-consciousness (*ahamkara*) and became the thinking being (*manu*). That principle will have become, for man, the means of further ascent.

## CONCLUSION

Quite remarkable is the convergence of all these legendary or mythical records, scattered over the earth among various races, to a very similar meaning – whether this concerns past events, or cataclysms, or divine dynasties ruling on earth and teaching human beings; or psychological struggles, whether outwardly fought between those of the right (or truth) path of return, and those of the left (or selfish) path of evil; or inwardly fought by those who struggled to rise above their earthly pull. Can these records be fables merely, inventions of over-heated imagination, when one finds them all over our globe? Assuming that man is the meeting-point of a physical evolution and a psycho-spiritual descent from previous evolutions, which make him the microcosm of the macrocosm, can one not see in these convergences a possibility of some basic reality enshrined in the human being; projected outwardly, in the various myths; and how out of the reminiscence of spiritual, or far more evolved, beings having come to help humanity, and "falling into generation", i.e. incarnating as humans, a tale was woven concerning this struggle which, in its final version, could have distorted the essential meaning?

Such an overall view of humanity's unfoldment as presented in the Stanzas of Dzyan, may at first sight seem extravagant, as it did to the 19th century intelligentsia used to the narrow limits of strict reason and the narrow-mindedness of Christian dogmas. The ideas of a) Celestial Man, archetypal prototype inherent to every human being, finally developing into the ideal perfect man of Ibn Arabi; of b) the complexity of the human make-up as revealed in the Vedic texts, and the various grades of progenitors of the human race; of c) the manifoldness of past human history so completely out of keeping with our generally present day myopic view of human evolution; all these may just bewilder the reader facing them for the first time. Yet, do they not point to, first, the richness of the human mind able to conceive it all - if it be "conceiving" and not in some respects, remembered revelation become tradition; then, to the fundamental oneness of the basic assumptions, if these be assumptions and not outright revelations emerging from the depth of psyche's power of visioning? To dismiss such ideas as preposterous as many did, is a pathetic sign of the poverty of mind of many of our fellow-men. Such ideas issued from ideals (freedom, brotherhood, equality, justice, non-violence, compassion) given out by high-minded individuals throughout antiquity have so far enriched human thought - with at least a few attempts to implement them.

If one accepts certain basic premises such as *first*, man encapsulates in himself the whole of Nature, as revealed in the embryo's development, plus the various modes of procreation which could have been experienced at a certain stage of human unfoldment when considered from the ethereal to the more concrete, then these ideas may not seem so preposterous; *secondly*, that physical Nature cannot fully account for man's evident *psycho-spiritual* dimension with its moral, imaginative, aspiring, intellectual and willful aspects, then that dimension which is not found in animals must have been seeded by some higher beings than man, call these God or the Lords or Dhyān Chohans; *thirdly*, that human evolution cannot be the acme of evolution, nor can the physical level of existence be the only reality; especially when it is realised that the average evolved person is more led by his emotions and/or mental capacities than mere physical senses and needs, capacities which will lead and have already led humanity to greater achievements; that an inner power of selfless love and far-reaching will and understanding that transcends all capacities stirs even more highly evolved humans as history has shown; that the greatest mystics and saints were illumined by an unearthly light that gave them supreme insight (cf. Lao-tseu, Plotinus, Meister Eckhart, Ibn Arabi, St John of the Cross, St Teresa, Hildegard, and among karma yoginis Mother Teresa, etc.) - whence their source, their cause? - then the whole panorama of human evolution may fall into place, and the esoteric insight may reveal a much deeper appreciation of man's stature as a full human being, and his place in the cosmos than our mere physical view.

One cannot help but brood again on certain lines that H.P.B. wrote:

"The mystery attached to the highly spiritual ancestors of divine man within the earthly man is very great. His dual creation is hinted at in the *Purāṇas*, though its esoteric meaning can be approached only by collating together the many varying accounts, and reading them in their symbolical and allegorical character." (S.D. II.p.81)

### PART III . CREATION OF HUMANITY.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Op.cit. p.7.
2. See also Bṛhad.Up. III. 2.13 where the secrecy of the doctrine of *karma* is admitted. The handing down of a sacred knowledge, an ancient heirloom, *paramparā*, is admitted in the Ṛgveda. Thus the Aṅgirasah say  
 "Not breaking the links, let to us, seeking help, follow after the powers (*śakti*) of our forefathers (I.109.3) or  
 "Great light has come to us, bestowed by the Fathers" (X.107.1) or  
 "Through wisdom we invoke the inspired thought (*manīṣām*) that we may contact the heroes of the mid- region" (I.110.6) So the Vedic seers call upon Agni "as did Bhṛguṣ, Manus, Aṅgiras" (VIII.43.13). See also VIII.102.2; I. 91.1cd;71.2c; IV.1.14d; etc. A similar kind of handing down of sacred teaching is seen in the Bhagavad Gītā. This is, as noted in ch. 1, the tradition of the esoteric wisdom which, in the face of the evidence of the ancient scriptures, we cannot deny any longer.
3. Compare the line of argument taken by W. Federn in his "The 'Transformations' in the Coffin Texts: a new approach" concerning Egyptian initiation. In *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* Vol.XIX. No.4. Oct. 1960 pp.241-57.
4. Kabbalah p.117.
5. *Agnisvāttas* means "well-tasted" or "sweetened" by Agni, hence consumed by fire – but in the esoteric sense. The *Agnisvāttas* have been written off by the orthodox Hindus as a class of *Manas* who on earth neglected to keep the sacrificial fire, whereas the *Barhiṣads* kept it. The esoteric account is quite different. The class of the Fire *Dhyānis*, identified in *The Secret Doctrine* with the *Agnisvāttas*, is called "the heart of the *Dhyān Chohan*ic Body", some of them said to have incarnated in the Third Race. The *Agnisvāttas* appear in the Ṛgveda (X.15.11) where they are called upon to come and take their seat by the altar for the ritual invocation and are described as of "good guidance", which shows they had not yet been degraded by orthodoxy. "... Esoteric philosophy identifies the pre-Brahmanical *Asuras*, *Rudras*, *Rākṣasas* and all the 'Adversaries' of the Gods in the allegories, with the *Egos* which, by incarnating in the still witless man of the Third Race, made him *consciously* immortal. They are, then, during the cycle of incarnations, the true *dual Logos* - the conflicting and two-faced divine Principle in Man" (S.D. II. p.164) - two-faced because the higher aspect of *manas* aspires to its celestial origin whilst its lower reflection enmeshed in the lower planes drags man down. Hence the eternal conflict in man which is his testing ground.
6. Further explanations are given in the following summary: "Worlds and men were in turn formed and destroyed *under the law of evolution* and *from pre-existing material*, until both the planets and their men, in our case our Earth and its animals and human races, became what they are now in the present cycle - opposite polar forces, an equilibrated compound of spirit and matter, of the positive and negative, of the male and the female. Before man could become male and female *physically*, his prototype, the creating *Elōhīm*, had to arrange his form on this sexual plane *astrally*. That is to say, the atoms and the organic forces, descending into the plane of the given differentiation, had to be marshalled in the order intended by Nature, so as to be ever carrying out, in an immaculate way, that law which the Kabbalah calls the *Balance ...*" (S.D. II.p.84)
7. "It is only in the actual *midway* Round that he [man] develops in himself entirely the fourth principle as a fit vehicle for the fifth [or *manas* vehicle]. But *Manas* will be relatively *fully* developed only in the

following Round, when it will have an opportunity of becoming entirely divine until the end of the Rounds". (S.D. II.p.161-2)

The fourth principle which H.P.B. calls the preserving vital fluid derived from Fohat in his secondary aspect of solar energy, is the *animal soul* of Nature, (S.D. I.p.111-2), hence also of man.

8. On the subject of the apes H.P.B. has a great deal to say. A few remarks will suffice:

"The pithecoïd is an *accidental creation*, a forced growth, the result of an unnatural process... The ape we know is not the product of natural evolution but *an accident*, a cross-breed between an animal being or form, and man ... "

It is, as remarked in *Isis Unveiled*: "... a transformation of species most directly connected with that of the human family - a *bastard branch engrafted on their own stock before the final perfection of the latter*" due to "the bestiality of the latest Third and earliest Fourth Race men". (I.U. II. p.278; S.D.II. p.261,262)

9. See *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* (A.A. Bailey) p.701. "Their opposition to incarnation in these forms was based on magnetic repulsion ... The lesser was not negative to the greater Life."

10. The war in heaven which appears in ch.XII of St John's *Revelation*, "comes from the Babylonian legends, without the smallest doubt, though the Babylonian story, in its turn, had its origin in the allegories of the Āryans." (See S.D.II.p.383; p.386 for the Hindu legend and p.499-500 ff for its several meanings.

11. One of the ways of looking at the dragon of the old myths is given us by H.P.B.:

"Cosmologically ... all the Dragons and Serpents conquered by their 'Slayers' are, in their origin, the turbulent confused principles in Chaos, brought to order by the Sun-gods or *Creative Powers*.

In the *Book of the Dead* those principles are called the 'Sons of Rebellion'. (See *Book of the Dead* ch.xvii, v.54.49) " The same myth is seen in the Scandinavian Eddas." (S.D.II.p.386; also pp.354 ff).

12. *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* p.688.

## CHAPTER 9

## THE BASIC ONENESS OF THE RELIGIOUS MESSAGE

*INTRODUCTION*

In the light of our present knowledge of ancient civilizations, their belief, their myths expressive of the psyche's intimate struggles, quests and findings, can the claim to one essential basis underlying all subsequent religious expressions, be justified? This was promulgated by H.P.B. in her two books, *Isis Unveiled* and in *The Secret Doctrine*. The answer could be given in the affirmative, but it has to be proved through the texts of the various religions. Even then it will remain a moot question so long as the human mind holds on to the narrow tenets which are thought to be the essentials of each monotheistic religion – to be the *Word* of God.

With the opening out to the West of the Sanskrit language and its vast stores of insights, philosophical and psychological, the interest aroused in Hindu and Buddhist thought, in Islamic civilization, and the discovery that the "unique truths" of Christianity were taught long before its advent, the Western mind has been forced to envisage vaster horizons. In this unlocking of Oriental lore H.P.B. was a principal pioneer, though unrecognized, who brought to the notice of Western intelligentsia, steeped in its smug self-complacency and superiority complex, the profound insights of Orientals mostly despised by the West. The shock reacted somewhat disastrously on her.

Nowadays, historians of religions no longer merely emphasise the differences between the religions to the glorifying of Christianity<sup>1</sup>; they acknowledge a certain common ethical, even philosophical basis, a common goal offered by religions widely differing in point of dogma and emphasis. Their approach is based on objective "impartiality" as far as possible, an attempt is even made to view each religion as a whole. But beyond the obvious ethical stand and hope offered to humanity, historians have found it difficult to accept a common basis as uniting the religions of humanity, their differences obscuring any vision of oneness of conception lying at the heart of their revelation and uniting them.

It is here that the *esoteric* or *inner* meaning of religious statements comes to the rescue. This esoteric aspect Frithjof Schuon, in his *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, calls the "transcendent dimension at the centre of the religious form" (p.10). Schuon asserts that

"...to transcend religious differences, the esoteric nature of the inward-turned spiritual path must be explored. On this journey, one can trace the brilliant ray of illumination back to the Divine Oneness, which is the basis of all religions..." (taken from the back of the book).

The study of religions from their inner or spiritual significance, rarely undertaken in favor of the outer dogma which rule the human mind, can take us towards a much deeper appreciation of truth, and the key to this was given us in our own Christian scripture by St Paul: "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2.Cor.3.6). This, unfortunately has been unheeded by the theologians of all faiths.

Historians of religions generally play down the fact of *revelation* which is basic to religion. Revelation, to the reason, is incomprehensible; hence to rationally examine any religion, one can but admit that religions are founded upon certain "presuppositions" rationally unverifiable. A comprehensive survey of present day religions, their dissimilarity and fundamental basis seen in the light of reason, and their conflict and how they can best serve human need, has been attempted by P. Ashby in his *The Conflict of Religions*. One of the most meaningful points about religion and its value is thus identified:

"...religion as a whole is the manifestation of man's concern with himself and his relationship to the ultimate meaning of his existence." (p.121)

Note that the ultimate meaning of human existence is grounded in the human *psyche*, there where occurs the human encounter with the *numinous*, there where revelation is received, there where lies the possibility of complete transformation. For P. Ashby "a religion exists only because there are men who are religious"; it would be more to the mark to state that a religion exists because there are human beings who accept the *numinous* and seek to understand human relationship to the *numinous*, to the dictates of a higher order, a fact here disregarded. But religion

"has a basic function of bringing meaning and truth to man. It is of primary importance in the world

today because of man and his concern with his own fulfilment." (p.122)

Truth and fulfilment are relative to the speaker, but what is truth in the spiritual sense? Since absolute truth<sup>2</sup> may be considered beyond human mental capacity, any approximation to it would already be tainted by our own limited apprehension, but theologians of any of the monotheistic faiths have taken no account of this. One can surmise, however, that truth in one sense, at our level, is the moment of coming to ourselves, to the deeper meaning resonating in our depth, in *psyche*; it is that flash of understanding, that sudden insight that takes us to depths hitherto unperceived, that revelation that for a moment illumines life and changes our whole outlook, our conduct, our being, gives us a directive, a sense of freedom. Each new insight allows a plunge into a profounder reality yielding a wider vista, a lifting of veil after veil, a deeper comprehension, a wholeness hitherto unsuspected. It is along these lines that true religion yields its treasures and contributes to the uplifting of humanity, "bringing meaning and truth to man".

The common underlying factor of religion which cannot be denied but which reason considers dangerous and historians ignore is *revelation*; what in monotheistic faiths is called the *Word* of God; a disclosure of certain truths, principles, precepts forming a body of sacred knowledge vouchsafed to certain outstanding individuals called prophets in the monotheistic faith, or seers or sages in antiquity - e.g. the ṛṣis of ancient India, the sages of China. The sages/seers who inspired the foundation of religions were not theorists but illumined seers, usually visionaries far in advance of average humanity, yet capable of giving the needed impetus for human advancement. Such revelation, thought to be infused or inspired from beyond the human mind, is deemed to be received from a source other than what is considered human or rational, and marked by *inspiration* and *authority*. The authenticity of the higher revelation is stamped not only with that ethical foundation of the Law and the rules of moral conduct responsible for the framework of civilized societies, but also with that exalting soaring of the spirit which released for humanity a vision and a goal. Note the Mosaic testament and epic story, the vision of Cosmic Order scattered in the hymns of the Vedas, the ideals of compassion and service with the Buddhists, of love and chivalry among the Christians, the profound unitive simplicity of Islam; the flowering of art to an unprecedented perfection for which each religion was responsible - Egyptian, Sumerian, Indian, Buddhist, Greek, Christian, Muslim, etc.

True revelation has the hallmark of vision, wisdom, authority and right action. Its recipients and propagators were capable of inflaming men to higher endeavors, capable of galvanizing a whole people into achieving a higher civilization - e.g. the Islamic miraculous rise to hold the palm of civilization during the Middle Ages, etc. No aberration of the human mind has ever raised human consciousness to a higher level of understanding and activity - witness Buddhism, but also the main teachings of all faiths.

All this bears witness to the impact of revelation and to the tremendous spur which religion, as a civilizing factor, has had upon humanity. Whether subsequent interpreters and followers have fallen wide of the mark from the original intent and induced their followers far away from the indicated path, and distorted the meaning and the plan, is quite another question. Ideals when taken hold of by narrow-minded individuals lead to separation, cruelty, bigotry, fanaticism; these belong to unevolved humanity, not to original revelation.

Historians of religion, faced with a panorama of religious conflicts from within and without, and with what appears as irreconcilable because beliefs basic to their followers, beliefs which in the past have aroused and still arouse prejudice, fanaticism, even bloodshed, may well despair of finding one common platform towards achieving some harmony between obvious discordances - the mirror of the human mind's own discords. From the strictly ideological standpoint there can be no solution to the religious conflict until man renounces identifying his consciousness of "truth" with the outer "form" in which that truth is enwrapped. Clinging to that outer garb prized above the inner meaning usually left unexplained, and holding fast to that garb as the very pith of one's conviction and commitment, creates the problem and exacerbates the difficulty. The conflict will last so long as religions are viewed from the outer perspective of the separative intellect, and so long as men cannot rise above their sectarian attitude which blinds them to the very essence of their convictions.

The obvious differences which, for historians of religions, form the very stuff of each religion, without which they would lose their uniqueness, is here to be questioned. The attempt is to probe beneath the outer form into the "spirit that giveth life" - sadly cast away by Christian theologians throughout the historical period. Here the very source of religious statements which is far beyond debates and intellectual quarrels, but

is usually ignored, will be enquired into. This source is based in the human *psyche*, the field par excellence where the drama of creation, preservation and regeneration of life's unfolding panorama, not merely physical, but mental and spiritual, is constantly being recreated; where the conflict between the polarities of light and darkness, intuition and reason, activity and rest, takes place, and above all, where the quest for meaning, purpose and freedom is undertaken, carried on and brought to its final conclusion. This field is ignored as the bedrock of religion itself, of its revelation and claims to truth. The human psyche is the ground and source of all revelation for whatever comes from another dimension of being, before it can find expression here "below", has to pass through the filter of psyche - that vast domain of consciousness that includes the highest intuitive faculty fed by the all illuminating divine spark, and psyche's filter, the mirror mind, the instrument of cognition and clarification which the Buddhists enjoin should be polished to its utmost. Psyche perceives oneness beneath differences, hence its intuitive faculty<sup>3</sup>; the mirror mind can reflect this if kept pure, but the lower aspect of the mind separates, categorizes, analyzes in order to reach a clearer understanding. It is obvious that if one uses the lower aspect of one's mind without any enlightenment coming through the mirror mind, the result is very superficial.

Does the common factor of *revelation* stop short at its enunciation because its presentation blocks our understanding? A case in point is the Vedic revelation garbed in myths and incantations to gods incomprehensible to the present Western mind, so much so that our earlier Western scholars, steeped in rationalism or a modicum of Christianity (with a few exceptions), could see nothing in it: no elevation of mind, no depth of thought, no vision, even no ethics. This also applies to the ideological presentation of the religions; the inner meaning, e.g. of Christ's utterances should be fathomed and contrasted with dogmatic Christianity which is not of Christ.

#### FUNDAMENTAL THEMES

P. Ashby names three fundamental "presuppositions", theoretical or theological basic to religion:

- 1) "the theory as to the nature of the Divine"
- 2) "the theory as to the nature of the world"
- 3) "the theory as to the nature of man" (op.cit. p.75)

These "presuppositions", from the mystical perspective, are not "theories", but *intuitions*: 1) of a divine central Source over and within all; 2) of the universe as the orderly externalization in space and time of certain manifested aspects of that Source; 3) of human nature as inwardly linked to that central Source, and so capable of encounter with the *numinous*, the inner spiritual core. These three fundamental themes which form the warp of all religions and unites them in one basic sense, centre around three main issues:

1) The Ultimate Origin of all, however we may call or degrade IT; be this *Tat* of the R̥gveda, Parabrahman or Ādi-Buddha<sup>4</sup>, Ain Soph, or the creator Gods, Brahmā-Viṣṇu-Śiva, Ahura Mazda, Jehovah, Allah, God, etc., the various representations of Deity, even the various isms - monotheism, monism, henotheism, polytheism, pantheism, all these include as common factor, a *divine source* or ground of being, even when this ground is called no-thing-ness, or the void. Whether this Supernal Source is conceived in one form or another, or relegated to respectful silence, to the extreme of the Void, or the bliss of Nirvāṇa, we still have the fundamental concept of a Source beyond this objective universe, expressed differently in accordance with the maturity or lack of it of the human mind. Hence the development from an Impersonal Brahman to a manifested Brahmā, or Logos that creates our space-time universe through the many devas or celestial beings, his active principles pervading all aspects of manifestations; or the reduction of the whole hierarchy of invisible beings to a single masculine creator God, responsible for everything. The various presentations are effects of mental conditioning, needs and reactions, but underneath is psyche's vision, however distorted by mental apprehensions unable to grasp the whole significance.

Also included here would be the various divine messengers, prophets, seers, witnesses to the *numinous* who throughout the ages gave out their "message" according to their measure of insight and especially according to the measure of those they addressed.

2) Law and Order as the mainspring of unfoldment, evolution, manifestation; this comprises our human idea of the manifestation or creation of the universe in accordance with Law, of which the laws of Nature are a reflection; hence the cycles of time, of evolution, as kept in the Hindu records and dwarfed by the Hebrews for

purposes of their own; the law of cause and effect not only physical, but on all levels, hence *Karma*. Hence the Cosmic Order so aptly sung in the Vedas, which in the monotheistic faiths is presented as the *Divine Will*. Law and Divine Will find a common denominator. Variations in apprehension set in as well as quarrellings as to "creation" versus "manifestation", predestination versus free-will, reward and punishment, heaven and hell, etc.

3) Humanity and its place in the universe; this includes the socio-ethical norms promulgated by all religions, the value, meaning and goal of life in general and human life in particular, the psycho-moral aspect that caters for human needs.

Such are the broad points of contact, the platform on which religions meet and offer teachings that may benefit humanity, whatever their varied formulations and conflicting emphasis. Were it only concerning the *very basis* of these three themes, irrespective of their variations through the ages, H.P.B. had cause to claim that

"The *Veda* [i.e.the *gnosis*] of the earliest Aryans, before it was written, went forth into every nation of the Atlanto-Lemurians, and sowed the first seeds of all the now existing old religions. The off-shoots of the never dying tree of wisdom have scattered their dead leaves even on Judaeo-Christianity." (S.D. II p.483)

#### THE PROBLEM OF EXCLUSIVITY

Exclusivity belongs solely to the mental level of human beings, not to the depth of the psyche, hence religious exclusivity falls more or less into the domain of the separative mind, of the relative, impermanent and changeable, in other words, illusion. F. Schuon, in his *The Transcendent Unity of Religions*, makes some very pertinent remarks concerning the assumed exclusivity of the monotheistic religions:

"Every expressed truth necessarily assumes a form, that of its expression, and it is metaphysically impossible that any form should possess a unique value to the exclusion of other forms; for a form, by definition, cannot be unique and exclusive... it cannot be the only possible expression of what it expresses...(p.18)

...No one can contest the fact that a form is always a limitation or that a religion is of necessity always a form - not ... by virtue of its internal Truth, which is of a universal and supraformal order, but because of its *mode of expression*, which as such, cannot but be formal and therefore *specific and limited*...(p18- 19)

The ideals that are affirmed in one religious form (as e.g. the idea of the Word or of the Divine Unity) cannot fail to be affirmed, in one way or another, in all other religious forms; similarly the means of grace or of spiritual realizations at the disposal of one priestly order cannot but possess their equivalent elsewhere..."(p.19)

-obviously they cannot fail to be reproduced in other forms, because they represent the ground of our being, viz., psyche, our intimate intuition.

"...the exoteric perspective is based essentially upon a fact to which it attributes a character of absoluteness. For example, the Christian perspective is based on the supreme spiritual state realized by Christ, but it attributes this state to Christ alone... (p.120)

...the exoteric or theological point of view, instead of embracing a truth in its entirety, selects one aspect only as a matter of expediency and gives it an exclusive and absolute value... There is thus a twofold restriction put upon pure truth; on the one hand, *an aspect of the truth is invested with the character of integral truth*; and on the other hand, *an absolute character is attributed to the relative*." (p.127 italics my own)

In other words, the grievous error of the monotheistic religions lies in their attributing an absolute truth to a relative form. As Schuon showed we cannot prove that "any particular form is the only true legitimate one." (op.cit. p.18) Error, being human, can be rectified if there be a will to do so.



THE CHRISTIAN PRESENTATION VERSUS THE MYSTICAL PRECEPTS OF CHRIST

Perhaps the most obvious, best known and seemingly insoluble exclusivity is found in the Christian presentation. Put very simply, the nucleus of the Christian faith can be summed up thus: God sent his only begotten son, at a particular time, to a particular place (Palestine) to redeem humanity from its sinful state. Hence God became man for our sake. This unique son gave a unique message of love and lived it; being misunderstood, he was accused by orthodox Jews (his own race) of conspiracy against the established order, of blasphemy for making himself the son of God, convicted through wily arguments and crucified, and he died for our redemption; but he rose from the dead on the third day, thereby triumphing over death, this being understood as the resurrection of the flesh. Such are, basically, articles of the faith. Although the two cornerstones of the Christian faith are the redemption of sinful humanity through the death of Christ, and Christ as the only begotten Son of God, these are no part of the teachings given out and enjoined by Christ upon his disciples to go and preach to the nations. The teachings centred around two basic injunctions:

1) "a new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another..."(John 15.12;13.34)  
"that ye love one another as I have loved you";

2) that the "kingdom of heaven is within you";

two tenets of infinite simplicity and power, rarely truly understood, let alone put into practice. To look for the kingdom of heaven within oneself is to look for one's own *inner resources*; it is ultimately to look for THAT which fundamentally "thou art" (of the Upaniṣads), hence to stand on one's own feet and face life courageously. Here the age-old Upaniṣads and Christ's injunctions meet, for "love one another" also leads to the discovery of that same THAT in one's neighbour as in one's self, that which fundamentally unites us.

Christianity placed man in a relationship with God through a mediator - the Son of God - sent to us by God, in whom one had to believe for one's salvation. This externalized not only the meaning of the "son of God" to one unique individual but also barred the way for other religions to any realisation of human and divine possibility of meeting point - except through Jesus. If the inner meaning had been taught the whole problem of exclusivity would have vanished and Christianity been the richer for it. This is what will be examined in the present section. The seriousness of the Christian problem lies in the basing of fundamental dogmas upon the exclusive personality of a man, however pure, but limited by race, time and place, instead of upon that universal inner essence in which we all share, though few realize it, which was the message of the Upaniṣads.

The main article of faith, belief in Christ as God and saviour, is founded on a series of mystical statements of Jesus himself concerning his oneness with the "Father", and his mission ordered by the Father.

"I am the way, the truth and the life; no one cometh unto the Father save by me" (John 14.6)

Here is complete identification with that divine spiritual core that makes the mystic realise his oneness with the divine ground of being here called "The Father"; which made the Sufi martyr El Hallaj declare "I am the Truth" which he equated with Allah and the Upaniṣadic sage teach his son "That thou art". Compare the following mystical words of Christ with the words of Kṛṣṇa in the Bhagavad Gītā:

CHRIST "I am come a light into the world that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John 12.46)

"I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." (John 11.25)

Is it coincidence that these statements bear the same mystical message as Kṛṣṇa's in the Bhagavad Gītā?

KṚṢṆA "He that seeth Me everywhere and seeth everything in Me, of him will I never lose hold and he shall never lose hold of Me." (Bh.G.6:30)

"He who knoweth Me, unborn, beginningless, the great Lord of the world, he ... is liberated from all sin." (Bh.G.10:3. cf. Īṣa Up.6&7)

Does this "me" pertain to the man, Jesus Christ, or Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna's charioteer, or to that divine spark to which the man is but the tabernacle? Is it coincidence or sheer recognition in both Christian and Hindu versions, of that hidden inner identity of the human psyche in its apex or deepest recess with the divine Spirit? Meister Eckhart's bold statement applies fully: "my eye and God's eye are one and the same - one in seeing, one in knowing, one in loving" - when pure spiritual perception is achieved. Similarly, Plotinus's unique experience made him exclaim: "There is no two. The man is changed, no longer himself nor self-belonging; he

is merged with the Supreme, sunken into It, one with It..." These are powerful admissions. In the Hindu statement, he who knows this inner "Me" cannot sin any more; in the Christian statement, he who believes in this inner Me cannot abide in darkness for he has sought out and found the Inner Light. "Though he were dead" implies "sinful", and therefore the utterance bears the same meaning as Kṛṣṇa's utterance.

Compare the ṛṣi's ancient, triumphant song at his discovery:

"I have known this mighty *puruṣa*, refulgent as the sun beyond the darkness; only by knowing Him does one overcome death; no other way is there to go." (Yajurveda 31.18)

Clearly defined here is the only way to reach out beyond death to the state of illumination; to the THAT (*taṭ*) of the Upaniṣads, viz. through the *puruṣa*, *archetypal man*, the *ātman*, of the *Upaniṣads*, the "*hidden man of the heart*" of St Peter (1.Pet.3.4) not aware that he was enunciating a very ancient mystical truth discovered by the ṛṣis of old India. The *puruṣa*, in the *ākāśa* of the heart (of the Upaniṣads), or the "Christ within" of St Paul, or the divine spark within each human being, are *one*. If we fail to grasp this we fail to grasp the rudiments of the perennial *gnosis*.

Christ offered himself as a prop to his disciples, hence to weak humanity, in the same way as Kṛṣṇa offered himself in the Bhagavad Gītā. (See for Christ, John 15.1, 4-5). "Abide in me and I in you" is a refrain one finds in both the Gospel and the Bhagavad Gītā, in essential meaning. But more than that, even in Buddhism, in the far less well known *Tathāgāta-garbha-sūtra* of *Mahāyāna*, the "element of Buddhahood" is considered to be in every living being and thus the cause of their finally realizing *nirvāṇa*. Thus are we, here, as in Christianity under a different label, "joint heirs" with the Buddha. This achievement possible for human beings has been the greatest hope offered humanity, however misunderstood, distorted and even prostituted through the ages.

St Paul who perhaps among the later disciples was the one who best understood the mystical significance of Christ's injunctions, makes a series of statements of the highest import:

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together." (Romans 8:16-17)

"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." (Gal.4.19)

What is that Christ that is to be formed in human beings, in new converts, for whom St Paul "travailed", for those would-be Christians who were urged to grow

"unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephes.4.13), to become, in Christ's own words "perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Math.5.48). These unequivocal words show Christ pointing to the "Father" in heaven as the goal for human beings, as the *ātman* is the goal in the Upaniṣads. The Christ to whom St Paul referred, that "*Christ in you*, the hope of glory" (Col.1.27) could not be the unique individual of Palestine only since he was to be *formed in you*, but that which the unique individual *represented*, the ideal perfect man as seen in Jesus, the Christ, mystically and esoterically identified with that universal divine principle present in each human being, the *puruṣa* of the heart, the *ātman*, St Peter's "hidden man of the heart", all bearing one meaning, one message of supreme universality. Mystical truth is one and universal but is expressed variously (as indeed the Ṛgveda tells us I.164.46). True Christianity lies in Christ's mystical utterances and his union with his "Father", the Flame Spirit with whom he communed again and again, and, as well, in his endeavors to make his disciples grasp their oneness first with himself, then with the "Father". (See St John's Manifesto of love in ch.17)

There is a further problem with monotheistic religions, for orthodox Christianity, like Islam and Judaism, makes an impassable gulf between Creator and creature. Hence Christ was accused of blasphemy - "because that thou, being a man, maketh thyself God" (John 10.33). Yet Jesus was quoting from their own Hebrew scripture, - "is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods" (John 10.34) (see Psalm 82.6). Those Jews whether of the priesthood, or of the masses, who stigmatised Jesus and shouted for his crucifixion, knew nothing of this innermost oneness with the Godhead, hence Jesus' "forgive them for they know not what they do". If the Psalms claim that we are gods (presumably *in potentia*) what blasphemy is there to claim one's self "a son of God"?

St Paul adds his enlightened comment and purely mystical insight thus:

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God

and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1.Cor.3.16)

The meaning neatly summarises the gist of Christ's utterances: in us as living temple dwells the spirit of the Divine; the very same meaning as applies to the apex of the soul as one with the Divine, of Meister Eckart. This explains why St Paul called us "joint-heirs with Christ". If so be it, then the impassable gulf between Creator and creature - the work of theologians, not of Christ - falls to the ground. Further "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God they are the sons of God" (Romans.8.14) implies that all those who "realise", become "fully conscious" of the spirit within themselves, are *ipso facto* "sons of God"; those who refuse to admit to the presence of the spirit within themselves, cannot in any conscious way be called children of God, though potentially they remain so. With the above quote compare the Ṛgvedic verse addressed to Agni:

"All indeed partake of thy divinity as they follow according to their wont the everlasting Law."  
(I.68.4)

St Paul's mystical understanding is not concerned with belief in the "only begotten son" of an anthropomorphic God in the literal sense, as insisted by the Christian Church, but only with the "hidden man of the heart", that age-old discovery, sung by the ṛṣis of ancient India millennia ago, which has ever been the discovery of the true mystic.

According to H.P.B. "Jesus taught the world nothing that had not been taught as earnestly before by other masters. He begins his sermon (on the Mount) with certain purely Buddhistic precepts that had found acceptance among the Essenes, and were generally practised by the Orphikoi, and the Neo-Platonists... Every word of his sermon is an echo of the essential principles of monastic Buddhism. The ten commandments of Buddha, as found in an appendix to the Pratimokṣa-Sūtra (Pali-Burmese text), are elaborated to their full extent in Matthew." (*Isis Unveiled*.II.p.552-3)

To put the person of Christ up as a great example to humanity is most helpful; to cripple this example by excluding all others that equally demonstrated the existence of the indwelling spirit in humanity is most dangerous. The awakening to that inner spiritual reality which Christ endeavoured to reveal to humanity, and which St Paul followed suit, was meant to leaven the human mind towards a better understanding of that indwelling spirit that animated and inspired Christ, for the greater service of human beings. As the "kingdom of heaven" is *within us* it also animates us. The proof of Christianity's basic mystical stand is in its inspirer's utterances, in Christ, and also in St Paul's elucidating statements. The theological mind could not probe the depth of the mystical utterances of the Master it made God.

The grievous error of the Church Fathers was in identifying Christ's injunctions and statements, not with the inner spirit that inspired him, but with the particular personality however advanced, living at a particular time; they thereby bound and limited Christianity to one unique irreversible historic event tied up to a single individual bound by time, place and race. This exclusivity firmly separated the Christian so-called "unique revelation" from all others, fostered pride, arrogance and intolerance, theoretically culminating in the Catholic Church's dictum found in catechisms "outside of the Church there is no salvation". The Church as authority, through its separative stand and activity, turned the Christian tenet of love into its very opposite.

"In the Christian Church, men have expressed themselves, not the Christ; they have imposed their interpretations of truth on truth itself; they have created a massive organization in every land but a living organism is non-existent."<sup>5</sup>

How long will Christians hold on to their "exclusivity" now that the "truth" has been out that Christ taught what had been taught before, and can be verified through documents? After 2000 years of hiding the truth, the beginning of a change of heart and the confession of past errors is most welcome. The present pope (John Paul II) has taken upon himself to humble the Church in his own person. But will theologians admit to their past errors and accept other religions as equally expressions of Truth?

#### THE ISLAMIC PRESENTATION AND ITS EXCLUSIVITY

As already mentioned, the problem of exclusivity also applies to Islam, though when it comes to tolerance of other religions, Islam has shown far more respect than the Christian Church. But to hold the belief that Islam possesses in its Holy Book, the *Koran*, the ultimate truth beyond human questioning or criticism; the gift of

the *Koran* as supreme revelation and gnosis to humanity, through Mohammed, the most perfect and final message, is a unique historical event, that cannot be repeated, is equally to mark off the religion as separate and superior to all preceding ones, thereby equivalent to setting it above all others (as in the case of Christianity). This sense of a unique revelation may be, psychologically speaking, the outer projection of an inner depth of knowing certain truths beyond words, but distorted as it passes through the conditioned mind. The form of the particular truth enunciated is the uniqueness of the *Koran* as revelation, not of the messenger chosen to set it down in writing, even though the messenger is made the "seal of the prophets"; a rather limiting view of non recognition of future developments of God's activity and care for the human race that would seem to be arrested at a particular time. But it does not detract from Muslim recognition of all previous Semitic prophets, including Jesus Christ. The uniqueness of the *Koran* as such may be fully granted by those who read it, but the truth of what it expresses, the numinous experience of Mohammed and his capacity to galvanise his followers, are not exclusive to himself or his people or indeed his message. There have been others, there must be others in the future, for such power belongs inherently to the human psyche, not to just one person.

F. Schuon's profound insight into Islam is shown in his ch.7, "Christianity and Islam" where he duly contrasts both religions in their depth. Islam is certainly "not based directly on the Prophet" Mohammed, in contrast to Christianity whose very core is Christ and his mission of redemption,

"... but on the Koran, thus on an affirmation of Divine Unity, and which does not consist in a perpetuation of Mohammed but in a ritual and legislative conformity of man and society to the Koranic Law and therefore to Unity...(op.cit.p.109)

For a Moslem all is centred in Allah, the Divine Principle considered under the aspect of Unity and of Transcendence, and in the state of conformity, of abandonment to Him: *Al-Islām*...(Ibid.p.109)

"According to Islamic doctrine God affirms Himself by His Unity; He does not become incarnate by virtue of an inner distinction, nor does He redeem the world. He absorbs it through *Islām*. He does not descend into manifestation. He projects Himself therein, as the sun projects itself through its light; and it is this projection that permits humanity to participate in Him." (ibid.p.111)

Whether Allah "projects Himself into manifestation", and "absorbs the world through Islam"; or whether Jesus Christ represents "God individualised", and as the Second Person of the Trinitarian manifested aspect of Deity<sup>6</sup>, these two diverging viewpoints and appreciation of the Divine impact on humanity, converge on the one basic admission: the omnipresence of God, however differently this omnipresence may be viewed.

One of the major points of contact of all religions is found in this truism that God must be present in all creation since God is by definition infinite, omnipresent and omniscient as well as beyond creation. This idea was succinctly expressed in a much more ancient scripture than the *Koran*, in the Bhagavad Gītā thus:

"Having pervaded this whole universe with one fragment of Myself, I remain." (Bg. Gītā 10.42)

and here Kṛṣṇa is as much God incarnate in human form as Christ is conceived by his devotees as God incarnate. When the *Koran* says

"Is He not closer than the vein of thy neck? Thou needest not raise thy voice, for He knoweth the secret whisper, and what is yet more hidden... He knows what is in the land and in the sea; no leaf falleth but he knoweth..." (K. vi.12,59)

it admits Allah's omnipresence and omniscience and care for human need for solace, comfort, assurance. Something similar is also found in the Gospels, thus:

"For your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him" (Math.6.8) or Christ's call

"Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest" (Math.11.28) - incidentally a statement which ages earlier was attributed to Egyptian Isis. How else can Allah reach finite man except through limiting his infinity to the finite human being? How can the finite human being conceive something of the Infinite except that something of that Infinite be at least mirrored in the depth of his psyche. Such Muslim and Christian divergences are by no means irreconcilable.

F. Schuon points to one of the contrasts between Muslim and Christian specific values:

"Thus, if in Islam the *Koran* is the Divine Word, the latter is represented in Christianity not by the *New Testament*, but by the living presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The *New Testament* only plays

the part of support, just as the Prophet is only a support of the Divine Message and not the Message itself. The remembrance, the example, and the intercession of the Prophet are subordinate to the revealed Book." ( op.cit. p.112)

Whatever be the difference of thought and emphasis, which is usually what is viewed by critics, the underlying basis is strikingly similar: the *Divine Word* or revelation has manifested as *holy writ* for the Muslim; the *Divine Word* or revelation has manifested as a living divine/human being, Christ, for the Christian, whether in the person of Jesus of Palestine, or later in the eucharist! The form, the method, the emphasis, change, but God does not leave his humanity without a message, a manifestation, when the need arises. The *Divine Word* here reaches back to the Ṛgvedic *word*, *Vāc*, across the millennia, to that frequency of the human being whose very core beats with the universal pulse, whose very beat responds to the universal beat in one way or another; indeed to the "puruṣa in the heart", to that enigmatic Upaniṣadic statement: "the essence of *puruṣa* is *Vāc*!"

Muhammed's revelation, bent on eradicating all forms of polytheism, insisted on One Supreme Transcendent God whose power is paramount, whose will pervades all, whose knowledge of all is unquestionable; thereby no other aspect such as a threefold manifestation of this Supreme One could be tolerated. Yet when one compares Allah's otherworldliness and descriptions by Muslim theologians with the Hindu Brahman which is larger than the largest and smaller than the smallest, hence out of the category of space; which is beyond time and its divisions of past, present and future; which is neither born nor dies (but only its manifested aspect appears and disappears in accordance with the vast cycles of duration) but is from everlasting in infinite duration; which is beyond all and within all, which is also found in the most secret shrine of the human heart, hence "hears" without ears the human cry - do not all these descriptions embrace in their totality all subsequent human attempts at describing the indescribable? including that of Allah the Transcendent and Merciful? Are they not reflected in Bahá'ism, one of the recent upsurging religions wherein we find a very similar stand:

"although God's attributes are numerous, yet in his own realm, He is sanctified above all attributes and exalted above all names. To apply any attributes to Him would indeed be tantamount to a limitation. In God's dominion there can be no multiplicity. His Essence and attributes remain one and the same and are indivisible. It is within the realms of the manifestations that multiplicity of attributes occurs..."<sup>7</sup>

Apart from the use of the masculine gender which automatically limits and lowers the Deity to the human male image and offers a lop-sided perspective that has prevailed for the past 2 millennia, one is here again reminded of the Hindu *nirguṇa* Brahman (without attributes) and the *saguna* Brahman (with attributes). The human mind cannot escape from these ancient insights rooted in a unique supreme *revelation*. Human ideas, human terms have to be used to describe the Deity or Supreme Source, this cannot be helped. Perhaps the ṛṣis of Ṛgvedic times were very wise to merely refer to the Absolute as THAT, *tat*. The attempt to eradicate from the human mind the many manifestations of God have only lowered the Deity to the level of man. Theravāda Buddhism insisted on a No-God basis, but many of its adherents do worship the Buddha, or turn to the many gods of their ancestors for their needs; Mahāyāna tradition has erected a most complex hierarchy of bodhisattvas and buddhas, all helpers of humanity, somewhat similar to the hierarchy of saints in Roman Catholicism, all headed by Christ and Mary. Even Islam in the person of its mystics, could not help but admit to a hierarchy of angels. Note how Hinduism caters for all levels of human understanding, from the lofty heights of the message of *advaita*, already found in the Ṛgvedic That, to the very human gods at a much lower level which are far more understandable to the common people.

## THE CONCERNS OF THE SPIRIT

### *SPECIFIC VIEWPOINTS TAKEN AS IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES*

In his contribution to the subject of *The Religions of Man*, Huston Smith lists some of what he calls the "unique truths" of religions which he deems fundamental and irreconcilable with other religious beliefs, without which each religion would fall as such, each "unique truth" being taken as an absolute in itself, disregarding its inner significance. Such problems lead him to make an important questioning as to the relationship between these divergences to the concern of religion:

"Are these beliefs really only accretions, tangential to the main concern of spirit.

The religions of man may fit together, but they do not do so easily...

The advocates of the essential unity of man's religions must meet the charge of superficiality. Their answer stands or falls with their ability to convince us that the charge is ill-founded."<sup>8</sup>

It is ironic that a charge of superficiality could be made against those who endeavour to fathom the depth of meaning of religious problems by those who stop at surface dogmatic differences. The important question here is: what are the concerns of the spirit, if not to reach out to that depth whence soul meets soul, whence wholeness and over all harmony can be glimpsed as underlying the march of evolution? In this respect the orthodox and therefore exoteric veneer of religious dogmas has little to do with the inner spirit that gives life. In clinging to their outer frames the religions will never fit together. The underlying unity can only be found through the esoteric inner meaning which can be found through the mystical perspective which spells out the concerns of the spirit. Christ's statements and what Churchianity has made of them exemplify this.

Orthodoxies, however elaborated, are only tangential to the real concerns of spirit, and all too often irrelevant. The spiritual perspective considers the core of any question in the light of its universal application, not in that of the material form which hides the inner core. This is constantly forgotten. In identifying itself so completely with the outer form of any religious presentation the rational mind kills any inkling of the inner truth that psyche might endeavour to bring out. It thereby kills the spirit within the form and remains glued to the surface level. There can be no reconciliation between the religions so long as their theologians stand on the mound of their respective theologies, erected by their predecessors as an unshakable standpoint, irrespective of the fact that this may not agree with their own scriptures, the original revelation. One needs to dig through and beyond mental rigidities and crystallisations to bring about a change in understanding.

For example, if as all religions claim, Deity is in some way omnipresent, whether by projection or indwelling at the deepest, most hidden level, its spiritual essence must at least be reflected in the human psyche, if not be actually present (as in the Upaniṣadic claim: That thou art). As human beings we cannot conceive, imagine, relate or aspire to anything that is not already there in the psyche at least as an archetype, a reflection, a vision or a reality. To say that the human family, or society etc., according to Islam, is "cast according to the idea of Unity of which they are so many adaptations" is tantamount to admitting a reflection of that divine Unity in the human soul, which brings it close to admitting the divine spark as the apex of the soul, hence the possibility of oneness with the Deity. To say that the idea of the Islamic Deity who "does not descend into manifestation" but "projects Himself therein as the sun projects itself through its light" is fundamentally equivalent to saying that Deity manifests Itself through its creation or is reflected therein in some way, or in some measure through the very fact of being *omnipresent*; is to say that the many manifestations of Divine *harmony* and *wholeness* in the cosmos, whether at the angelic or at the human family level, are "adaptations" of that transcendent Unity upon which all religions agree; a unity which lies, usually undetected, in the very depth of the human soul, otherwise we would be incapable of conceiving this *unity*. Such inkling of the Divine Presence within psyche is attested to by mystics of all creeds, irrespective of time, race or religion. Here the impassable gulf between Creator and creature falls away. To the mystical insight, whether Deity manifests especially through its Rays or Principles or hierarchical energies, at the cosmic level, or, at the human level, through a holy man, as Christ, Buddha, Kṛṣṇa, etc. or Holy Writ, as the *Koran*, implies formal differences which do not detract from the underlying one truth: the interaction between the Divine and Its manifestation, between the Divine and the human soul. The form of that manifestation is secondary, it suits the needs of the particular race and times where it manifests. Holy Writ is very special and needed, but a human example of spiritual values is also very special, needed and encouraging, for all human beings. Herein we glimpse the goal which is meant for us humans, to strive towards the divine perfection, whether this be emphasized through one means, Holy Writ, or through one human example, a Holy Man, or through many saintly examples. The underlying significance of all this is the concern of the spirit.

#### HUSTON SMITH'S IRRECONCILABLE PROBLEMS

Referring to particular details as outlined through the questions posited by H. Smith, how do we reconcile

1. "Christianity's claim that Christ was the only begotten Son of God" and the "Muslim's claim that Muhammed is the Seal of the Prophets"?

to which could be added:

or belief in Christ as the only way to salvation according to Christianity, with the Muslim's belief that there is no intermediary between God and man? This first question faces us with two different categories of concept which do not bear comparison. In this respect, Schuon has a profoundly important remark to make:

"...So far as the difference between Christ and the Prophet is concerned, we would add that the great spiritual men, whatever their respective degrees, manifest either a sublimation or a norm: to the first group belong Buddha and Christ as well as all those saints who were monks or hermits, while to the second belong Abraham, Moses, and Mohammed, together with all saints living in the world, such as the royal and warrior saints. The attitude of the former corresponds to the words of Christ: 'My Kingdom is not of this world', the attitude of the latter to the words, 'Thy Kingdom come.'<sup>9</sup>

The first part of the question, Christ as the Son of God, was answered through the examination of his very utterances, comparable to Kṛṣṇa's utterances; an examination which showed that he referred to that divine spark within us all which he had identified within himself with "our Father in heaven", the hope for all humanity, or as one might say, the kingdom of heaven "within you". Schuon points to something else, to the fact that Christ was on the teaching line of manifestation, the esoteric doctrine of the Second Ray, whilst Mohammed was on the statesman's or ruling line of manifestation, the First Ray, hence the difference between the two. But the two categories complement each other. Christ was considered a "prophet" by the Jews, or some of them, and is so considered by the Muslims to this day. If the Muslims take Mohammed as the greatest and seal of the prophets, it does not prevent them from recognizing Christ as one of the prophets in line with Moses and other Hebrew prophets. The whole problem of exclusivity is reduced to a question of recognition of degree of greatness and to this relative judgment, no one can put a stop. This is a value judgment and very short-sighted which by putting a seal on the lines of prophets stops any further manifestations of the Divine among humans, giving an immediate rejection to any further step in evolution. One, the Christian, stops all future recognition of divine *messengers* of Deity; the other stops all future recognition of divine *messages* that could be vouchsafed to humanity for its own benefit, for humanity does not stand still in its evolution. These two formal theological decrees do not detract from 1) the message of love of Christ writ large in his life; 2) the message of the *Koran* as Holy Writ. They only show a myopic vision.

To the question of Christ as the only way to salvation and the Muslim's denial of any intermediary between man and Allah, one may point out that the mystical understanding of Christ as the "inner man of the heart", the "kingdom of heaven within us", the *puruṣa* or *ātman* of the Upaniṣads, meets the Muslim's understanding of *Alla's* presence in the human being as exemplified in the words "Is He not closer than the vein of thy neck?"

Here again the mystic's understanding points to the inner meaning which brings outer points of view closer, and here again Schuon has an important contribution:

"In Sufism there is a saying that 'None may meet Allah who has not first met the Prophet'; that is to say, none can attain God save by means of His Word, in whatever form the latter may be revealed; or again, in a more specifically initiatory sense: None can attain the Divine Self except through the perfection of the human ego ... when Christ says: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life' this is absolutely true of the Divine Word ('Christ'), and relatively true of its human manifestation ('Jesus'); an absolute truth cannot in fact be limited to a relative being, Jesus is God, but God is not Jesus; Christianity is Divine, but God is not Christian."<sup>10</sup>

Here is implied the whole doctrine of sounding our rightful keynote, which is the sound of the divine spark within psyche, which can only be fully sounded through a life lived in spiritual purity, self-oblivion, altruism.

QUESTION 2 "How does Theravada Buddhism's rejection of every form of personal God find echo in Christ's sense of relationship to His Heavenly Father?" to which could be added: or Islam's transcendent yet very anthropomorphic God?

To the second of H. Smith's specific questions, one may object that Theravada Buddhism's "rejection of every form of personal God" is completely counterbalanced by its offering to its followers a "refuge" in the Buddha, the Dharma, the Sangha. Whether such refuge be called "Father" or Sangha or Buddha, the fundamental meaning refers to the same profound need of the human being to be helped, taken care of in his

deepest aspirations and needs. To reject the notion of a personal God at this stage of human evolution without putting something equivalent in its place is to throw average humanity back on personality worship. Had Theravada Buddhism refused to face this want it would have de-humanised its presentation to the detriment of its own followers who, nevertheless, in their mass, worship the Buddha, as Christians worship Christ, however much these two great servers of humanity would have disowned such adoration. Acknowledging this need, Theravada Buddhism offered a refuge in which its followers may find protection and feel safeguarded, as a child feels protected and guided by its father. Christ's "heavenly Father" in whom he placed his complete trust, is no different from the act of faith and trust of one "who goes for refuge to the Enlightened One, to the truth, and to the Spiritual Community",<sup>11</sup> who places himself in the keeping of the Buddha or the Dharma or the Sangha. Christ's psychological insight into human nature made him realise the need of the "Father" that all could relate to, that could not be taken away from the sorrowful heart. The same appeal to and trust in the Divine is made in the Bhavagad Gītā where Kṛṣṇa offers himself as the supreme refuge:

"Fix thy mind on Me, give thy heart's love to Me,  
consecrate all thy actions to my service, hold thine self  
as nothing before Me. To Me then shalt thou come..."(Bhg. Gītā.18.65)

Such appeal is constantly made to Allah by distressed human beings. Millennia ago the same call for help is found in the R̥gveda:

"O Varuṇa, keep dread far away from me; O Sovereign, holy Lord, be favourable to me! Like cords  
from a calf, release this distress from me. Without thee I am not even Lord of my eye's  
winking."(R̥gv.II.28.6)

Similarly the Lord of Prayer, Brahmaṇaspati, safeguards his worshippers from distress and injury and vouchsafes them ample protection (R̥gv.II.26.4).

To take such statements as the above questions strictly literally once again shows how "the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life". The inner aspect of the great religions touches that essential spring of the human heart which needs the solace, the shelter of something greater than itself, an all encompassing light, lord, father, saviour. Here, one may ask, what about the need for a mother? Monotheistic religions have relegated woman to a very secondary status. Despite this fact the figure of the Madonna is there to remind us of the human need for motherly tenderness. Among Catholics, sailors pray for their safety at sea to Mary; women pray to Jesus. In China Kwan Yin, the goddess of Mercy has quite a worship, etc.

QUESTION 3. "How does Buddha's 'anatta doctrine' of no-soul square with Christianity's belief in man's individual destiny in eternity?"

The problem of the Buddha's '*anatta* doctrine' - that there is no ultimate survival for the personal self of man, no immortality for anything purely human or compounded, revolves around the meaning of *ātman* which fluctuated throughout the period of Sanskrit writing and which some derive from *at* to move, or *an* to breathe, but which also contains *tman* which means self. It was used in the singular as reflexive pronoun (himself, herself, etc.), as the personal self, or as the essence, nature of a particular thing, or as the impersonal core of Self equated with the Brahman in the Upaniṣads. The word, in Gautama's time, seems to have been commonly used for the personal self or ego as against the usage in the Upaniṣads for pure spirit which is *no human principle*, although individualised during human incarnations and called *jīvātman*. With such ambiguity, the danger of believing in personal immortality and fostering egotism was obvious. The controversial *anatta* doctrine culminates in the Buddha's remaining silent each time a particular wanderer asked "is there an *ātman*". To his disciple Ānanda, Gautama explained that to say "there is no self" would be to side with the annihilationist theory, to say "there is a self" would be contrary to his knowledge that "all *dharmas* are without a self", *dharmas* being the "building blocks" of ultimate existence, that through different combinations make up our world. Obviously these being compounded could have no ultimate existence as such. Buddha's silence is very meaningful.

To translate *ātman* by "soul" is erroneous, or *puruṣa* by person in specific cases is wrong. The "person" is the mask put on, not the spiritual principle. The mistake about translating *ātman* as soul arose from the fact that Christian born scholars, though not necessarily believers, were unaware of the difference between *spirit* and *soul* - two words differentiated by St Paul himself - which two had been finally lumped together into the same



basket of vagueness, the soul being considered a vague, intangible something created by God for each human being, it being the source of conscience, feeling and deeper understanding. The notion of spirit, (the *ātman*) that which nothing can sully, which is from everlasting as against existing in time and space, which remains uncompounded throughout its pilgrimage in human form, is abandoned. The soul which may be considered the spirit's radiating light at a lower level, is already differentiated, is the vehicle of spirit which, being too pure, cannot manifest at this lower level, and thus forms the link between spirit and the personality, whilst itself evolving through experience gathered from life. To write as R. Walpola does in his chapter "The doctrine of no-soul: *anatta*" that

"What in general is suggested by Soul, Self, Ego, or to use the Sanskrit expression *Ātman*, is that in man there is a permanent, everlasting and absolute entity, which is the unchanging substance behind the changing phenomenal world"<sup>12</sup>

is very misleading, equating soul with *āman*, and thereby destructive of the Upaniṣadic doctrine of *ātman* which has nothing of "substance", ego or soul. His use of the word substance whose literal meaning is primarily "the tangible, *basic matter* of which a thing consists", or "the basic element of anything that can receive modifications and in which attributes and accidents inhere", reduces *ātman* to a material entity, however subtle. This is certainly not the teaching of the Upaniṣads. The word's other secondary meaning as "the *essence*, meaning" etc. of, for instance thought, a discourse, a philosophy, etc. takes one a little closer to the real meaning because of "essence" which the dictionary defines, philosophically as "the unchanging, inward nature of something as opposed to its attributes and existence" and theologically, as "an immaterial or spiritual entity". Through a wrong translation and interpretation of the word *ātman* due to ignorance or a complete disregard of its meaning in the Upaniṣads, W. Rahula destroys the central core of the *Upaniṣads* revelation. The essential spiritual nature of the *ātman* as against any substantial connotation, is one of the remarkable traits of the Upaniṣads as they attempt to define the indefinable. Thus the teaching of Uddalaka to his son Śvetaketu (in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 6.12) revolves around the whole *unsubstantiality* of *ātman* as the core of everything, the tangible tree as well as the whole universe, as every human being: in the fruit of the fig tree lies the seed which produces the tree, but in the seed when broken *nothing* is visible, and it is this very invisible, intangible no-thing-ness, (*na kim ca na*) that causes the fig tree; in fact the whole of the fig tree is in that nothingness. The world has this subtle essence or no-thing-ness, this *ātman* at its core; without it there could be no world. This nothingness at the core of the world which is its supreme reality, is truly the essence of the Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. Why is this ignored? Whoever identifies the *ātman* with anything substantial, differentiated, or soul, knows nothing of the Upaniṣads' doctrine. In the whole lesson to Śvetaketu in which the father chooses various images to instruct his son, the refrain goes:

"Believe me, my dear, said he, that which is the finest essence - this whole world has that as its *ātman*. That is reality, that is *ātman*.

That art thou, Śvetaketu."

The difficulty of describing that which appears as no-thing to the senses led to the famous *neti neti*, of the *Upaniṣads*: it is not this, it is not that. This recalls the Buddha's description of *nirvāṇa* in completely negative terms, meaningless to the mind.

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* describes the *ātman* thus:

"That *ātman* is not this, it is not that.

It is unseizable, for it cannot be seized.

It is indestructible, for it cannot be destroyed.

It is unattached, for it does not attach itself.

It is unbound, it does not tremble. It is not injured." (IV.4.22)

"As a unity only is It to be looked upon

this indemonstrable, enduring Being,

spotless, beyond space,

the unborn *ātman*, great, enduring." (IV.4.20. Hume's translation)

This recalls the "unity" of Allah in Islamic thought.

The *Īśā Upaniṣad* describes the *ātman* as:

"Immovable, one, swifter than mind,  
inaccessible for the powers, the spirit speeds ahead,  
standing poised, it outstrips these others.  
Within it, the Life-power establishes all activities." (4)

"Moving, immovable, the spirit;  
far away, verily so close, the spirit;  
within it all, verily without it all, the spirit."(5)

"He all encompassing, the resplendent,  
without form or sinews, flawless, pure, unsullied  
by evil, He, the Seer, the Wise, omnipresent,  
self-existent, has from everlasting years fitly ordained  
all things according to their nature."(8) (my translation) <sup>13</sup>

None of these descriptions fit the human personal self or ego, full of limitations, desires, prejudices, vices, etc.

"When the wise realise the omnipresent Spirit, who rests invisible  
in the visible and permanent in the impermanent, then they go beyond sorrow." (Kaṭha Up. II.18-22)  
In his *The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation*, E. Obermiller translated the *Tathāgata-garbha-sūtra*, giving a rather extraordinarily similar view to that of the Upaniṣads:

"127. The Immaculate Essence of the Spirit in the living beings  
is unaffected by the coverings of defilement;  
as such it exists eternally,  
being spoken of as having no beginning."

Strophes upon strophes describe how the Buddha essence is hidden in all that lives (p.230), "but obscured by lust, hatred and other coverings of defilement." (99) (p.214) It only needs to free itself from contact with these defilements.

"...Examples given in the *Tathāgata-garbha-sūtra* illustrate the fact that all the defiling forces are accidental in every living being containing the element of Buddhahood which is the beginningless spiritual element. They are also an indication that all the purifying forces are innate and inseparable from the beginningless spiritual element..."

"54.a.1 The Essence that has no beginning  
is the foundation of all the elements,  
owing to its existence, all the phenomenal life,  
and *nirvāṇa*, likewise, is made manifest."<sup>14</sup>

The recognition of a beginningless and endless essence, or *suchness* (*tathāta*) "unchangeable by nature, sublime, perfectly pure", or *tathāgatagarbha*, "the permanent, steadfast and eternal substratum" of the *Śrīmālāsūtra*, or dharmakāya, "the perfection of purity" or fundamental element, *dhātu*, or spiritual principle in living beings, "unaffected by defilements" is really the Upaniṣads' doctrine of the *ātman*, "unsullied by evil" as previously quoted: "the essence that has no beginning is the foundation of all the elements", is equivalent to the *ātman* as the finest essence of this world, etc. That these statements are in full agreement with the Upaniṣads may make us suspect that they are indeed the "esoteric" aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism - even though refused credence by the Southern Theravadins. They would claim that this doctrine belongs to Tibetan Buddhism and this "third promulgation" of the Buddha's doctrine is open to suspicion since it does not appear in the original canon. According to H.P.B., Buddha never denied the essence of Upaniṣadic teachings on which he was brought up.

To answer H. Smith's question, all the facets involved which are far from simplistic and of which an outline has been given here, should first be taken into consideration. One might conclude that *anatta* when taken literally, as with Theravada Buddhism, applies to one side of Gautama's answer to Ānanda - to say that there is a self would be contrary to all dharmas, and thereby does not square with Christian belief; whereas the other half, to say there is no self would be to side with the annihilationists. The third promulgation of Buddhist revelation admits a *dhātu*, or fundamental element, or Buddha essence, a *suchness* in sentient beings

which eventually allows each one to become a buddha. *Ātman*, in the *personal sense* had thus no future, hence the *anatta* doctrine. Belief in man's individual destiny in eternity is a half palliative to give importance to the individual so prized in the West, half rooted in human intuitive recognition of something immortal within himself which in his ignorance he ascribes to his compounded self; the emphasis being once again on the outer appearance instead of the inner essence. *Ātman* in the purely spiritual sense ever remains one with the universal Brahman or ultimate Source which is from everlasting, and yet is the imprint of that drive forward of what we perceive as evolution. It is the spirit within and behind all earthly pilgrimages, which in the human being is responsible for the latter's, or psyche's unfoldment to a state of knowledge-wisdom quite beyond our present consciousness. This is the esoteric doctrine not spelled out in so many words yet hinted at in various guises.

The other half of the Buddha's statement, which is only answered in the *Tathāgatagarbha* tradition whose texts have only been translated around the second half of the 20th century, could be compared to the Christian belief in man's destiny in eternity, though the two views differ considerably in details. As shown in ch.2 when man emerges triumphant from his pilgrimage, or in Buddhist terms, when all defilements have been removed, man is no longer man for he has transcended his human condition. Yet what remains could not emerge to the state of *nirvāṇa* or *mokṣa*, except through the experience of the human psyche, of the balance between spirit and matter, through the interplay of the positive and negative, through the outgoing and ingoing of the centrifugal and centripetal forces. From the esoteric perspective, the passage through humanity is considered necessary to achieve that *transformation* and *transmutation* of evolving consciousness. St Paul reveals something of his esoteric knowledge when he wrote ch.16 of 1. Corinthians, of which here are two excerpts:

"Now this I say brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (50)

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory". (54)

Because of its profound implications such a refinement of reasoning as the Buddhist could not be given out to the masses, except in very simple terms, and this is what is contained in Christ's very simple advice to the people: "be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect". (Math.5.48) Here is the promise of the possibility of perfection for the human being which is the same as the promise of the possibility of Buddhahood in the *Tathāgata-garbha-sutra* and other similar texts. Christianity in its attempt to simplify the gnosis to its ultimate element, reduces the whole pilgrimage of the human soul to one life-time during which it makes or mars its whole eternity. Nevertheless, Christ's utterances point out that it is only in striving towards perfection, towards being a living embodiment of the kingdom of heaven "within you", that the soul will reach its high water-mark. Christ never claimed that by his death human beings would be redeemed and reach perfection; but like Gautama who enjoined upon his disciples to strive diligently for their salvation, so Christ advised his listeners to strive for perfection, for which the great rule which he gave was "love one another". This is all very simple but how many achieved this? Further, if there was nothing in the human being capable of realizing *nirvāṇa*, how could the Buddha have pointed to *nirvāṇa* and his own realisation of it as the only goal worth pursuing? The same applies to Christ's emphasis on the kingdom of heaven and perfection.

## DIVINE INTERFERENCE IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

### *THE PROBLEM OF BIBLICAL LITERAL VERACITY*

Such divine interference for believers in an anthropomorphic God is of utmost importance and in the case of the Old Testament Jehovah marks him out as involved in his creatures' immediate destiny.

QUESTION 5. To H. Smith's question: "how does the Indian view of *Nirguṇa* Brahman (Brahman without attributes), the God who stands completely aloof from time and history, fit with the Biblical view that the very essence of God is contained in his historical acts?" one may answer: is the historian's choice of wrong categories for comparison deliberate? It cannot be ignorance! Why compare the *nirguṇa Brahman*, which is

beyond all manifestations, with the all too human Biblical God, when the Hindus themselves make a difference between the Supreme Source of all and its manifested aspect, the *saguna Brahman*, Brahman with attributes, of which *Viṣṇu* is the preserving principle *whose divine incarnations show his care for creation and interference* in human affairs? If comparison is due, it is but fair to choose two similar categories when they are present, and that is the case. For Jehovah is not the Absolute and the Rabbis of the Kabbalah knew this.

The problem of "factual truths" which, according to believers, are embodied in Biblical texts as against "legendary" tales of other religions - factual truths being Judaic or Christian and recorded in the Bible, legendary tales pertaining to other religions and deemed by believers to have no fact behind them - such is even to this day the general attitude. This discrimination immediately alerts us to a basic warping of perspective - my truth is right, my God is the only true God - which has been a blight on monotheistic religions for the past two millennia and led to the worst atrocities.

Most religions offer their "truths" in the guise of myths, legends, allegories, parables, or tales that strike the imagination and arouse the intuition, and remain in the mind, but are also of psychological and *esoteric* significance and thus require deeper understanding, usually with more than one key to get their core meaning. The Christian "myth" of the Christ birth is no exception. H.P.B. remarks

"But the point to which even the most truth-loving and truth searching Orientalists ... seem to remain blind, is the fact that every symbol in papyrus or *olla* is a many-faced diamond, each of whose facets not merely bears several interpretations, but also relates to several sciences ..." (S.D. I.p.305) and even sometimes to several occurrences. Even those religions that started without myths, Buddhism and Islam, acquired tales that in due time became hallowed in the same way as myths, after the death of their founder (cf. the *Jātakas* and the *Hadith*). In his pursuit of all "corrosive rationalism" Western man forgot the true meaning of myth and its vast implications, the vital expression of his own psyche's cosmic sentiency, projecting on the cosmic screen his own aspiration, vision, struggle, enshrining in those ageless tales treasures of insights which do not pertain to our present narrow range of world perspectives. In branding myth a lie, rational man degraded and killed the very significance of the spiritual dimension of his own being which he can no longer fathom and therefore denies and reduces to absurdity.

H. Smith puts forward a very strong claim for the Bible:

"...that God is found within the limitations of the world of change and struggle, and especially that he reveals himself in events which are *unique, particular* and *unrepeatable*. 'For the Bible, history is neither *māyā* nor a circular process of nature; it is the arena of God's purposive activity'." (op.cit. p.243-4) (italics my own).

This idea is also taken up by P.Ashby who remarks:

"... the Western religions are divided from the Eastern in the *emphasis* which they place upon *concrete historical event* in which the Divine has been decisively involved. For them the Divine is in relationship with men in recorded purposeful history; for the others both men and history are of a different character because of their beliefs about religious knowledge and the Divine." (op.cit. p.120)

An answer will be given to this seemingly important cleavage of religions in the course of the present chapter by having recourse to the texts of the scriptures themselves, for instance Kṛṣṇa's interference in human affairs according to the Bhagavad Gītā.

The *whole historical credibility of the Bible* and thereby God's historical acts, according to orthodox Christianity and Judaism (for the *Old Testament*) hinges on a literal reading and understanding of the various Biblical books. Such literal reading, however, fails miserably in making sense in too many instances where there can be a confrontation with factual knowledge, or when the text has obvious esoteric significance; e.g. in *Genesis*, the 6 days of creation understood as human days, and the few thousand years allotted since the beginning of creation which tally awkwardly with the long geological epochs of our own earth encrustation, let alone with the aeons of the starry universe! No one seems to have had enough sense to consider that the Days of God would be totally different as epochs from the puny days of man. The Hindus who preserved the figures of their days of *Brahma* showed far more sense in their vast aeonic computation, but their figures were dismissed as fabulous.

H.P.B. in *Isis Unveiled* brought to the public notice that the Pentateuch is supposed to be written by Moses, "and yet it contains the account of his own death (Deut.xxxiv.5,6); and in *Genesis* (xiv.14) the name

Dan is given to a city, which Judges (xviii.29) tells us was only called by that name at that late day, it having previously been known as Laish". (I.U. II.p.167)<sup>15</sup> Further, how can one accept the "fact" that, as clearly stated in *Genesis*, Adam and Eve as the first male and female couple, have two male children of whom one kills the other and flees to another land, and there takes a wife. Where does she come from?

"And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the Land of Nod, on the east of Eden. And Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bare Enoch and he builded a city, and called the name of the city after the name of his son Enoch." (Gen.4:16,17)

Why the need to build a city? As disastrous is the difficulty of putting any exact date to specific "historical data" such as the Israelite descent into Egypt, the years of the Egyptian oppression and the exodus out of Egypt. This is all highlighted in H.H. Rowley's *From Joseph to Joshua* (1950). Discrepancies, contradictory chronologies and exaggerations abound. For instance Abraham is told (Gen.15.13) that his seed will be a stranger in a foreign land and will be afflicted for 400 years. But as Rowley remarks:

"... the period of Joseph is hardly to be reckoned as a time of oppression, and indeed we are told that it was in the reign of one Pharaoh that the oppression was begun, and in the reign of his successor that it was terminated in the Exodus (Ex.2.23). The reign of the first oppressor is represented as a long one, but certainly one that fell far short of 400 years." (op.cit.p.70)

In Exodus xii.40 the Israelites' stay in Egypt is said to be 430 years.

"It has frequently been observed that the genealogies of the Pentateuch are in persistent disagreement with the 430 years of Ex.xii.40." (ibid.p.70)<sup>16</sup>

God's supposed historical acts which H. Smith emphasizes as constituting the Jewish dynamic contribution to religion, suffer a disastrous setback in the face of the evidence of other far older "legends" from all over the world, just as they do in the face of poor, or just lack of evidence of so-called historic happenings mentioned in the *Old Testament*. That most books of the *Old Testament* are based on certain historic occurrences is probably true, but these were used for other purposes than historic accuracy, and were tampered with by later writers, as has been uncovered by researchers.

The *Old Testament's* contradictory chronology of events around the Hebrews' stay in Egypt and their exodus, which even the Rabbis cannot fit together, is a case in point, and necessarily arouses grievous doubts as to their veracity. The story of Exodus<sup>17</sup>, so deeply engraved in the Jewish mind that not the slightest doubt can be aroused as to its historic authenticity, hinges on the somewhat preposterous claim that Pharaoh would have stooped to pursuing, at the head of his troops, 600,000 men (Ex.12.37) with in addition their women and children, as well as their goods and chattels, all foreigners, amounting to a huge mass movement of possibly well nigh two million people, to bring them back to Egypt! As is well known, foreigners were not dear to the Egyptians who could very well do without them.

The *Koran* follows Exodus in making such a claim, except that it wisely refrains from numbering those who fled. Only, it gives a curious and also preposterous conclusion, though in one sense in keeping with the Egyptian death wish to be buried in Egyptian soil: thus Pharaoh, on the point of being engulfed in the waters, is said to submit to the God of Israel as the only God who therefore told him that his body would be saved,<sup>18</sup> (*Koran* 10.90-2), a very biased Semitic conclusion using the Egyptian wish to the glory of the Semitic God.

The fact could be that in *Exodus* lurks a dim ancestral memory of some vast cataclysm that occurred ages ago in which the human racial survival, not just the Hebrews, was at stake and humans were partially saved, superimposed upon and merged with some incident that occurred to the Hebrews stationed in Egypt; the latter incident assuming priority in the Hebrew memory to the extent of eradicating the former cataclysm and never tolerating the slightest doubt as to the truth of the *Old Testament* exodus out of Egypt to this day commemorated among the believers.

Furthermore it is very strange that a historian of religion should evidence such a seemingly complete lack of awareness of other related similar occurrences in other and much older traditions as to write thus:

"It is impossible to talk about Adam and Noah (the same may be said of almost every Biblical character) apart from the particular circumstances - in this case Eden and the Flood - that surrounded them and in response to which their lives took shape." (op.cit. p.244)

as though Adam and Noah were unique characters and their destiny unique, whereas for instance, in the case of the deluge, other "heroes" far older than Noah are reported to have heard similar "orders" from their gods and to have saved humanity and all creatures from complete disaster by obeying the injunctions of their God. The universal tradition of the deluge takes us from India to old Persia, to China, to the Peruvians and the Aztecs, to Mesopotamia, to the Chaldean fragmented tablets, discovered in the 19th century and acknowledged to be older than the *Old Testament*, giving accounts which find their counterpart, if not copies in the *Old Testament*, from which it becomes evident that the latter account is based on the former, that both may be legends built upon some actual ancestral memory of a cataclysm that occurred ages ago.

Noah finds his prototype elsewhere in the hoary past of legendary tales, two stories among several could be cited. 1) The case of the Babylonian Uta-Napishtim who, warned by his God Ea (Wisdom) built a ship and embarked with his wife and cattle etc. when the floods began to rise. After seven days and nights these subsided and his ship rested on the summit of Mount Nisir, the only emergent land. Uta-Napishtim sent a dove and a swallow who came back, then a raven who did not return. The God Enlil who had unleashed the cataclysm to destroy mankind recognized the worth of Uta-Napishtim and made him and his wife immortal. 2) The Hindu Vaivasvata Manu, directed by his God *Viṣṇu* in the form of a fish (who grew to enormous proportions) constructed an ark and with his family and the seven ṛṣis (in the *Mahābhārata* version) sailed on the rising waters and thereby saved the human race, the seven ṛṣis here representing the seven human races. H.P.B. here clarifies that it is Vaivasvata Manu

"... the Hindu ideal embodiment, called respectively Xisuthros, Deucalion, Noah and by other names [in the various accounts of the nations] who is the allegorical man who rescued our race, when nearly the whole population of one hemisphere perished by water, while the other hemisphere was awakening from its temporary obscurity." (S.D. II.p.309)

A very similar tale is told in the

"... *Vendīdād* of the Mazdeans, as ... in the Chaldeans and the Mosaic allegory of the Ark, all of which are the many national versions of the original legend given in the Hindu scriptures ... Open the Mazdean *Vendīdād*, and read the command of Ormazd to Yima, a Spirit of the Earth, who symbolizes the three [earlier human] races, after telling him to build a *vara* (an 'enclosure', an *argha* or vehicle). 'Thither (into the *vara*) thou shalt bring *the seeds of men and women*, of the greatest, best, and finest on this earth; thither thou shalt bring the seeds of every kind of cattle ... All those seeds shalt thou bring, two of every kind, *to be kept inexhaustible there*, so long as *those men shall stay in the Vara.*' (*Vendīdād*, Fargard II, 27(70), 28(74). S.B.E. vol.iv, 1895. p.17)" (S.D. II. p.290-1)

Are all these "saviours" of humanity historical personages? With such testimony at hand, the "historical" figure of Noah dwindles in literal historical veracity - why should he, a late comer on the scene of scriptures, be considered more historical than Uta-Napishtim, or Vaivasvata Manu, or even Deucalion who advised by his father, Prometheus, constructed an ark and went on board with his wife Pyrrha and survived nine days and nights of flooding? The usual number is 7 or multiple of 7, but versions vary. In the face of all these older specimens of human beings who heard their gods and obeyed their command, a similar command,

"... the Biblical claim that God is found within the limitations of the world of change and struggle, and especially that He reveals himself in events which are unique, particular and unrepeatable"

as emphasized by B. Anderson and H. Smith, primarily in Hebrew history, suffers a particular blow. For the personages implicated in the *Old Testament* are *far from unique*, but rather belong to a long line of personages of legendary history, whose "God" was certainly not the unique God of Israel.

H.P.B. explains the allegorical meaning of Noah and his forebears such as the Chaldean Nuah, or the Babylonian Uta-Napishtim, or Vaivasvata Manu of the Hindus, as representative of that seed of humanity that was preserved both at the cosmic level - during the period of obscurity or inactivity called *pralaya* - and at the terrestrial level, in spite of the deluge; further, that Noah is also symbolic of that spiritual spark falling into the generation of humanity and once enmeshed in matter, although vivifying it unto creativity, partially and temporarily loses knowledge of its origin (recall Noah planting a vineyard, drinking and getting intoxicated). The flood in these legends, esoterically refers in terms of cataclysmic floods to the periodic obscurity to which our planet is subject, when earth reaches a standstill of all activities and sinks into a "deep sleep" of regeneration,<sup>19</sup> hence the symbol of water. The seeds of all lives are meanwhile preserved in the "ark", symbol

of the womb of Nature, the female principle, symbolised in the figure of Ashtōreth and other similar goddesses, but in later texts usurped by male figures as masters of the ark. Ashtōreth was, according to *The Secret Doctrine*, apart from her identification with Venus, "in one sense an impersonal symbol of nature, the ship of Life carrying throughout the boundless Sidereal Ocean the germs of all being" (S.D. II.p.462) and thereby being addressed as "Virgin of the Sea, blessed Mother and Lady of the Waters".<sup>20</sup> All these legends, with a much deeper inner significance than was ever suspected, are in filled with metaphoric, poetic expressions of psyche.

If the Bible be pure history, the arena of God's purposive activity, why did St Paul declare so openly that the story of Abraham, Sarah and Agar is an *allegory* which he partially explains (Galatians iv:12,24). St Paul alone among the apostles had been initiated into the "Mysteries" and thus knew the ancient way of writing scripture. The esoteric reading, as against the literal, is cosmic as well as spiritual and psychological. Our Western myopic minds have failed to rise to that level.

B. Anderson's claim, as quoted by H. Smith, as to Biblical history being "neither *māyā* nor a circular process of nature", but "the arena of God's purposive activity",<sup>21</sup> should now be examined in relation to Hinduism's answer to this problem of God's interference. For Anderson, God's purposive activity is radically opposed to the Hindu view which regards the sensory world as illusion (*māyā*) from which religious men seek to escape. If there is no meaning in history, adds H. Smith, then "at a stake is our whole attitude toward the social order and man's collective life". (op.cit.p.244) In spite of ultimately regarding the cosmos as illusion (from the highest standpoint of spirit) the Hindus, as well as the Buddhists, admit the relative reality of the world and its inhabitants so long as the cosmos lasts. In this respect H.P.B. makes the following comment:

"... all things are relatively real, for the cognizer is also a reflection, and the things cognized are therefore as real to him as himself ... Whatever plane our consciousness may be acting in, both we and the things belonging to that plane are, for the time being, our only realities." (S.D. I.p.39-40)

H. Smith asserts that for India the world will

"... always contain approximately the same amount of good and evil, pleasure and pain, right and wrong. This being its inherent and intended condition, all thought of cleaning it up, of changing it appreciably, is in principle misguided" (op.cit. p.245)

a very sweeping generalization, itself misguided, for it does not fit at all with the Hindu doctrine of *avatāras* and the message of the *Bhagavad Gītā*. The Hindu does conceive the world as the *līlā* or play, or playground of the Lord wherein the Cosmic Dancer

"embodies in himself and simultaneously gives manifestation to eternal energy"

as Zimmer puts it, and, I would add, to eternal Order:

"The forces gathered and projected in his frantic, ever-enduring gyration, are the powers of the evolution, maintenance and dissolution of the world. Nature and all its creatures are the effects of his eternal dance."<sup>22</sup>

Within this playground or arena of the Lord's own producing

"Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata,  
and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I Myself come forth;  
for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers,  
for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age." (Bhg. Gītā 4.7-8)

Nothing could be clearer that this formulation of divine intervention in the human world when the need arises to restore righteousness. Why was it ignored so completely? The main theme of the *Mahābhārata* is just this. To overlook this teaching on the basis of a supposed all engulfing other worldly outlook which applies only to the sages, ascetics and disciples, is to fail to grasp the supreme message of one of the world's greatest scriptures, a failure unforgivable in historians of religions! The message of the *Bhagavad Gītā* is: fight because it is your duty to fight; for the unrighteous must be overcome; act in accordance with your *dharma*; this world is one of activity, therefore act! The message of a fully committed, courageous and purposeful teaching could not be more clearly spelled out:

"Shake off this paltry faintheartedness.  
Stand up O conqueror of foes...  
Taking as equal pleasure and pain, gain and loss,  
Victory and defeat, gird thee for the battle..." (Bhg. Gītā 2:3,39)

But note that Kṛṣṇa is not Brahman, but the manifested aspect or *avatāra* of Viṣṇu, the preserving aspect of manifested Deity.

The Hindu doctrine of *avatāras* concerns divine incarnations, each manifesting at specific times in the cycles of the *manvantara* or age, for specific purposes, from the *matsya* or fish *avatāra* whose object "was to save Vaivasvata, the seventh Manu and progenitor of the human race [of this cycle], from destruction by a deluge" as legend will have it, to the *kūrma* or tortoise, to the *varāha* or boar, to *Narasimha* the man-lion who delivered "the world from the tyranny of ... a demon who ... had become invulnerable", to *Vāmana* the dwarf, to *Paraśu-rāma - Rāma* with-the-axe, born to "deliver the Brahmins from the arrogant dominion of the Kṣatriyas", to Rāma born "for the purpose of destroying the demon Rāvaṇa"<sup>23</sup>, culminating in the incarnation of the Lord, of Viṣṇu himself as Kṛṣṇa. These may be allegorical fables, but they show the Hindu idea going much further in its inclusiveness for it encompasses other creatures than the humans, indeed the whole planet, and implies the shaping and caring for the animal world. To be noted is the underlying inkling of the evolutionary ladder of life through the so-called lower animal forms to the higher, to the man-lion, to the human dwarf evocative of man's puny self yet capable of great acts, and finally to the human (royalty in its noblest aspect as in Rāma) and the supra-human or divine in Kṛṣṇa: the ascent of life from the lower to the higher. This is not found in monotheistic religions focused only on man.

Moreover, Hinduism unlike orthodox monotheism, offers to its more mature souls a transcendental vision beyond this arena of divine work, and calls forth its spiritual elite to the realization of what lies behind the flux of change, of conflict, of *māyā*, outlining pathways to this goal in some of the greatest practical spiritual texts still extant, as the *Śiva-sūtras* or the *Yoga-sūtras*. The *Rgveda* also has a particular verse that succinctly points to this further evolution in humanity:

"Seven landmarks have the wise established. For one of these may the troubled mortal set out. Thence liberated from the paths, verily a pillar of life, he stands on firm foundations, in the abode of the Most High." (Rgv.X.5.6)

Such questions as have been here collected as deemed irreconcilable, without which, it is claimed, each religion would cease to be its unique self, turn out, -- when examined in their depth of mystical insight, or within the worldwide traditions to which they belong, or compared according to the right categories which characterize them - to share a common, fundamental oneness of *essential meaning* and a similar message, which only ignorance or lack of insight or preconception can fail to see. That which gives them their uniqueness is only the presentation, the emphasis and the accretion of the human mind. A much deeper understanding able to go into the depth of the questions, cannot brand the religions as being at odds with each other in what is important; but each fits far better than our superficial, separative minds would admit. They meet in that one common ground of all human beings, psyche's profounder domain, illuminated by its own, yet universal spiritual sun.

#### KARMA AND ITS COROLLARY, REBIRTH; AND DIVINE WILL

Much has been written about the doctrine of karma; at times rigidly, at times wrongly, even absurdly. We still know little about it and perhaps misunderstand a great deal. It is often used as a nail on which to hang unsolvable problems much in the same way as monotheistic faiths use the Will of God to hide their ignorance.

Was karma, the law of action-reaction, understood in a very crude sense in Old Testament times - as even nowadays in some sections of human communities? Thus it is said in Leviticus:

"And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour as he hath done so shall it be done to him. Breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be done to him again." (Lev.24.19.20. cf. also Ex.21:24-27. Deut.19.21)

Does this necessarily imply that a man may seek to perpetrate revenge in the same way as the wrong inflicted upon him, or that the law will mete out to the wrong doer in the same way as the latter has meted out to his victim? Or is this to be interpreted as the law of action-reaction automatically working, whatever the conditions prevalent? In such interpretation there is no room for "transformation", change of mind and heart, *metanoia*, that could bring about a different reaction.



H. Smith in his *The Religions of Man* makes most important remarks concerning karma:

"The idea of karma and the completely moral universe it implies carries two important psychological corollaries. First, it commits the Hindu who understands it to complete personal responsibility. Each individual is wholly responsible for his present condition and will have exactly the future he is now creating ... the idea of a moral universe closes the door to all appeals to chance or accident..."

Karma is not fatalism because, as explained by H. Smith

"Karma decrees that every decision must have its determinate consequences, but the decisions themselves are, in the last analysis, freely arrived at... This means that the career of a soul as it threads its course through innumerable human bodies is guided by its choices, these in turn being decided by what the soul wants at each stage of its pilgrimage." (p.78)

This belies the Western oft branding of repeated existences as purposeless. In the West, H. Smith further shows, we also have something akin in such expressions as:

"'As a man sows, so shall he reap'; or again 'Sow a thought and reap an act, sow an act and reap a habit, sow a habit and reap a character; sow a character and reap a destiny' - these are ways the West has put the point. The difference is that India tightens up and extends its concept of moral law to see it *absolutely binding and brooking no exceptions*. The present condition of each individual's interior life ... is an exact product of what he has wanted and got in the past; and equally, his present thoughts and decisions are determining his future states." ( *ibid*.p.77)

This "absolutely binding and brooking no exceptions" law is equivalent to the *Divine Will* of the monotheistic religions. However, there are two aspects to this law which are lacking in H. Smith's description: the first, that of transformation of outlook, of heart, mind, a full realization of guilt and commitment to redress the wrong perpetrated, automatically alter the reaction psychologically and morally, if not physically as well. Karma is not rigid, its byways and implications are vast and quite beyond our human compass. There is no doubt that action-reaction rules our lives, but we have the choice to change our reaction through our understanding of, for instance, what activated another person's action towards us. Thereby action-reaction may work totally differently from what could be expected. We weave our future with our present thoughts, attitude, deeds or misdeeds, our choice of direction. This leaves freedom of choice, our reaction may also be our choice.

The second aspect and a vital one which our extreme Western individualism automatically makes us reject, is that of group, national and racial karma. The esoteric postulate is that groups of souls bound by past ties, whether for good or evil, are born at a particular time to work out certain "unfinished business" or for some other purposes, for good or evil. Here we may ask the question: can souls be evil? No: but that aspect of the so-called separative mind when it is allowed to rule supreme more and more blocks the way to the soul's influence, and may through its excessive *momentum* cause a series of reincarnations more and more destructive and evil until annihilation supervenes and the soul's pilgrimage receives a very grievous set-back.

The implication of group karma recognizes the fact that we are more or less interdependent and jointly responsible for what happens around us and to us all.<sup>24</sup> This may be admitted at the physical level when we view hereditary diseases passed on by parents, or good or bad characteristics inherited through our genes which make us prone to particular diseases. Various abuses of wrong eating or drinking and misuse of the physical body are "visited" upon our descendants (e.g. today children born of alcoholic parents dying of delirium tremens at the age of 12; drug, tobacco addiction, even aids are passed on to the child)). The R̥gvedic prayer is relevant:

"Release us from our father's offenses; from those that we have ourselves committed." (R̥gv.VII.86.5a)

The O.T. Exodus declares:

"For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me." (Ex.20:5)

K. Gibran put it more mildly and poetically:

"And if any of you would punish in the name of righteousness and lay the axe unto the evil tree, let him see to its roots;

and verily he will find the roots of the good and the bad,  
 the fruitful and the fruitless, all entwined together  
 in the silent heart of the earth..." (*The Prophet*. p.39)

A striking example of "the fruitful and the fruitless, all entwined" ... is evident in what happened to mankind in the 20th century with its aftermath in the 21st century. Our myopic vision prevents us from seeing that, for instance, certain events taking place through the activities of evil men occurring e.g. much earlier in the Middle Ages, could have repercussions on occurrences in the 20th century. But far more clearly than this, though we may be and are generally *blind* to it, the *cancer* that was growing for centuries within Europe, manifesting in that superiority complex that led to lust for power, aggressivity, ruthlessness, cruelty, mass extermination e.g. of Tasmanian Aborigines, of American Indian tribes, North and South, torture by the Inquisition of thousands of innocents, massacre of the Cathars, etc., heartless slave trading of Negroes by so-called Christians, exploitation of all weaker and poorer peoples at home and abroad, partition of Poland, of Africa, of America regardless of its indigenous inhabitants - finally flared up, concentrating in the very heart of Europe, Germany, with the rise of Nazism and its perverse group of leaders bent to wreak appalling havoc upon Europe itself and beyond its confines. Arrogance, cruelty, hatred, all that had served certain European nations to conquer and exploit others, became concentrated as never before as extreme racism in one single nation to break upon Europe and cause the deliberately planned extermination not only of 6 million of Jews, but hundreds of thousands of others - gypsies, Slavs, Jehovah Witnesses, homosexuals, etc. Europe with its self-proclaimed highest civilization became the theatre of abject barbarism. These are the facts that cannot be denied, but has the average historian probed into their hidden causes?

After the holocaust of two world wars there was a wish to start a new order where justice, fair dealings, good-will among human beings would prevail and the horrors perpetrated would never again occur. So the *Atlantic Charter* was written.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately selfishness and greed very soon took over and the few benefits won for the masses at home soon were eroded and any good intention to help the Third World soon became swamped by the new profit making enterprises. A lop-sided world has emerged once again and three quarters of humanity is hovering on the brink of starvation. The evil seed of selfishness, greed, pride, etc. have not been expurgated but allowed to take hold of the Western world generally and exacerbated by education, the rush to more sensations, "kicks", etc by the media. The whole problem is not a question of God interfering in human affairs and meting out punishment, but one of action-reaction. The door where evil dwells is still wide open and through our own fault.

#### KARMA'S COROLLARY: REINCARNATION

Monotheistic faiths do not teach reincarnation but concentrate on the one present life wherein man makes or mars his whole eternity. For the past two millennia the subject of rebirth as part of human evolution went underground, when not directly anathematized by the Catholic Church and ridiculed by later Christian writers. It is believed that in the year 553 the doctrine was anathematized in a Church Council - Justinian having instigated a condemnation of Origen's teaching on this matter some 10 years earlier. As it is the corollary to *karma* it could have been a secret doctrine during Vedic times (see Bṛh. Up.3.2.13). Belief or disbelief in it will never affect the fact that it is part of the great wave of outgoing and ingoing life of the cycles of objective and subjective existence.

The simple image of the tree might clarify the underlying issue, the tree which could be called the tree of Life as well as of Knowledge and Wisdom. Each spring the little leaves reappear, similar to the previous years, yet not the same, and perhaps also subject to worse tempests than before. The leaves represent our little persons fed by the sap that feeds the branches and rises from the trunk rooted in the soil, the source of nurture, or as in the case of the Vedic Tree of Life, in the heavens. When the sap withdraws, the leaves wither and fall; the little egos that we so cherished, disappear and the sap withdraws partially down the trunk. In due time, in accordance with the grand rhythm of cyclic time, the sap runs up the branches and puts forth another array of leaves, another little ego, similar to the previous one and yet not the same, perhaps an improvement. The soul emits a ray which attracts magnetically those atoms that had previously built its vehicles. This depicts the usually more or less automatic living of average humanity with little deep thinking or initiative to change. The analogy, as with all analogies, cannot be carried too far; for in the human being there exist a mind and a little

will guided by a soul that in time will initiate change, development, leading to transformation into a more highly evolved being; for *direction* and *purpose* towards achievement, *love* and *choice*, finally arise in the more mature individuals to play their crucial part, and open up unforeseen horizons. The wheel of births and deaths is not an endless process, the wise ones know how to stop it.

Some religions, like Bahá'ism, imply that there are further possibilities for progress beyond death. To this the *esoteric doctrine* answers that the terrestrial or objective level of experience is, for humanity at the present time, the plane of originating causes; we set causes into activity on the objective level which will have to be reaped as effects on the objective level; whilst the state beyond death is the purely subjective state wherein we reap the benefit of subjective states of bliss or their opposite created by our subjective thoughts, feelings and aspirations. What ties we forge for ourselves, for better or worse, have to be untied, or strengthened, on the same plane on which they were forged. This is an aspect of the law of action and reaction usually ignored. Earthly life is a state which provides for a host of particular soul-sparks the requisite field of experience, experiment and expansion of consciousness in accordance with the law of cycles, the outgoing and ingoing breathing of life. The deeper the descent into material levels of existence the greater the mastery eventually attained, the greater the perfection. This is the mighty task to which the human spirit has been called and to which it has acquiesced. None of the monotheistic religions explains this to any degree, but all recognize the importance of humanity in the universal scheme of life, and all give hope of bliss in some paradise or state of higher consciousness to their followers.

Here it is that we glimpse a wider standpoint that involves *the concerns of spirit*, taking in its perspective a much vaster compass than that offered by orthodox religions, defined in *The Secret Doctrine*. According to the *wisdom tradition* preserved in its broad outlines in the Hindu and Buddhist sacred books, the cosmos has a dual "tide", or cyclic process of *outgoing* and *ingoing* movement, called *pravṛtti* and *nivṛtti* in Hinduism, the *breathing out* of the universe with all its starry galaxies and creatures - the immersion of the spiritual essence into denser levels of matter; and its *breathing in*, - the return to the ONE SOURCE; these, among the Buddhists, were called *vivartakalpa* or ages of rolling outwards, and *saṃvartakalpa* or ages of rolling up or back; in modern terms, cycles of involution and evolution. This implies that what is considered good or to be sought after, in the outgoing period or descent into material conditions, involves the development of potentialities through the experience of every possible form of activity, hence of matter; but on the way of return, values necessarily change, experience has been gathered which is no longer needed, e.g. what is fine and necessary for youth is not so for adulthood and old age. In the wider compass, spirit's main concerns then center on bringing back to the Source, matured and wiser through the accumulated experience, all the fragmented expressions of Life that were launched on the playground of cosmos.

In the human field this means the abandoning of limitations which had served to condition us according to race, nation, sex, social custom, etc. and separate us into specific groups, all of which makes for separatism, which in humanity's infancy was necessary, but is now superseded by the drive towards the Centre of wholeness; much in the same way as the child is first confined by its cradle, its little park, its room, its house, its city, and then the wider world, but in order to be able to cope with this wider world he has to grow, learn, experience, understand, etc. Real spiritual development implies that competition, rivalry and the like must give way to cooperation and sharing in all domains of human activity; to good-will among all social strata - the human expression of the Divine WILL-TO-GOOD; to harmlessness towards all life, hence togetherness and care for all life, instead of destruction; to service given spontaneously; to self-oblivion for the good of all; all the qualities and attitudes recognized as spiritual are to come to the fore of human kind, thereby bringing all humans to the harmony of the great principle of LOVE, to the realization of the sacredness of LIFE.

In this far reaching context, the concerns of spirit have little to do with whether a particular holy individual was the "only begotten son of God", but rather that his teachings should be assimilated and acted upon, viz., that all human beings are expressions of the Divine Flame (the Father in heaven) that animates them, some more advanced in their understanding and living, others more retarded and in dire need of help; little to do with whether another holy human being was the "seal of the prophets" but rather that humanity in its forward march has never been and *will never* be left without help from its elder brothers whose duty it is to help, and in this they never fail, however little we may realise this.

One main question pertaining to this doctrine of repeated births is: who reincarnates?<sup>26</sup> Not the puny self to which we are so attached; but the soul principle, *psyche* puts forth a ray of mental energy cemented by desire for further experience and eventual mastery of the lower realms of life. Each ray is coloured somewhat differently through previous experiences and quality endowment and yet is the same ray. One might say paradoxically: there is reincarnation and there is not! The ego is different, the colouring is different, psyche has developed further, is learning to control its little ego and repair wrong doings, is progressing towards greater conscious awareness, towards full unfoldment and better expression. Psyche itself, after its age long pilgrimage will eventually achieve fusion with its master *Spirit* and the earthly *rounds* will have attained their purpose and come to an end. Such is the esoteric doctrine.

Buddhism explains the mechanism of the five constituent elements or groups of attributes (*skandhas* from *skand* to rise) responsible for the development of the ego or during life. In the after death state, these *skandhas*, having no proper field in which to be activated, await in a dormant state for their cycle of objective activity to come back. They are generally listed as *rūpa*, form or physical tendencies; *vedanā*, feeling, sensation; *sanjñā*, perception or knowledge; *saṃskāra*, mental impressions, *vijñāna*, discernment. Esoteric philosophy counts two more concerned with subjective existence. These *skandhas*, not having as yet exhausted their momentum, give rise during life to another set of *skandhas*, neither entirely the same nor completely different. Differences are due to the various experiences gained, and changes undergone, new conditions, new reactions. This goes on until the human being awakens to the fact that a) he can change his mind to align his own little will to the greater Will that works throughout the cosmos, of which he becomes aware; that b) he can destroy all selfish attachments that bound him securely to the wheel of life and death; c) that he can get out of the chain of causation, or remain in it for the sake of helping humanity.

Scholars have denied the existence of the doctrine of reincarnation in the Ṛgveda. The examples brought forward by A.B. Keith in his *Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanishads* for critical survey, are not at all to the point and not worth discussing here. The only example in the Ṛgveda which does seem to refer to it has been ignored except for Dr Werner in his "The Vedic concept of human personality and its destiny". My translation of the verse in question runs thus: addressing Savitr, the solar Presence, the poet admits:

"First thou hast bestowed upon the worthy gods the loftiest share: immortality. Then for men, as their share, thou openest out successive existences." (*anūcīnā jīvitā*. Ṛg.V.54.2)

In the *Gospels*, Christ makes quite a number of references to karma and reincarnation usually disregarded. Sometimes these examples point out that another interpretation besides the usual is possible. Thus, one passage concerns the "Galileans whose blood Pilate had shed in the midst of their sacrifices" (Luke 13.1). Commenting on the disciples' remarks on this, Jesus said:

"Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." (Luke 13.2-3)

The implication is that calamity is not necessarily brought about to some because they have sinned more than others (which seems to be the disciples' thought). Christ indicates that we all have the wrong outlook on life and thus the wrong reaction which will sooner or later bring us into misfortune. To change one's attitude, to transform one's self in this very life where the awakening takes place, is the core of the teaching of Christ in his parables. Only by being "reborn" from within, i.e. by an inner transformation, a change of heart, (*metanoia*) can man start to fulfill his high destiny and find the kingdom of heaven "within you". This can be done here and now, in spite of all karmas and reincarnations. Christ's particular remark to Nicodemus "thou must be born again" which the latter, unable to understand, thought in terms of immediate physical birth in his mother's womb, referred to that inner transformation equivalent to a new birth which alone can operate the right transmutation. Notice that the change of heart concerns *kāma-manas*, the transforming agent in the human being at this present time. Once this is set into action, psyche can then start influencing the little ego.

From the disciples' questions scattered throughout the Gospels, and indeed from Christ's own question to them, it may seem that reincarnation was *taken for granted*. Thus, Christ asked: "Whom do men say that I, the son of man, am?" (Math.16.13) The disciples answer: "some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets". Christ himself tells his disciples who was John the Baptist in the past:

"But I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him

whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John of Baptist." (Math.17:12-13)  
and earlier the same is clearly stated by Christ:

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And *if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come*. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." (Math.11:13-15)

These are unequivocal references to reincarnation, but they are disregarded. Several more references may be found in the *New Testament*, implying reincarnation, one notably of importance since it concerns sin and its punishment. The disciples asked Christ about a man *born blind*: "Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:2-3) - how could a man sin before he was born? The apostles are not asking what kind of sin brought this result, but who sinned, the man or his parents? implying both the Jewish law that the sins of parents are visited upon the children, and that the soul pre-exists and pays for past transgressions. Christ's answer in this particular case goes far beyond this all:

"Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." (John 9:3)

Thus the calamities that befall humans should not always necessarily be laid at the door of karma. The works of God may refer to Christ's healing ministry, but there may be a deeper significance concerned with the mystery of suffering on our planet. Whatever inner meaning Christ may have assigned to this episode, the story may also teach that the blind man, in his approach to the Divine (in this case Christ), in his recognition and full acceptance of a Divine Will and ministering, was able to start the process of *metanoia*, complete change of heart and mind which is what is demanded on the path of return, not imposed by any outer authority, but called forth from within the man. This change leads to true insight and cooperation with the soul's behest, hence the removal of that mental blindness which affects humanity at large. Such may be called the "works of God", or of the illumined soul. The Pharisees in the story, saw only the breaking of the law of sabbath, or wondered how a "sinner" could work a miracle. It is the ex-blind man who teaches them a lesson - which they fail to take.

#### DIVINE WILL AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Much has been debated in the monotheistic faiths concerning the Divine Will. That a Divine Will underlies the whole of manifestation is common to all religions, each in its own way acknowledging and interpreting this from its specific standpoint. We know very little about the Divine Will except by inference from the Cosmic Order, the natural order with its fine *balance*, and the soul's deepest aspirations and spontaneous service of others. Monotheism emphasizes the divine will, inscrutable and overriding all; monism the divine law, the process of unfolding towards greater harmony of all aspects, to which all are subject; the common background is the divine FIAT, *let it be*, and it was. But how to reconcile a divine will with the problem of evil that so cripples the human mind and with an all perfect, all knowing, beneficent, omnipresent Deity?

This problem is not acute in monism. *Sanātana Dharma*, the real name of the Hindus' religion, set man in the framework of a Cosmic Order whose vast conception, as discussed in previous chapters and in my book *The Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas*, goes back to the ancient *ṛsis* who visioned *ṛta* in its wide compass as the established world order; later to fade as a whole from human ken, to be differentiated into its two important facets, both pertaining to humanity: karma, the law of action and reaction, and *dharma* implying law-righteousness-duty-religion (what binds back to God). This supreme vision of cosmic order was also shared by the Zoroastrians in their *Asa*, by the Egyptians in their *Maat* and to some extent by the Greeks in their *Themis*.

In the case of monism, underlying all basic oppositions and dualities is the fact that every manifestation implies a division of the ONE source into two complementary forces, positive-negative, centrifugal-centripetal, and their interaction. Hence manifestation is conceived as a limitation of the Infinite into an infinite number of finite expressions. Dualism and separation intervene at every step, resulting in the multitudes of fragments, each one striving to achieve its own wholeness separately, a mirror on its own scale, of the original wholeness. The friction created through differentiation causes further differentiation or splitting off towards further unfoldment of potentialities, hence further limitation. Neither of these polarities is evil in itself, nor is limitation evil. Only when the human mental element steps in and deliberately uses separation to further its

own selfish aims regardless of others, or decrees that its limited conception or perception is supreme and forces others to submit to it, evil appears. In emphasizing self at the expense of others man sows the seeds of evil.

At the very outset of the Cosmic Order, as viewed by the human mind, at the atomic level and beyond it, a divine will is imprinted as a *fiat* of what the thing is to be, how it is to grow, develop, thereby giving it its stamp. There is a harmony between the innermost core of any thing in nature and its outer covering. The acorn can only produce an oak, the lily seed a lily, the human embryo only a human being. From that stamp which is both its directive and its divine imprint, the seed cannot deviate, unless there be wrong human interference. It is interesting here to note what H.P.B. revealed of the esoteric teaching in *The Secret Doctrine*; quoting from a work on *Occult Embryology*, bk.1 she writes:

"When the seed of the animal man is cast into the soil of the animal woman, that seed cannot germinate unless it has been fructified by the five virtues (the fluid of, or the emanation from, the principles) of the sixfold Heavenly Man. Wherefore the Microcosm is represented as a Pentagon, within the Hexagon Star, the Macrocosm.' Then 'The functions of *Jīva* on this Earth are of a fivefold character ... in man alone the *Jīva* is complete. As to his seventh principle, it is but one of the beams of the Universal Sun ..."

(S.D.I.

p.224)

We know that to temper with Nature always brings a backlash of difficulties, disorder, if not disaster. The myriads of forms in which life is enshrined are thus conditioned by what is seen as the divine will which imposes limitations, restrictions, adaptations, in order to foster growth, maturity, etc. Forms constantly adapt to outer conditions, to needs and purposes, and can even in certain cases change their appearance. This adaptation and balance manifest at all levels and from these the laws of Nature are deduced, which laws are not only expressive of an intelligence or collective intelligences guiding creation but also of a hidden *all driving will* at work within it. The ṛṣis summed up this vast cosmic order in several verses, quoted in the course of this study, of which three stanzas may serve again as examples:

"Firmly fixed are the foundations of Cosmic Order,  
shining in beauty, manifold are its beauteous forms." (Ṛgv.IV.23.9ab)

"Vast truth, stern Order, consecration, contemplative-exertion, prayer,  
sacrificial offering, these uphold the earth."(Athv.XII.1.1)

"One-minded, one-intentioned, the shining-ones move unerringly  
together to the one purposeful accomplishment." (Ṛgv.VI.9.5cd)

In this universal recognition of the Law, that underlying order to which action and reaction are inherent, bringing back to the centre, to the harmony of the whole, the straying element, the *Law* is equivalent to the *Divine Will*: the religions meet. But in the monotheistic faiths this vision of wholeness somewhat loses its cosmic quality to yield to the conception of the all sovereign Will of an anthropomorphic God who knows all, wills all, leads all, distributes his favours to some and not to others, and thereby, in the last analysis is responsible for all, good and bad. This is typified in the Old Testament Jehovah who leads his people into the promised land, makes a covenant with them, but does not hesitate to order them to massacre the inhabitants of the land conquered; in Islam as Allah who orders all things<sup>27</sup>, and to a slightly less extent in the Christian God. In these three faiths human life is given a unique value. For Islam, the value of individuality is stressed as "God's accomplishment in man" which raises man above all creatures. In Judaism, a Psalm of David asks:

"What is man that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou  
visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and  
hast crowned him with glory and honour?" etc. (Ps.8. 4-5)

In Christianity a similar thought is found in Christ's words:

"...if God so clothe the grass of the fields which today is and tomorrow  
is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little  
faith. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Math.10:28-31)

Beneath the surface of the problem of good and evil traced to a common source, the One God, lies a profound, powerful archetypal scintillation which embraces all and thus holds in unison paradoxical, contradictory aspects. Some of these manifested in ancient days in the idea of the Great Mother with her apparent terrible aspect of devouring her children back to herself. Mythology gives many other examples of

this facet of cosmos which humans find awful, but which is only a return to the source of all the separated fragments. It is evident that this deeply seated archetypal vision of wholeness inclusive of all opposites was disturbed around three or four millennia ago when the rational mind, with its neat categories of opposites, began to usurp predominance over the intuitive insight of psyche, and to introduce its conception of an anthropomorphic God made in the image of man, hence finite. This has ruled the Semitic and Western world ever since. The problem of evil cannot be solved by pushing it back on an all powerful, all willing, beneficent anthropomorphic God. Yet the idea of God creating evil is practically the answer given to the origin of evil - overtly by Judaism in the Prophets' books or tacitly by Christianity and Islam.

Contradictory traits have to be admitted in the all-powerful God of justice, righteousness, mercy and beneficence, the Father who takes care of his creatures but equally orders the massacre of his creatures or sends numberless souls to hell for minimal transgressions (e.g. not going to mass on Sundays!) The Judaic God of the Old Testament declares:

"I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me ...

I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil:

I the Lord do all these things." (Isaiah 45:5, 7)

"... Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos.3.6. cf. Ezekiel.9:5-6)

In *Lamentations* the question is put clearly:

"Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?" (Lam.3.38)

There is no hesitation on the part of this God, Jehovah, to give the order, because of a great iniquity, to go and

"...let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity; slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little

children, and women; but come not near any man upon whom is the mark... Defile the house, and fill

the courts with the slain; go ye forth. And they went forth and slew in the city..." (Ez.9.5-7)

orders which arouse grave suspicion that this Almighty God seems rather made in the image of cruel, vengeful tribal man, than a righteous divinity. There can be no solution to the problem of evil in monotheism, so long as God is made in the image of man, a projection of the human mind. This is not realised.

#### ZOROASTRIANISM AND DUALISM: GOOD AND EVIL

The splitting up of the original undifferentiated archetypal vision of the divine Source into the pitting against each other of two mighty Forces, Good and Bad, Truth and the Lie, which must have been inevitable at one stage of human development, appears in Zoroastrianism long after its foundation but did not last long. The seed of that dualism which was to prevail in the minds of orthodox believers for a little time, is found in the Gathas where the Wise Lord, Ahura Mazda stands against the Evil One, or the Lie. The "Holy Spirit" (Yasna 47.3) is called the Son of Ahura Mazda, the "Evil Spirit" stated to be his twin, Ahura Mazda seemingly standing beyond both; a concretising and personalising of the polarities. Zoroaster himself does not appear to have referred to the origin of the Evil Spirit; both spirits, evil and good, are already divided.

According to R.C. Zaehner in his article on "Zoroastrianism"

"...when Zoroastrianism became the official religion of the second great Persian (Sassanian) Empire, we find two forms of Zoroastrianism existing side by side, the one nearly dualist in that it makes the principle of evil independent of Ahura Mazda and co-eternal with him, and the other tentatively monotheistic in that it raises Infinite Time to the status of the mysterious origin of all things from which the twin principles of good and evil severally proceed. Neither of the systems, perhaps, represented the authentic teaching of the Prophet." (*Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faith*, 1979. p.201)

Tavaria, in his *A Manual of Khshnoom* and Chiniwalla, in his *Essential Origins of Zoroastrianism* maintain that the "Eternal enemy", (Druj and Ahriman) is not eternal as pointed out in Bd.1:2 where it is stated: "the creation of Ahriman will terminate when (the) totality of souls will attain *tane-pasin*, final body. That also is the Boundless Time'."<sup>28</sup>

To his question, what did the Prophet understand by good and evil, Zaehner answers:

"... he understood as 'good' that which his God revealed to him - a new religion which recognised no god but Ahura Mazda - and as 'evil' the old national religion which recognised a plurality of gods ..."

(*ibid.*p.201)

Although it is true that every monotheistic religion began by casting the stone on other modes of belief, each standing on his own version of "truth" irrespective of the relativity of every standpoint, the great prophet was more concerned with opening human eyes to the *Spirit of Truth* as he saw It, than with proselytising. Zoroaster did not completely dethrone the other "wise lords" as the following Yasna proves: "Truth is to be invoked, and the Wise One and the (other) lords (ahuras)" (Yasna 31.4). It is evident that Zoroaster had his own peculiar view of Deity which he thought it good to share with others for their own benefit. For Zaehner "Truth and the Lie, righteousness and wickedness, good and evil, and the choice that all must make between the two - always we come back to this. God himself as well as his 'Most Holy Spirit' must make this choice; and here we come to the all-important question of Zoroaster's dualism." (op.cit. p.203)

Here the human mind has wandered very far from the *Nirguṇa Brahman* of the Hindu, or the *Ain Soph* of the Kabbalist, or the That of the R̥gveda, or the *Void* of the Buddhist, to the point of making God choose, a purely anthropomorphic trait, which step Zoroaster perhaps never took, but only Zaehner in his mind did, fascinated as he was with this problem of good and evil which is purely human. Zaehner admits that

"Zoroaster, the founder of 'Zoroastrianism' which is generally regarded as the classic example of dualist religion, was not himself a dualist ... It is implied, though never explicitly stated, that the Evil Spirit derives from God; but this Spirit is evil by choice and was not created evil. As in Christianity it is God's gift of free will and the misuse of it by creatures that brings evil into the world." (ibid. p.204, 205)

The controversy as to the dualistic stand of Zoroastrianism did go on for some time, especially with the later seeming identification of the Holy Spirit with Ahura Mazda which made the latter twin to the Evil Spirit. During the revival of Zoroastrianism in the Sassanian Empire (226-652 A.D.) the dualistic position of God and Devil as co-eternal principles was adopted by the orthodox, a dualism which could not endure for long but is now disavowed. Dualism was only a phase of the religion that made it in opposition to its original source. For this reason it is erroneous to call it a classic example of dualism.

India also around three millennia or more ago had its *anthropomorphic* version of divine munificence, as given to us in the Bhagavad Gītā, with a similar view of the opposites as present in the one Deity, here Kṛṣṇa, an incarnation of Viṣṇu. Thus Kṛṣṇa says:

"I am the gambling of the cheat, and the splendour of splendid things I;  
I am victory, I am determination, and the truth of the truthful I.  
And whatsoever is the seed of all beings, that am I, O Arjuna ;  
nor is there aught, moving or unmoving, that may exist bereft of Me." (Bhg. Gītā 10:36,39)

The emphasis here on evil is not as dire as in Isaiah (45.5-7) previously quoted. Separatism, as of the polarities, finally leads to distortion of what was whole; the fragment ceases to reflect the whole in immature humans; distortion of natural laws, whether physically or psychologically, leads to all the evil man suffers, plus such morally arrogant usurpation of a non-existent superiority leading to cruelty, etc. which mars human history.

"Whatsoever is glorious, good, beautiful, and mighty, understand  
thou that to go forth from a fragment of my splendour.  
... Having pervaded this whole universe with one fragment  
of Myself, I remain." (Bhg. Gītā 10:41,42)

This is really the doctrine of *ātman* and *puruṣa* as pervading all, yet beyond all, and is compatible with the Muslim conception of Allah.

#### HUMAN FREE WILL

For Christianity man was created in the image of God, but through his original disobedience to God's decree and therefore to his *will*, man lost, or greatly reduced his own godly image. This is not the result of God's will but of man's choice for he was given the capacity to choose and thereby to act contrary to the Divine Will, even if it meant self-destruction. The Lord's Prayer given by Christ to his apostles, shows that the divine Will is not done on earth, that humans have to strive towards *doing* the divine Will - as much of it as



humans can recognize. In that same prayer (King James and New World English translation, also French Ostervald version) is the plea: "and lead us not into temptation". Does God lead his devotee into temptation? The tempter is considered the devil, the opposite of God, but in the prayer, it seems to be God himself - in which case there is no need of the devil - the devil and God are one, or as H.P.B. put it, *Demon est Deus inversus!* Does God send us temptations to test us, as Christ was tempted, in which case why ask that they should not come our way?

Christianity leaves man room for freedom of choice, in contrast to Islam, but insists that man, although "independent and unique", is yet always "dependent upon God for his freedom and individuality". This could well be translated in karmic terms - although man has a certain amount of choice, he is bound for his action by past karma, hence *past conditioning*, which may not make him completely free to act. P. Ashby remarks:

"Human society and individual man are doomed to frustration and self-defeat unless the relationship between the human and the Divine which gives man and his society meaning is re-established through the agency of Christ." (op.cit.p.128)

The last part of this quote could be translated in esoteric terms thus: unless the relationship is re-established through the agency of man's inner divine spark, the ātman (of the Upaniṣads equivalent to the Christ within).

Islam insists on the all sovereign *Will* of Allah from which *Will* nothing escapes since it rules all. This implies man's total dependence on his Creator, takes away a great deal of human initiative and ascribes to man an extremely limited power of choice which leaves far more room for a fatalistic attitude to events than Hinduism or Buddhism or Christianity do. But Muslims do admit the human responsibility to some degree; they would agree with the Christian tenet "God helps those who help themselves"; so Mohammed, as the story goes, enjoined upon his follower to tie up the camel first, and then God would look after it! Man is held responsible for his deeds and misdeeds and has to pay the penalty of wrong doing, or "offending God" for he knows what is wrong and what is right. So the Muslims declare

"Whoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his own responsibility." (K.4:11)

"Everyman's action have we hung around his neck and on the last day shall be laid before him a wide-open Book." (K.17:13)

The Ṛgveda in the same vein stressed:

"Retribution dogs the wrong doings of men" (VII.61.5cd)

"Sinners are false and untruthful, they dig their own deep ditch" (IV.5.cd)

"Evil-doers do not cross the pathway of the Law" (IX.73.6d)

For Islam, Allah, explains P. Ashby,

"... places responsibility for all events or decisions upon those men who participate in them though the initiatory action and the inevitable consequence are determined and known to Allah.

What man wills is caused by the Divine and is known by the Divine before it is cognitively present in man." (op.cit. p.130)

For the Muslims, what appears evil to men may not be so from the Divine perspective, for man cannot judge properly. This is fully granted, yet certain questions are left unanswered. Evil, strictly speaking is a moral wrong characteristic of human beings, causing harm (or offense) to sentient beings, or ravage to nature (the latter is never considered as such). It does not pertain to the natural order. Because of his self-centredness man considers natural catastrophes involving loss of human life as "evil" but not so when they do not affect him. In the social order, are the direst crimes committed by men against, e.g. little children as nowadays, or cruelty such as torturing one's fellowmen or animals, in accordance with Allah's will? Are not such crimes completely against the very laws of ethics given by God in all religions and does not the Koran admit: "whoever gets to himself a sin, gets it solely on his own responsibility". (K.4.11) To refer to the divine perspective in certain contexts may just mean, in the last analysis, admitting human defeat in understanding a divine Will behind everything, including atrocities. In the case of impersonal *karma* all actions are referred back to man, he is the sole doer, the sole responsible and the sole recipient of the law of action-reaction. The whole problem in monotheistic religions revolves around: is man's choice of an evil path ultimately willed by God? Is predestiny, in so far as humans are concerned, an aspect of the Divine Will which necessarily leaves man bound? Whatever the views and their outcome or conclusions, all religions are concerned with this problem, but whether they can solve it is very much open to doubt.

P. Ashby summed up the Muslim and Christian position thus:

"For the Muslim, man cannot stand in opposition to God because no action is possible without divine support. For the Christian, man can stand in opposition to God even though in so doing he is defeating himself." (op.cit.p.132)

The consequence of these two positions is similar: man cannot err too far away from God without retribution. Similarly Karma brings back all straying human elements back to the cosmic order. The devas, in the R̥gveda, are examples of those intelligences who in the past ages took up their stand on the side of the Order and are now

"Law abiding, born in Law, sublime fosterers of Law, haters of falsehood" (VII.66.13ab)

"herdsmen of the Supreme-Law, whose decrees are Truth." (V.63.1ab)

The Islamic and Christian conception of human freedom of choice - or lack of it - meet in the underlying one concern: how to reconcile man's uniqueness, which both religions advocate, with a Divine Will that overrides all and to which man in the final analysis is subservient. The story of Jesus Christ is here very instructive. Portrayed as a perfect being sent by his "Father", the Deity, to accomplish the mission of opening humanity's eyes to a higher order, that of love, hence of harmony and good-will among men, Jesus is shown in the Garden of Gethsemane, as struggling to align his own will to the Divine Will in order to act in accordance with It; not an easy task, even for him. But the orthodox Church has emphasized the physical and moral suffering, failing to recognize the very much higher plane on which Christ was moving: the fusing of the human soul with the divine Spirit, of the *soul will* with the *Divine Will* of the Inner Monitor, the ātman. Faced with the tremendous Call of the Divine Will surging from his own depths, with the glimpse into Deity's purpose for humanity and man's destined participation in it, and the part he himself was called upon to play if he so agreed, he found some difficulty in fully aligning his human will with the Divine Will: "Father... not my will but Thine be done" (Luke 22.42). In these simple words the whole process of human evolution with its final apotheosis is enshrined. Deity's purpose is a human term which embraces the WILL-TO-GOOD, cryptically described by St Paul thus

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose." (Romans 8:28)

God's purpose and the Cosmic Order, the harmony of the spheres, of Nature and of human relationships are all basically one, but only the human element has not achieved this purpose as yet.

This whole aspect of free will and determination brings to the fore the question of *predestination*<sup>29</sup> which monotheism never solved. Man is necessarily conditioned from his birth by race, sex, heredity, society, class, hence what kind of education, work, etc. which conditioning will necessarily influence his choices in life. Since these are also consequential on his karma - if one accepts this doctrine - then the human being is the result of a long concatenation of conditions - cause and effect- which started in the past, brought about by his own actions, but leaving their mark in the present and seriously limiting his freedom of choice now. The Hindu way takes in a far deeper and broader compass than just to lay the problem on an anthropomorphic God's Will.

## BUDDHISM AND BAHAIISM

Among all the known religions, the most pragmatic approach to the problem of evil and the simplest, was on the one hand, stressed by the Lord Buddha; on the other hand, Bahaiism gave humanity a new, vital and workable vision of social order which could help it in taking the next step to harmonization among humans.

Gautama was not really founding a new religion but laying down certain principles to follow a certain pathway to liberation for those capable of undertaking it, a path that would appeal to suffering humanity. The Buddha isolated the fundamental fact of human nature and its plight through logical reasoning. Thus *desire* propelled human development on the lower levels, but when unchecked, impeded spiritual progress. Such desire should be starved to free the human capacity to soar to those subtler realms where suffering does not exist.

"One thing I teach, suffering and the end of suffering" he claimed. His analysis of the cause of life's suffering as *tr̥ṣṇa*, *thirst* for self gratification, plus the separative selfish drive that removes all obstacles on its way regardless of others, which originally caused man's drive towards more and more experience resulting in

his involvement into lower levels of experience and thus his "fall", throws some light on the meaning of the Biblical myth of the fall of man and the eating from the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Here in Buddhism, in a religion that originally was *unique* among the world religions in that it had no outer authority, no theology, no ritual, no cosmology, no tradition, no God in the accepted monotheistic sense, we are given an answer to that problem that is so vitally related to the very core of the monotheistic faiths, namely the Christian dogma of the fall and redemption of man. Totally different in approach, idea and expression, Judaism and Christianity state the problem in a particular dramatic way, firmly rooting it on an historic basis which to them is unshakable; the other, the Buddhist, points to selfish desire as the very cause of that fall from a higher spiritual estate, and explains what are the means of liberation. When desire leads to selfishness it brings in its train evil and more and more thirst for so-called self-fulfilment in an unending vicious circle of more sensations, more pleasures, etc. Only the transmutation of desire, of self, expressed as love and service by Christ himself, exemplified in his very life, in his healing ministry and such symbolic acts as washing the feet of his disciples, puts an end to this suffering, whether inflicted upon others or upon one's self.

Another religion, Bahá'ism has arisen also with a pragmatic approach suitable to our modern times; for the spiritual guidance given to humanity throughout the ages has not stopped inspite of our sceptical, over rational, over critical and over material attitude. Trends in the deeper probing of human nature and its values as mirrored in the social order, and deeper studies of the human psyche have highlighted specific problems which now demand solution. A response to this need for a religious foundation towards a new social order without the paralyzing authority of priestcraft, is found in Bahá'ism, a recently emergent religion started in Persia in the second half of the 19th century under the inspiration of the Bab and continued under his disciple Baha'u'llah.<sup>30</sup> Little notice was given to Bahá'ism in 20th century histories of religions such as e.g. Zaehner's *Concise Encyclopedia of Living Faiths*, and T. Ling's *History of Religion East and West*, although documentation was already available and some books had been translated.

There are in Bahá'ism, in accordance with the esoteric tradition, two essential and novel emphases, which in their appeal, include the whole of humanity. For the first time in history Baha'u'llah acknowledged fully the work of all previous "messengers" of God who have been sent throughout the ages to "leaven" the human race, help it to take a further step in the ascent to spirituality, and strike the keynote of a new dispensation - a fact unheeded by Western historians of religions, but which, when viewed as a whole marks out a plan in the unfolding of human consciousness. Whatever message these "Manifestations" have given to humanity, "whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God and are a reflection of his Will and Purpose", Baha'u'llah wrote in the tablet of *Madinatu't-Tawhid*, The City of Unity<sup>31</sup>. These are clear words that embrace all messengers and their revelation, and there is no envisaging of an end to these divine emissaries, contrary to the Islamic claim that Mohammed is the seal of the prophets, thereby limiting divine action.

Religions have always stressed the development of qualities, duties and ethics, thus *dharmā* for Hinduism, *compassion* for Buddhism, *love* for Christianity, *mercy and charity* for Islam, these being stepping stones toward the unfolding of human consciousness to human solidarity and the oneness of Divinity. Other aspects also need developing. Baha'u'llah divides each revelation, whether past or present, into two specific aspects:

1) the spiritual, universal and eternal; 2) the human social order, therefore relative to time and racial factors. Here we note that certain improvements have been made, that understanding is being developed and changes in social outlook brought about. Thus the abolition of slavery which took some 2000 years or more to be accepted, yet still prevails in some quarters - unofficially. Baha'u'llah had a realistic social vision which could, in due course of time and once the present craze for materialistic satisfaction has run out, influence on a much wider scale the better minded among human beings. He envisaged a new order in which human society struck a balance between the spiritual and the material, its foundation being based on moral laws and its apex being Deity. He worked his social order in minutest details which are all appropriate to our times.<sup>32</sup>

The new world order was thus outlined so that whatever powers man may be acquiring which all too often he uses for selfish ends and destructive purposes, can be channelled into creative, wholesome activities that are helpful and uplifting for humanity and far above the present materialistic aims promulgated by Western propaganda. In his *Kitab-i-igāre*, the *Book of Certitude* Baha'u'llah outlines the "*Grand Redemptive Scheme of God*". His social order has no clergy but is governed by the so-called Houses of Justice or spiritual

Assemblies constituted of local councils of 9 members annually elected who administer the community. Everyone being equal, all have the right of vote, hence of voice and of being elected. There is no room for individual power or prerogative over any one else, there are no privileges, only the satisfaction of accomplished task. This may sound utopic, but all depends upon the full commitment and faith of each member. Religious practice means prayer, meditation and action the corner-stone on which the social edifice is built, action meaning basically service. Co-operation, not competition is enjoined upon the faithful, and the restoring to individual worth of the belittled, the downtrodden, the needy whom one serves. Service is the fruit of prayer and meditation.

Service was indeed the example and the imprint left by Christ, little understood and only practised by the few. The ideal of service has taken some 2000 years to sink into the human mind at large and only recently have great movements been formed to help to heal, to uplift human beings irrespective of their race or creed, even to care for the welfare of animals and plants, in short for the whole planet. This call to service in Bahá'ism is the golden thread in the labyrinth of life. True service, rendered not because one feels uncomfortable at the sight of human distress, but spontaneously as a soul urge, is characteristic of the soul, not of the personality. "No man liveth unto himself" indeed, but all are dependent upon one another and all form a whole with the whole planet. Slowly humanity is learning its lessons and this new religion, labeled *syncretistic* in Trevor Ling's *History of Religion East and West*, calls all human beings to service of our fellow humans, to living from the very depths of our souls.

#### THE HUMAN PLIGHT AND THE HUMAN HOPE

In the search for reality, for truth, the mythologies of the ancient world assume unprecedented importance as a repository of humanistic basic insights and "cosmic sentience", hence its being found at the basis of most religions. Behind each great myth lies a mirror of the human psyche at work, searching, struggling, projecting outwardly in a more or less dramatic form its own conflicts and wonders, describing, enthralling, but always seeking to understand. Myths, legends, parables, allegories, when not entirely referring to cosmic creation, were mostly concerned with the human plight and the human hope.

Thus the Biblical Myth of the Fall of Man and its consequences as told in *Genesis* - scoffed at by 19th century rationalists who saw nothing in it beyond its surface meaning - embodied in a nutshell the Hebrew perspective of the human plight and its cause; the New Testament myth of the redemption of man through the sacrifice of the Son of God, was the Christian answer to the ending of this plight, plus an offer of hope for human salvation. This answer was long ago foreshadowed in the *Puruṣa* of the *Ṛgveda*, the willing sacrificial archetypal human victim with its vast cosmic implications (see ch.8) missing in the Christian presentation. To this plight, as portrayed in mythical form, the Hindu and the Buddhist thinkers gave a straight out answer: selfish desires tie down humanity to the wheel of incarnations as the Law of Karma acts inexorably until all can find their way to the Centre. In choosing to descend more and more into the limitations of matter, exemplified in the parable of the Prodigal Son, man enslaves himself to the shackles of that which now constricts him, thereby separating himself from his higher possibilities and the freedom of the Spirit.

The ten divine incarnations or *avatāras* of Viṣṇu in the *Purāṇas* are not just nursery tales, they enshrine ancient man's knowledge of the ladder of evolving life including all sensitive beings and expressive of the activity of the preserving divine principle. That which to the Hindu mind was conceived as a cosmic process to which man is bound in his descent and ascent, but out of which he has the capacity to rise to liberation by the very existence of the spiritual flame within himself, was by the Hebrew mind described as a human choice of action, a deliberate turning away from a divine command, which from the Christian viewpoint based on the Hebrew myth, needed in due course of time a direct interference of the Divine to redeem humanity. The Hebrew presentation and its Christian sequel are dramatic; the Hindu sets man as part of the vast cosmic process, the *lila* or play of the Lord, and lacks that dramatic touch. This becomes all too clear in the Hindu Myth of *The Churning of the Ocean of Milk*<sup>33</sup> which also concerns desire.

Is not the ocean of matter (milk) that is to be churned for thousands of years at the cost of so much exertion, in a peculiar sense, the equivalent of the valley of thorns and thistles that confront Adam and Eve on their expulsion from the paradise of harmony that was theirs before they asserted their choice of tasting the fruit

of knowledge of good and evil which would make them as one of the Elohim? Both the "ocean" and the "valley" offer toil and hardship as the prerequisites for any achievement and a price to be won through toiling: through the churning of the ocean, the gems and immortality; through cultivating the soil by the sweat of their brow, the fruit of knowledge and its apotheosis - mastery. Both myths have at their basis *desire* for something other than what is given, for surpassing one's natural capacity. In the Hebrew myth the tempting serpent with its bait of power and knowledge acts as the prodding desire, whereupon the tree of knowledge changes into the tree of illusion and suffering; in the Hindu tale, the bait is the nectar of immortality which the antagonists, the gods and the antigods both desire, but which is reserved only for those on the side of evolution, hence the ensuing friction and struggle. Note that the ocean contains both poison (the dregs of past evolution) and nectar, and that the poison, in some versions, comes up first to be swallowed by the destructive aspect of Deity, Śiva. Similarly, although the valley offers thorns and thistles, it also offers the possibility of knowledge leading to godly stature, but only at the price of tilling the soil of one's own nature, for that is the essence of the meaning. In man's case, the opposites at war within himself have to be resolved before he can transcend himself.

Observe the deep psychological and physiological implications of the Hebrew myth: by choosing to descend into the lower realms of matter, part of the divine fire which naturally abides in the apex of the soul is drawn downwards and transferred to the physical body, and there, tinged by impure connections, kindles desire, sex, etc. and becomes the terrene fire unleashing all ills which one by one should be surmounted. As viewed by Anna Kingsford and Edward Maitland in their *The Perfect Way*<sup>34</sup>, there occurs a *depolarisation* of the human being, the terrene fire now rules supreme in man instead of the flame divine; the soul becomes subject to the ego/body, hence its aspirations are disregarded, its intuitions scoffed at and stifled, its very being denied. This is the very picture of the intellectual elite of 20th/21st century. The underlying message stresses the human plight, self inflicted through falling into the temptation of ill-directed desire, for it is the latter that constantly drives humans and brings about the human plight.

Observe that just as in the case of the total resolution or fusion of the opposite forces in the universe there would be an end to the universe as we know it, so in the case of man, total integration would make him more than human, hence would mean an end to "man". This is why the forces of the universe are shown by the Hindus in constant friction and tension - so long as the "cycle" of present existence goes on. This aeonic theme was completely missed by H. Smith for whom India does not foresee any end to the conflict. In this respect, a hint of the constant opposition of contending forces occurs in the Christian Gospels, two of which gospels tell of the temptations of Jesus by the devil which he overcomes, after which "the devil leaveth him", but only one Gospel, that of Luke, goes further: "and when the devil had ended all the temptations he departed from him *for a season*" (Luke 4.13). Would that imply that the antagonistic forces are never completely overcome, at least in our present cycle of evolution? The question is seldom raised, but Luke's awareness took note of this .

Can we claim that the Indian myths, such as that of celestial Puruṣa's sacrifice that the many might be, and the *Churning of the Ocean of Milk* by the forces of opposite polarities in search of the nectar of immortality, have a fundamental meaning equal to the Biblical myth of the *Fall of Man* and his redemption through the death of Christ, without laying oneself open to the charge of "superficiality"? Though different in their presentation and details, one lacking the dramatic element found in the Hebrew, the other lacking the cosmic dimension found in the Hindu, they converge on the fundamental meaning of the human eternal quest to surpass his humanity.

It is obvious that the divine Son of Deity, the *ātman* of the Upaniṣads, the Christ of the Christians, the Puruṣa or Archetypal Man, dies in one sense, i.e. disappears, like Osiris in his coffin, like Jesus on the cross, but to resurrect to conquer and transmute this ocean of our being, of matter, into a true temple of the divine, for "That thou art". This is the real meaning of the Christian resurrection and ascension. It is obvious that, however differently presented in myths or parables, this is one of the messages of these tales. They point to a vision of the macrocosm and the microcosm, God and man, inextricably interlocked, both working together towards a greater purpose, the Buddhist *nirvāṇa*, the Hindu *mokṣa*, the Christian resurrection, the Muslim paradise, however differently conceived and described. Is it not possible to find a basic foundation deep down in our *psyche* irrespective of all orthodoxies? Yet as P. Ashby remarks:

"For the Eastern religions salvation or release is fundamentally an attainment; for the Western, salvation or fulfilment is the result of the gracious act of the Divine. Neither orthodox Christianity

nor orthodox Islam can give up their basic beliefs in this regard without destroying the foundations upon which they rest." (*The Conflict of Religions*. P.184)

Yet St Paul calls to us all to rise to the stature of the mystic Christ to be formed within us (Gal.4.19). It is true that once we have made all possible efforts towards opening the channel to the Divine, then the divine Grace manifests in one way or another: *attainment and divine grace fuse in illumination. Then may we "...enjoy the liberty that comes with the glory of the children of God"* (Romans.viii:24). This is the mystical realisation which reason can never thwart, what the religions should admit, casting away their preconceptions. The Ṛgveda holds out a goal wherein seven landmarks have been established by the wise for the distressed mortal to turn to and choose one of them as a pathway towards becoming "a pillar of life in the abode of the Most High" (X.5.6) like the Christian Revelation for

"him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple  
of my God and he shall go no more out..." (Rev.3.12)

In the word "overcometh" is concealed the effort required on the part of the human being. Effort will call down the divine "Grace". These similar ideas show the convergence of ancient records scattered over the planet to the same profound significance. They show that psyche's vision is cosmic, extending far beyond earthly bounds, they also show the baseless fragility of the theologians' splitting up of fundamental truths and intellectual dogmas, relating man to the cosmos in his essential nature. This relation is striking not merely in the Vedas, but peculiar to other ancient races, e.g. the Incas, the Aztecs, the Chinese, etc.

All the religions have called upon man to rise to a state of integrity which we could translate as a state of harmony between Inner Self and outer person, between human being and fellow-man, even between all humans and their environment. All the world's scriptures point to other worldly values which may be understood as involving the purpose of life - even though their paradises be materialistic. Such values are summed up for us, for instance in the Sermon on the Mount (N.T. Math.5.6), in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path of Buddhism, in ch.16 of the Bhagavad Gītā, epitomized in verse 5:

"The divine properties are deemed to be for liberation, the demoniacal for bondage."

Such values appeared long ago in those two collections of ancient hymns so misunderstood by the early Western Sanskrit scholars, as the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda:

"Instill in us a wholeness, happy mind and a good will and understanding.

Then shall we ever delight in your friendship like cows who gladly rejoice  
in meadows green. This is my joyful message." (Ṛgv.X.25.11 Panikkar's trans.) (Cf. Athv.III.39.1-4,6,7; I.31.4)

"Open yourself, create free space,  
release the bound one from his bonds!

Like a new born child, freed from the womb,  
be free to move on every path." (Athv.VI.121.4)

"We choose freedom and wholeness" exclaims the poet of Ṛgv.X.100.1. Real freedom implies a knowledge of real responsibility to be exercised in all safety for every one, and wholeness gives it the seal of true freedom. That the majority of humanity have not responded to this call through rebellion, greed, selfishness, or self-centredness, is a blight upon us which made us topple down the high meaning of LUCIFER, the Light bringer.

## CONCLUSION

Contrary to those who see only the different standpoints on which the religions take their stand and from which they will not depart, this chapter has sought to highlight their point of convergence in thought and ideal, in underlying significance, *in their mystical meaning from which derives the esoteric stand* and from which were developed the great themes and doctrines characteristic of each religion. The aim was also to see whether this core of essential meaning can be in any way related to an original revelation, a gnosis as claimed by H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine*, a claim which during her time was *a priori* unacceptable.

In the present study the conflicting claims of religions which prevent them from entering into a full dialogue based upon mutual understanding and respect, have been acknowledged. Perhaps the worst exclusivity

is centred in the Christian theological viewpoint in making Christ the be-all and end-all for all humanity. Schuon's remark is very apposite here, that orthodoxy, in this case Christianity, "instead of embracing a truth in its entirety" - such as the *ātman* or spirit as the very core of every human being, the inner access to salvation - "selects one aspect only ... and gives it an exclusive and absolute value" (op.cit.p.127): salvation only through Jesus Christ, a historic personage limited by race, time and place. Exclusivity can be no part of supreme truth for ultimately, as all mystics irrespective of their religions affiliation have discovered, all are fundamentally one, for all are rooted in the One.

The few seemingly unsurmountable blockages, could be ironed out with a little will, but for the moment it does not seem likely. P. Ashby's remark may still hold good:

"Each theory of adjustment between the conflicting religious systems of the world that is put forward in the West is a reaffirmation of the Western religious belief that ultimately religious knowledge is dependent upon God's self-revealing activity in a series of revelations culminating in a supreme revelation." (*The Conflict of Religions*. p.184)

- for Christianity Jesus Christ, for Islam the *Koran*. P. Ashby sums this trend thus:

"Ultimately" man must "find this supreme source of religious knowledge in one of the two unique self-revelations of God claimed by the two conflicting religions of the West." (ibid. p.189)

This is doubtful, especially with regard to Christianity which is seriously losing its foothold in the West. The only reconciliation lies in the mystical apprehension of fundamental oneness which Francis Thompson put forward poetically and forthrightly: "All things betray thee, who betrayest Me", the "Me" referring to the inner divine Monitor, the Christ within, or Kṛṣṇa, or Allah, etc. However, with the realisation that ultimate truth is quite beyond any belief in any exclusive presentation, such quarrels will appear futile. Only then will humanity be able to know only one religion - of the soul. One great Christian, Bede Griffiths, shows the way. In his deeply thought out *New Vision of Reality* Bede Griffiths recognised that

"...there is a universal wisdom which comes down from ancient times and which was formulated in India, China, the Arab world, and in Christianity. At the Renaissance, and particularly with the rise of modern science and philosophy, it was largely lost in the West. Only very recently have we in the West come to realise the existence of this universal wisdom and only now are we beginning to recover some of it." (op.cit. p.227)

This is the thesis of *The Secret Doctrine* put forward when such a recognition was unthinkable, unacceptable, hence immediately denied. That it is here admitted by a sincere Christian seeker of truth a century after H.P.B.'s pioneering work appeared, shows a turning point in the development of Western apprehension of certain age-old truths. B.Griffiths' book is the testimony of a modern, dedicated Christian searching through the main religions and finding that *perennial philosophy* shining through the ages, and establishing those underlying ideas basic to every religious quest. His ability to view the main religions' traditions from a holistic standpoint, to give a much deeper assessment of their significance, allowed him to admit that "every religion tends to build up a wall of separation which divides it from the rest of humanity". (p.103) Such a wall is found in dogmas more and more developed and crystallised.

"As a religion feels itself to be threatened, it clings to its old traditions and centres on itself, so that it becomes incapable of further growth or of responding to the movement of the Spirit." (p.102)

This admission opens the eyes to what happens to religions when they get crystallised in their dogmas and ignore the inner spirit that inspired their original momentum. Another of B. Griffiths's significant admissions is very much to the point:

"... Our present mode of consciousness is dualistic, but as the mystics of all religions have discerned, the ultimate reality is non-dual. This new mode of being and consciousness is the *nirvāṇa* of the Buddha, the *brahman-ātman* of the Upaniṣads, the *al haqq* of the Muslims and the kingdom of heaven of the Christian Gospel. It is here and here alone that we can find the meeting place of all religions." (p.106-7)

This is the gist of the present discussion. We have strayed far away, like the Prodigal Son, from our roots, from this central core of psyche, from which issue all higher aspirations, inspirations and endeavours, and to which these take us back. Bede Griffiths concludes that the religions offer

"... not so much a uniform as a unitive vision of reality", that this is "common to all the great traditions", (p.148)

that every religion has to undergo a transformation from within,

"... that passage to an interior religion which every religion has to undergo if it is to survive, and which is so clearly the call of religion today. From reliance on external rites and doctrines religion has to pass to the experience of God in the heart, and this movement of interiority has to be constantly renewed." (p.101-2)

This is B.Griffiths' unique testimony and his interpretation of Jeremiah's idea of a "new covenant" "which God will make with his people, when He will 'write his law in their hearts.'" (Jer.31:33).(op.cit.p.101)

The religions of humanity may and do fit together but only at the price of probing deep into their basic spiritual revelation, at the process that led to their message, and at the price of their intransigent theologians admitting to all past dogmatic errors in favour of "the spirit that giveth life."

## CHAPTER 9

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The outstanding 15<sup>th</sup> century mystic Nicolas de Cusa, in his *De pace fidei*, was perhaps the first Christian writer to attempt a dialogue between Christian, Jew, Muslim and Hindu concerning a universal religion which would overcome all religious differences; but he could not help regard the *Koran* as but an imitation of the Gospels. To rise above the climate of Christian opinion at that time was too premature and dangerous. See also P. Ashby's discussion in ch.5 of his *The Conflict of Religions* bearing upon even 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian arrogant and intransigent stand towards non Christian religions, in their belief that the religions of mankind are fulfilled by "the supreme revelation of the Divine given in Jesus Christ" (p. 175). Islam, in contrast, far from rejecting other religions gives in the *Koran* precepts for respecting them:

"Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion." (K.cix.6)

"Let there be no compulsion in religion." (K.ii.257)

Evidently fanatics who claim to follow the *Koran* disregard these precepts:

"To every one have we given a law and a way... And if God had pleased, He would have made you all one people (of one religion). But He hath done otherwise, that He might try you in that which He hath severally given unto you; wherefore press forward in good works. Unto God shall ye return, and He will tell you that concerning which ye disagree." (K.v.48)

Islam emerges as a simple, beautiful religion with its five fundamental pillars as doctrinal pointers, a religion that inculcated peace, respect for others' belief and submission to the Divine Will. That men in their narrow-minded bigotry have travestied the meaning of this religion is no fault of the *Koran*.

In her *Secret Doctrine* H.P.B. wrote those rather revolutionary words absolutely unacceptable to the intellectual elite of her time:

"The original, transcendental and philosophical conception was one. But as systems began to reflect with every age more and more the idiosyncracies of nations; and as the latter, after separation, settled into distinct groups, each evolving along its own national or tribal groove, the main idea gradually became veiled with the overgrowth of human fancy..." (S.D. I.p.424)

<sup>2</sup> For H.P.B. : "Man, unable to form one concept except in terms of empirical phenomena, is powerless from the very constitution to his being to raise the veil that shrouds the majesty of the Absolute. Only the liberated Spirit is able to faintly realize the nature of the source whence it sprang and whither it must eventually return." (S.D. I.p.51)

<sup>3</sup> In *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. wrote:

"Every human being is born with the rudiment of the inner sense called *intuition*, which may be developed into what the Scotch know as 'second sight'. All the great philosophers, who, like Plotinus, Porphyry and Iamblichus, employed this faculty, taught the doctrine. 'There is a faculty of the human mind', writes Iamblichus, 'which is superior to all which is born or begotten. Through it we are enabled to attain union with the superior intelligences, to being transported beyond the scenes of this world, and to partaking of the higher life and peculiar



powers of the heavenly ones.' (*Life of Pythagoras*. xxix. ed. Thos.Taylor.)

Were there no *inner sight* or intuition, the Jews would never have had their *Bible*, nor the Christians Jesus. What both Moses and Jesus gave to the world was the fruit of their intuition or illumination. What their subsequent elders and teachers allowed the world to understand was - dogmatic misrepresentations, too often blasphemy.

To accept the Bible as a 'revelation' and nail belief to a literal translation is worse than absurdity - it is blasphemy against the Divine majesty of the 'Unseen' ... That which supports the faith of man in God and a spiritual life to come is *intuition* ... (I.U. I.p. 434-5)

<sup>4</sup> This word *ādibuddha* is explained in the *Theosophical Glossary* as the "the First and Supreme Buddha - not recognized in the Southern Church. The Eternal Light." In S.D. I, p.43, H.P.B. explains:

"In etymology *Ādi*, and *Ādhi-Budha*, the one (or the First) and 'Supreme Wisdom' is a term used by Āryāsaṅga in his Secret treatises, and now by all the mystic Northern buddhists. It is a Sanskrit term and an appellation given by the earliest Āryans to the Unknown Deity ... It means the absolute Wisdom, and '*Ādi-bhūta*' is translated 'the primeval uncreated cause of all world'", [in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, iv.ch1].

The word *ādi-buddha* is mentioned by T.W. Rhys Davids, in *Buddhism*, 1877, p.206, but misunderstood. Thus H.P.B. corrects: "Rhys Davids says 'that in the 10<sup>th</sup> century A.D. a new being - this time infinite, self-existent and omniscient - was *invented* and called *Ādibuddha*'. Error. '*Ādibuddha*' is mentioned in the oldest Sanskrit books [in the *Maṇḍukyopaniṣad* in the dissertation by Gauḍapāda]."

See H.J. Spiereburg's *The Buddhism of H.P. Blavatsky*, p.3ff.

<sup>5</sup> A. Bailly. *The Rays and the Initiations*. p. 296.

<sup>6</sup> The threefold manifestation of Deity of the Christian view, when esoterically considered, seems a distorted reminiscence of the esoteric doctrine of the interaction of the polarities and their results the "son" or universe. Such triple manifestation of an original but concealed One Divine Unity which divides Itself into two polar yet complimentary opposites in order to manifest and unfold all potentialities, is the cosmological tenet of most ancient religions. This ancient triad of father-mother-son, influenced the Christian notion of the Trinity where originally the Holy Spirit was feminine, whose subsequent eclipse (as feminine) made the whole approach lopsided and artificial, sweeping away the supreme mother aspect of creation and nature, but to find it reappearing in the worship of the Madonna among Catholics.

This threefold aspect which is but an appearance of manifestation was totally rejected by Islam which, in offering a transcendent, infinite male Deity, yet still limits "him" by making "him" anthropomorphic. Manifestation is multiple, the non-manifest alone is ONE. In Buddhism, the Buddha refusing to speculate on cosmic metaphysics, and discarding the personal, transcendental anthropomorphic God, presented *nirvāṇa* as the goal for human beings, which could only be described in negative terms "... an unborn, a not-become, a not-made, a not-compounded ... neither a coming nor a going nor a standing still, nor a falling away nor a rising up, without fixity, without mobility, without basis ..." to the average person unintelligible, unattractive and meaningless. Hence the various transformations which Buddhism suffered after the death of its inspirer.

<sup>7</sup> *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah*. p.117-18.

<sup>8</sup> op.cit. p.319, 320.

<sup>9</sup> *The Transcendent Unity of the Religions*. p. 115.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p.27-8, fn.

<sup>11</sup> *Dhammapada*. v. 190-2. Quoted in Skilton, *Concise History of Buddhism*. p.39.

<sup>12</sup> *What the Buddha taught*. 1974. p.51.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Also the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad:

"Vast, celestial, of aspect inconceivable, subtler than the subtlest, it shines forth; farther than the far, *that* is, here close at hand, seated in the cavity (of the heart), for those who behold it."

"Attainable through truth, through spiritual exertion (*tapas*) is this *ātman*; by constant right-knowledge, by (constant) continence; within the body, light-hued, radiant (is) that whom ascetics, with imperfections removed, realize (=behold)."

"Not by sight is it grasped, nor even by speech, nor through the other senses, not by austere

practices, nor by ritual work; through the favor of the higher-knowing (*jñāna*) one of purified-mind beholds *that*, partless, in meditation.” (Muṇḍ. Up. III.1.7,5,8)

<sup>14</sup> See Obermiller, op.cit. p.205ff.

<sup>15</sup> Ezra, the “Jewish priest of the 5<sup>th</sup> c. B.C.” who was sent from Babylon to Jerusalem to “reconstitute observance of the Jewish law and worship in Jerusalem after the captivity”, (Collins English Dictionary) according to H.P.B. “remodelled the whole *Pentateuch*. For the glyph of Pharaoh's daughter (the woman), the Nile (the Great Deep and Water), and the baby-boy found floating therein in the ark of rushes, has not been primarily composed for, or by, Moses. It has been found anticipated in the Babylonian fragments on the tiles, in the story of King Sargon, who lived far earlier than Moses ... the story told of Moses by Ezra had been learned by him while at Babylon, and ... he applied the allegory told of Sargon to the Jewish lawgiver. ... *Exodus* was never written by Moses, but re-fabricated from old materials by Ezra.” (S.D. I.p.319-20)

“But now, when Professor Sayce has had the courage to push back the dates of the Chaldean and Assyrian Kings by two thousand years more, Sargon must have preceded Moses by 2000 years at the least. (See Professor Sayce's *Hibbert Lectures* of 1887 on the subject.) The confession is suggestive, but the figures lack a cipher or two.” (ibid. fn.p.320) See also *Isis Unveiled* I.p.163; II. 551;167)

<sup>16</sup> Rowley (op.cit.) gives quite a number of examples, one of the more striking ones concerns Machir, the grandson of Joseph, who

“is said to have been a father before Joseph died (Gen.1.23) - ie. some seventy years after the descent into Egypt. If he was still alive, therefore, after the death of Moses, he must, on the chronology of Ex. XII.40, have been about 430 years of age”. (p.72.fn.1)

from which Rowley concludes that “it is probable that we should see in Machir the personification of a clan” - or a tribe which indeed would be the case with many of the patriarchs, just as the first Adam represents a human race, not a single male. Who was the pharaoh of the oppression? On the basis of the name of two cities of the Delta region being called Pithom and Raamses which the Israelites were set to build (Ex.I.11) and the announcement of the death of Pharaoh (Ex.II.23) which means that during the life of Moses there were two Pharaohs, the evidence points to Ramses II whose long reign would tally with Moses having reached the age of 80 when he was called to deliver his people and face the new Pharaoh, Merenptah.

<sup>17</sup> The Egyptians kept their records meticulously and it is strange that there has never been found any reference to a Hebrew mass migration from Egypt with a pursuit by Pharaoh. The only stele that mentions the name of Israel for the first time is that of Merenptah, and there it is said that “Israel is desolate, her seed is not, Palestine has become a widow for Egypt; all lands are united, they are pacified ...” (See Gardiner's *Egypt of the Pharaohs*. p.273.) Israel was unimportant to the Egyptians. Rowley shows how the two main views as to a fifteenth century Exodus of all the tribes under Moses and Joshua, or a thirteenth century Exodus have to face too many difficulties to be credible (op.cit. p.109). Against what for some scholars, best fits an Exodus around 1290 B.C. and entrance into Palestine around 1250 B.C.,

“there is no archaeological evidence of the date of the event of Exodus. There is evidence relevant to the determining of the period of the oppression and the period of the entry into Palestine, but there is no archeological evidence that a period of 40 years separated the Exodus from the entry into Palestine.” (op.cit. p.133)

<sup>18</sup> Related in M. Bucaille, *La Bible, le Coran et la Science*, (p.226-7). The mummies of Rameses II and Merenptah are in the Cairo Museum; that of Merenptah has been examined, under the suggestion of M. Bucaille, and the body was found to have been traumatised, but as it has markedly deteriorated since its exposure in the Museum, findings as to whether he died by drowning may be very unreliable and subject to biased judgement. A full account of Bucaille's research on the mummy of Merenptah is published in his *Les Mommies des Pharaons et la médecine*. Paris, 1987.

<sup>19</sup> One is tempted to question here whether the myth of the Ṛbhus in the Ṛgveda, who are said to have rejuvenated their parents, Heaven and Earth which had grown old, was not based upon a dim reminiscence of this ancient esoteric doctrine of the cycles of obscuration and activity, each cycle of activity bringing in a new form, a regeneration or rejuvenation of the previous form, for instance of the planet earth. Here Heaven would

refer to the Hindu concept of *loka* (there are several *lokas* in the beyond) which under the cosmic pralaya would also disappear. (R̥gv. IV.35.5 and others).

<sup>20</sup> L. Burdin-Robertson. *The Goddesses of Chaldea, Syria and Egypt*. p. 126.

<sup>21</sup> Anderson, B. *Rediscovering the Bible*. 1954. p.27-8. Quoted in H. Smith, *The Religions of Man*. p.243-4.

<sup>22</sup> *Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization*. p.152.

<sup>23</sup> J. Dowson. *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology*. Section Avatāra. p.35-8.

<sup>24</sup> Do the innocents, or the just, sometimes help to pay for the guilty? This is the great problem hinging on vicarious atonement. In this respect the legend of Sunaḥṣepa, reported in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, which A.B. Keith found meaningless and nonsensical, assumes profound significance, especially as interpreted by R. Panikkar in his *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (1979). It concerns the interdependence and solidarity of human beings which pervade every level of existence. Thus in pledging his son's life to his God, the King Hariścandra offers his own; when his son Rohita flees from what was to be his destiny (to be sacrificed to Varuṇa), his father falls ill. Rohita finally finds a denuded Brahmin family whose father is ready to sell his son, Sunaḥṣepa (the unwanted middle child) for 100 cows, to stand as substitute sacrificial victim for Rohita. Innocent Sunaḥṣepa is now cornered in a hopeless situation, but he transcends himself through his faith and appeal to the gods who save him, whilst his own father is completely disgraced. Sunaḥṣepa is made a ṛṣi. A simple story perhaps, but with many more striking details such as the question of karma and destiny and the advice of Indra to Rohita to fight and pursue his own destiny. Do the innocent pay for the guilty, partially? Perhaps the whole burden of humanity could be lightened through the self-sacrifice of those ready to forget themselves for the sake of others. Is there an inner, far more significant meaning to the sacrifice of the first born? What is the implication of giving up one's best for the sake of the whole? For R. Panikkar, the just are at times called upon to pay for the sinners, being the only ones who can do so without complaining, i.e. in self-oblivion, the supreme virtue. The story brings to the fore many implications.

<sup>25</sup> One point in the *Atlantic Charter* postulates the duty of the states to

“... further the enjoyment by all states, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for economic prosperity...”

How much of this pious wish is left in the minds of our 21<sup>st</sup> century leaders?

<sup>26</sup> Like any other doctrine reincarnation may lend itself to abuse or misunderstanding. It may encourage sloth - “I’ll make an effort in the next life” - or, among the weak-minded personality bloating and ego-centredness. It may foster fatalism, “I can’t help it, it is my karma” equivalent to “it is the will of Allah”, therefore we are helpless; all these are distortions due to human ineptitude and weaknesses. A deeper understanding of the doctrine may lead us to a better understanding of human beings, their qualities and failures, their particular trends of activity, their innate talents, the inherent difficulties they have to face and overcome, their ability or disability to surmount obstacles, and how to help them. Life’s injustices more and more appear as not quite injustices; but there is always room for helping.

To the scarecrow doctrine found universally among Hindus and Buddhists of the possibility for the “human life-flux” taking “re-embodiment in sub-human creatures immediately after having been in human form”, the best answer is given in W.Y. Evans-Wentz introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (Oxford, Univ.Press.1927; reprint 1984, pp.42-47), the gist of which is summed up as follows: “... for a human life-flux to flow into the physical form of a dog, or fowl ... is therefore, held to be as impossible as would be - let us say - the transferring of the waters of Lake Michigan into the depression occupied by the waters of Lake Killarney, or - as the Hindu would say - as putting into the bed of the Ganges River the waters of the Indian Ocean”. (p.42-3)

Evans-Wentz's examination of the *Law of Manu* is most important in this respect (p.47.fn.1); also his comments on R̥gv.X.135, p.45-6,fn.1. We should note that human beings at this stage of evolution identify generally either with their lower aspect, the body, or their middle aspect, the mental-emotional or *kāma-manas*. Belief in transmigration into animal bodies reflects where lies the identification.

According to H.P.B., the doctrine of reincarnation was taught by the Egyptians during the Mysteries as it was an esoteric doctrine, as karma and reincarnation were in ancient India. For her, the scarabeus, stylised as the globe with two wings, was the symbol not only of transformation or “becoming” but also an emblem of human life, “of the successive *becomings* of man, through the various peregrinations and metempsychoses

(reincarnations) of the liberated Soul.” See S.D. II.p.552. Only the constituent atoms of the physical body would “transmigrate” into animal forms after death, *never the psychic principle with its mental vehicle*, both of which belong to a higher evolution. (Cf. the *Lunar pitris* and the *Agniśvāttas* “fashioners of the Inner Man”, S.D.I.p.86-7; 246ff.) (Ch.8, pt.3)

According to Gershom Scholem, the *Kabbalah* teaches the “doctrine of transmigration” of the soul as “a basic Kabbalistic principle”. (*Kabbalah* p.161) Transmigration of souls or *gilgul* “is taken for granted in the Kabbalah from its first literary expression in the *Sefer ha Behir* (late 12c)”. (p.345) From the time of the *Zohar* the term is used freely in Hebrew literature. H.P.B. explains that “the primitive meaning of *Gilgūlim* or ‘Revolution of Souls’, was the idea of the Reincarnating Souls or *Egos*. ‘All the Souls go into the *Gilgūlah*’, into a cyclic or revolving process... the cyclic path of rebirths.” (S.D.I. p.568.fn)

<sup>27</sup> A basic understanding of the Divine Will, as conceived by Islam, may be gained through a study of Nature's workings: observations show that e.g. at the microcosmic level, the subatomic particles know, in their own peculiar way, their place within the system of their world and act accordingly; electrons around the nucleus of an atom are always equally balanced to the atomic weight. Thus an atom will lose electrons but will attract the same number of other electrons to keep it to its normal weight, to keep it in balance to what it is. This order is translated by the human mind as a natural law. All atoms are pre-destined or programmed to act as they do.

At the cellular level, each cell has its task to perform and knows exactly what is that task, how to do it and what is its place in the body - unless something goes utterly wrong and cells start running riot but even that riot goes according to a pattern. How is it that a rejection takes place between similar tissues when transplanted into another body? Here the defense system of the body immediately attacks what it considers to be foreign tissue, yet that foreign tissue is made up of similar cells doing exactly the same job in the donor's body. The cells show a knowledge of exactly who their neighbours are and what is and what is not a cell of their own making.

Genetic inheritance is not a fixed given, does not have a laid down course but will depend upon prevailing conditions now and over a period of time which may emphasise some aspects and suppress others, these being aspects that are no longer needed in the interplay between organism and environment. Thus there is room for plasticity and variability, but all in accordance with what we could call laws or “rules of the game”. The organism changes according to the feedback of the environment via its genetic information which is modified so that the organism itself changes. From all these one may deduce natural laws which reveal an overall order and broad pattern, into which a mystic would see the working of a “divine will”.

The balance of nature has shown man an exquisite pattern; thus species of animals and plants live in harmony in a domain of mutual exchange where balance, if upset can only bring disaster. If man exterminates one species that preys on another, the latter will multiply and become a pest; if hedges are destroyed birds that sheltered there leave the spot and insects multiply, fastening upon human beings or their crops which they ruin; pesticides have to be used which poison the atmosphere and other plants and bring further disaster, etc. The eradication of vast forests alters the climatic conditions, the destruction of trees brings erosion and reduces land to desert. When man interferes with the natural order, whether it is nuclear fission or liberating carbon in the atmosphere through burning whole forests, the results border on disaster.

This implies that there is a law inherent to Nature which cannot be ignorantly interfered with by men without dire consequences to life. This law extends not only from the microscopic world to the natural world, including all creatures, but also to the macroscopic world of which we know still less - thus the determined charge whereby the pole of our planet revolves around the pole of the ecliptic taking some 25,000 years or more results in a change of pole star every 3,000 years. The stars also have variable courses which are modified over vast periods of time. The accuracy with which the movement of the planets and stars can be calculated, the precise orbital path of the planets, all show a predetermined pattern whose overall mark is a cosmic order, a mathematical order, at the very core of which is Will, Intelligence.

<sup>28</sup> AHU and Ahura Mazda, maintains Tavaria (op.cit.) are the twofold concept of the Godhead in Avesta - the former, impersonal, inconceivable, Absolute One, refuting the century-old heresy of ‘Dualism’ as the fundamental theological teaching of the Zoroastrian Faith; the latter, “Ahura Mazda, the Creator of the Universe, who is personal or conceivable from his numerous names occurring in Hormazd and Ram Yashts.” (T.p.21). *Ahu* means literally “IT IS” and is mentioned only in the Yathā AHU VAIRYO prayer. As the “Zervanist ‘IT

IS' is only the rendering of Avesta AHU" (T.p.131) the argument that Zoroastrianism is "uncompromisingly dualist" falls to the ground. Ahu in the Avesta stands for "Unnamable, Unthinkable Absolute one in oneness" and it is its emanation that starts the activity of unfoldment, manifestation, etc. This is pure *Secret Doctrine*, a conception glimpsed in R̥gv.X.82.6 as "The *One* set within the core of the *UNBORN* wherein stand all the worlds", and again in the differentiation made by Meister Eckhardt between *Godhead* and *God*, equivalent to the above *Unborn* and the *One*.

Zaehner's strong projection of a personified God set against a personified Evil at war with each other for ever does not enter Tavaria's or his Master's conception of good and evil. Tavaria explains that "transmutation" of the "opposite" is the key to the whole problem, transmutation of evil into good; really the integration of the opposites into something beyond both.

<sup>29</sup> The Hindu *Purāṇas* offer us in their legend of Vena and his son Pṛthu an exposition of this question of evil and predestination. This can be viewed from historical, psychological and esoteric standpoints. With Vena, the emphasis is on evil conduct as a direct effect of evil heredity which goes back to many lives of evil doing; his whole character is summed up in a simple phrase: "Vena was devoid of *dharma*", that sense of duty in accordance with "the pattern of life appropriate to one's own level of attainment and position in society". (J. Bowker, *Problems of Suffering in Religions of the World.* 1970. p. 196). Thus his negative destiny was sealed from his very birth and his baneful heredity predestined him to act contrary to accepted norms of *dharma*. The end was obvious, complete destruction. See my "Predestiny and Evil in Hindu Mythology: an Inquiry into the Symbolism of the Vena-Pṛthu Legend". In *Symbols of Art and Religion*. Ed. K. Werner. 1990. The two different standpoints of monotheistic religions and Hinduism could be summed up thus: The Hindu places the burden of evil squarely on human shoulders, their deeds or misdeeds committed over a long chain of action-reaction; monotheistic religions blur the issue through the ultimate Will of an all powerful Anthropomorphic God whose "justice" makes no sense to human reason or sense of justice.

<sup>30</sup> Because of the Bab's rather revolutionary ideas he was martyred in 1850, but the movement he inaugurated went on gathering momentum under his disciple Baha'u'llah. The latter, a highly inspired man, suffered extremely at the hands of orthodox leaders of Islam but managed to continue the Bab's message and through the revelation he himself received gave form to the religion called Bahaism.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in the *The Revelation of Baha'u'lah* by A. Taherzadeh. p.118. Baha'u'lah's conception of God, expressed in highly devotional, ecstatic language, is still the Transcendent God, the All merciful, the all glorious God of Islam whose essence man can never know but is nevertheless active in his care for humanity, who sends his messengers for the sake of helping human development. Through his grace human beings are able to approach Him thanks to the revelation of his Messengers whom Baha'u'lah calls his "Manifestations", and describes as "the mirror reflecting the sun". In God there is no multiplicity, essence and attributes are one, but within His creation, multiplicity of attributes is evident. So the "Manifestations" reveal the attributes of love, knowledge, power, etc. As there is but one God his worshippers may worship differently, their prayer will always be heard. Such a realisation may be found in the Bhagavad Gītā:

"However men approach me even so do I welcome them  
for the path men take from every side is Mine." (Bhag. Gītā. 4.11)

Each messenger has highlighted a particular aspect of what was and is meant to be taught to humanity, hence their different emphasis and teachings which, when seen from a holistic standpoint, form a wholeness that points to humanity's goal and future achievement. For Baha'u'lah, the Manifestations only differ in the intensity of their revelation which has caused some to be exalted more than others.

<sup>32</sup> Men cannot govern themselves equitably until they have acquired *wisdom* over and above their capacity to think and to acquire knowledge. One basic principle enjoins: seek out unity in diversity, (this is the motto of Hinduism); seek out to erase all prejudices of race, class, sex; to harmonise science and religion (note the three objects of the Theosophical Society) - cerebral activity yields science, intuition reveals the depth of the sacred, indeed of the soul. Mundane problems are considered; thus, what evils should be eradicated, what should be stressed for the social set up, such as voluntary sharing, basic work for all, suppression of industrial slavery, how to treat criminals, education, development of character as the foundation of education, equality between man and woman who are, so to speak, the two wings of one and the same bird, without which humanity, like the bird, cannot accomplish its flight from earth to heaven, from the one humanity to the one Divine Source.

This is definitely a far cry from the Jewish prayer that thanks God for being born a man; from the complete downgrading of woman in the Hindu *Manu Smṛti* where the birth of a daughter is called a calamity; from the arrogance of the Christian Church Fathers who at one of the Church Councils debated whether woman had a soul! They finally had to admit to it, for how could man be born of a soulless creature?

<sup>33</sup> A full exegesis of this myth under the title "The Myth of the Churning of the Ocean of Milk" (J. Miller) was published in *Perspectives on Indian Religion: Papers in honour of K. Werner*. Ed. P. Connolly. Delhi, 1986. The problem of good and evil as it appears in the *Purāṇas* is examined in W.D. O'Flaherty's *The Origin of Evil in Hindu Mythology*. Berkeley, 1976.

<sup>34</sup> *The Perfect Way; or The finding of the Christ*. 1925. p.158,160. Bede Griffith, in his *New Vision of Reality*, refers to the Fall as a separation from the spirit:

"If human beings respond to the Spirit they grow harmoniously... But now fallen humanity has lost the vision of the Spirit beyond and everything focuses on the self..." (p.99)

## CHAPTER 10

## THE ESOTERIC APPROACH AND CONTRIBUTION TO UNDERSTANDING SACRED TEXTS: A PANORAMIC SURVEY

## INTRODUCTION

If we take an overall survey of the investigations carried out in the present study, we find three main strands of examination:

- 1) the esoteric tradition spanning the millennia in spite of all obstacles and difficulties, whose doctrines, couched in various ways through myths, symbols, rituals, allegories, are found to spell out a fundamental *gnosis* and oneness at the basis of all known sacred texts. This tradition, unrecognized, even denied *a priori* by too many scholars, claims its own validity through an examination in depth of the sacred texts available. But this needs an approach that takes into consideration the inner meaning or spiritual significance, "the spirit that giveth life", as against "the letter that killeth", which has prevailed for far too long. The two approaches to an understanding of ancient sacred lore, the exoteric and the esoteric, will need here to be compared, assessed and understood as to each its method and compass; it will be found that the esoteric throws far more light upon the ancient texts, the exoteric deals only with the surface meaning of words.
- 2) The *Vedas* – the four *Vedas* or mantric hymns, the *Brāhmaṇas* or ritual explanations, the *Upaniṣads* or esoteric expositions and similarly the *Āraṇyakas* – taken collectively as one of the more ancient records that have survived the millennia, prove the existence of such a *secret knowledge* going right back to the Ṛgveda, given out in allusions, whether covered, i.e. enigmagtic, or open as in expositions of basic truths as in the Upaniṣad's great teaching: *tat tvam asi*, That thou art. These records, left to us as an heirloom by the sages/seers of past millennia, when examined in depth, yield their *gnosis* recognisable in the Vedas, the Mazdean scriptures<sup>1</sup>, the Kabbalah, some Sufi writings, even in certain tenets of the monotheistic faiths such as e.g. the threefold manifestation of the Godhead, however distorted in Christianity, the soul as the link between the divine and the human, etc. Even Christian mystics, such as Meister Eckhart, did not improve on the Oriental idea of Godhead.

It is a fact that sacred texts have been regarded as primitive records of humanity's past beliefs, not "sacred" for their translators, in the days of H.P.B. and prior to her. Therefore the tools of philology and rationalism were deemed amply sufficient to make some sense out of so much *irrationality* and naive beliefs. Yet they only served to highlight the naive literal understanding of scholars, which did not help at all to decypher the true meaning of sacred texts, but all too often reduced them to gibberish. These texts pointed to a basic age old esoteric doctrine which H.P.B. endeavoured to explain to the sceptical arrogant Western reader, to no avail. Fortunately, since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholarly attitude to such texts has considerably changed, but the essentially spiritual meaning of the message has not yet been fully grasped.

- 3) H.P.B.'s contribution not only to the turning of the Western mind to consider and benefit from the treasures of thought locked in Oriental sacred texts; but through her elucidations of some of their more obscure aspects, not only in the Vedas, but the Avesta, the Kabbalah, etc. gave enlightening clues towards the understanding of our spiritual human evolution. The latter she unfolded in a vast compass never before given in such breadth and depth, with explanations and proofs from the various ancient traditions, their myths and legends. She saved mythology from falling into the garbage basket of "exploded superstitions" by revealing it as the repository of our ancestral knowledge and sentiency, its archetypal symbols as psyche's method of imparting those insights that the intellect found too difficult to grasp. In this respect, M. Eliade's work, most probably unknown to him, particularly in his *Patterns In Comparative Religion*, has been quite revealing and proof of the truth of some of H.P.B.'s claims. She gave a spiritual assessment of the *sacred texts*<sup>1</sup> in an attempt to prevent at least a portion of Western humanity from falling and being buried into the abyss of negation of all spirituality, leading to hopelessness as is still prevalent among a large number of educated people. She pointed to the *dead letter* approach of scholars' translations as smothering their true meaning. This in itself is an

immense contribution, hardly known to and thereby least of all appreciated by the intelligentsia for whom the squadrons of denigrating critics, ignorant of the depth and breadth of her work, have said the last word!

This chapter will give a summary of these three aspects; with an emphasis on the Vedic gnosis as a record of the higher mind's activity during the past millennia; an evaluation of Western exegesis and why it failed to bring out the essential message of sacred texts; and an overall view of, and tribute to H.P.B.'s pioneering contribution.

### *THE ESOTERIC TRADITION*

Viewing the various threads of the esoteric tradition studied or just mentioned in the present investigation, we find that

- a) the ṛṣis' understanding of the divine gnosis, *veda, vidyā or guptavidyā*, going back several millennia, (in fact further back than what scholars give out as a date, for the tradition was then oral), is found in many hints given in enigmatic verses of the Ṛgveda, gathered together and examined in the previous chapters; this *wisdom* marked by insights into our *spiritual nature*, unknown to the average Western reader, can no longer be denied;
- b) a wisdom focussed round a central supernal Source, variously hinted at but mostly left unqualified; referred to as the "Sky divinity" by most "primitive" peoples; referred to as *That* in the Ṛgveda, or the *Unborn*; from which central Source emanate first the blueprint or pattern of the universe to be (Ṛgv.X.190) which, through the highest contemplative exertion, (*tapas*) differentiates into its various planes, giving birth to all its denizens, highest, middle and lower, (X.90); this being the Vedic revelation. To this H.P.B. gave the complementary gnosis : a chain of evolving lives coming down from the highest to the lowest and going back to the highest; the accumulated experience thereby bringing about vaster and deeper consciousness and understanding; hence mastery of every plane of existence; most of this more or less concealed in hints in the *Vedas*, the *Purāṇas*, the *Kabbalah*, etc.
- c) the Zoroastrian esoteric tradition to this day unknown to orthodox Parsis and scholars, and denied existence, though referred to and explained by H.P.B. in several instances before being partially revealed by Talaria and Chiniwalla in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century as explained in several chapters; needs more research.
- d) the Sufi esoteric tradition, until recently hardly known in the West, but which through Idries Shah, J. Bennett and others, has been documented in its continuity and influential compass, with the specific tradition of the Khwajagans or line of Masters of the Wisdom of Central Asia being revealed to the West.
- e) in the light of this esoteric tradition spanning the world, H.P.B.'s claim to have received her tuition, knowledge and mission from a trans-Himalayan source unknown in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the West, and immediately derided and dismissed as imposture when her writings came out, can no longer appear preposterous; now more open to investigation through the Tibetan diaspora and 20<sup>th</sup> century Western travellers to the Himalayan region in search of this hidden knowledge - N. Roerich, E. Birnbaum, and others; it awaits further research.

All these more or less documented traditions with, on the whole, a basic underlying doctrine, can at least bear witness to a *sacred lore* treasured and handed down through the ages, diverging superficially in its various transmissions and presentations, but one in its fundamentals. To these may be added the testimony of the Greek sages and the mystical teachings of Christ himself - *the kingdom of heaven is within you; I and my Father are one*, the latter significantly implying the fundamental oneness of the human spirit with the Divine Source - ; such a truth being also taught in the Bhagavad Gītā, going back to the Upaniṣad: *tat tvam asi*. This finds expression among some of the great Christian mystics e.g. Meister Eckhart, and among Sufis and Gnostics.

This is substance enough to accept the existence on earth of this ancient *gnosis*, a revelation not only given out ages ago, but still going on among those whose minds are receptive enough, and still shaping many lives for the greater good of all; surviving all vicissitudes - natural catastrophes or human persecutions or destructions; kept alive underground through such bodies as the Kabbalists, Rosicrucians, Sufis, to surface once



again for the benefit of humanity at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through the efforts of H.P.B. and those who sent her to spread her message. This was originally meant as an attempt to stem the tide of sheer materialism which is still engulfing humanity to the loss of its spiritual values and nowadays the rape of our planet. Within this growing evidence of a perennial spiritual heritage that nothing could destroy, H.P.B.'s claim assumes an unprecedented importance. In this respect she emerges as a courageous pioneer, misunderstood, misjudged, unjustly vilified.

#### PSYCHE SPOKE FIRST, THEN THE RATIONAL MIND

From the records available it may be concluded that the history of the deeper aspects of human thought and insight started with an apprehension of what the ancient mind could only describe as the divine: not merely as the gift of life, but as the vision of creation in a vast cyclic unfoldment which in the Ṛgveda is revealed as a mathematical progression (Ṛgv.I.164.41) : a far cry from that primitive state of mind *imposed* on prehistoric man; a vision of wholeness inclusive of hosts of denizens whether celestial, human or sub-human playing their respective parts in this vast kaleidoscopic panorama. Primitive man, if one must call him thus, however simple he may have been in his outlook and habits, was more in tune with his soul than we are, and was taught and granted a guidance by more evolved beings issued from previous waves of evolution - so teaches the doctrine. Here one cannot get away from the understanding that there have been other evolutions than ours and there will be others after our own. This vision, left to humanity as an heirloom from the sages of millennia ago, embroidered upon and somewhat transformed through the ages, the intellectual elite among our modern generations has endeavoured for the past two centuries to destroy by every means. It has not succeeded, for the testimony is too strong and surfaces with more and more proof. From the texts available, it is evident that *psyche* spoke first to humanity through *poetry*; for poetry came first, being the language of the soul - melodious utterances, imagery, feeling, a synthesis of thought not always clear to the rational mind. This language, as used in the Vedas is well explained in D. Frawley's *The Creative Vision of the Early Upaniṣads*.

Only later came the turn of the rational mind which uses prose, logic - either or - , specific terms, what it considers clear, but which in its earth-bound dogmatism, will not accept anything that is not sense bound and logically sound. This is the great handicap scholars have to face when translating and interpreting *sacred texts* which are not tied to these mental limitations. So long as this obstacle prevails, so long as scriptures are taken literally, so long will these be misunderstood. Scripture is no *factual* writing, like any historical or scientific treatise dealing with physical facts. Scripture deals with spiritual or psychological phenomena too often not amenable to reason and often fused with physical facts, with various levels of meaning. Hence the falling back on *myth* to express profound truths of many-sided meaning; hence the abysmal aberration of those who reduce *myth* to *lie* because they are incapable of reading anything beyond surface level. Poetry is an image-based and rhythmic language of the psyche; prose belongs to the rational mind. It is obvious that the prehistoric human mind expressed itself in images, metaphors, similes taken from immediate surroundings; these became symbols, i.e. stepping stones towards the revelation of deeper experiences. These could only be worded through utterances combining striking images with specific rhythmic sounds. This is revealed in the Vedas, the mantric part, but also in other religious incantatory texts, e.g. the Egyptian, still mostly misunderstood, the Koran whose recitation deeply affects the listeners.

The Ṛgveda does speak in startling metaphors, obviously with a specific purpose. Thus the milking of the celestial udder (IX.107.5); or of the bull Soma (IX.95.4ab); or the Soma juice as the thunderbolt (III.44.5); the bursting open of the mountain full of riches (IV.1.15; 2.15); the sun hidden in the waters; Agni seated in the imperishable syllable (VI.16.35); or in the rivers, or leader of the rivers, etc. (See ch.4, pt.3). Such images convey something that does not belong to our space-time logic, they point to another dimension of being that concerns man in his psyche wherein is reflected a measure of his *cosmic being*. In modern man there is generally no inkling of cosmic being; but there was among the ṛṣis. (Ch.6 assessed this aspect) Can we deny this other worldly vision of cosmic compass to men of the calibre of the ṛṣis, *prophets*, in the real sense of the word, of Āryāvarta, only because we are incapable of it, or cannot grasp it, or cannot accept that prehistoric man could rise to a cosmic vision? Yet the Ṛgveda is the testimony of this capacity. That it has not been recognised is our exegesists' fault. In his *Creative Vision of the Early Upaniṣads* D. Frawley wrote:

"The Vedic seers worked at a level above the intellect wherein language was mantric and made a

direct appeal to the inner mind beyond ordinary language and thinking ... People apprehended what are to us only abstract ideas according to sound and symbol, in musical and pictorial form as well as ideationally. Their language was rooted in vision (*dṛṣṭi*) and inspiration or revelation (*śruti*) ..." (op.cit. p.45)

But even more than poetry, the tapestry of the universe as presented by the ancient seers, whether of Āryāvarta or of Egypt, of Sumer or elsewhere, woven and interwoven of life's very essence with its multivariied forms, was seen as a vast living organism: therein the very pulse of the One Divine Life orchestrated the vast cyclic outgoing and ingoing of its myriads of tidal life-waves; the outbreathing and inbreathing of all its creatures, celestial, human and non human; gave the impulse to the outer trajectory of each one's life-work, each one's "offering" and very life, and each one's return to the One Supreme Source enriched; it all spelled out the secret of the cosmic sacrifice which our modern generations have failed to grasp. This is part of the message of the Vedas, this is the world's ancient gnosis, the *veda*, for this wisdom-knowledge does not belong to India alone, it belongs, in greater or smaller measure, to all the ancient peoples. It must be so, for the vision is anchored in the human psyche and each one responds in accordance with his own measure of light.

In due course of time a split occurred between the outer, factual knowledge common to all, and the inner wisdom-understanding developed in the more mature minds. Hence arose the tradition of the *gnosis* or repository of the wisdom and visionary insight of the sages kept as an heirloom by their disciples and subsequently given out only to those ready to qualify for it; hence the two sides of the body of knowledge, the outer, exoteric dimension, - accumulating facts; and the inner, deeper, esoteric dimension, the wisdom evolved as a result of experience, understanding, maturity and finally initiation. This split between the inner and outer dimensions which resulted in the esoteric and the exoteric approaches, is made clear even in the words attributed to Christ, which shows that he too reserved some of his teachings for more understanding humans:

"Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God,  
but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables."

Here Christ reveals his link with the initiatory tradition which always kept the kernel of its teachings to its initiates, those who were ready, i.e. prepared and morally blameless, worthy and competent to understand the deeper dimensions of existence. As already mentioned, until recently scholars denied initiation to any of the ancient people before Greek hegemony, whereas the Egyptians were the great initiators for all civilizations around Egypt, and so were the Ṛṣis. The prejudice of "primitiveness" has stood too long in the way of the right appreciation of past sacred texts.

#### THE TWO METHODS: THE EXOTERIC AND THE ESOTERIC

Of these two approaches, the exoteric is the one accepted for exegesis - the other being disregarded. The exoteric approach deals with the literal understanding of texts which, if *sacred texts*, bear different levels of meaning; its tools are philology and rationalism which cannot fathom sacred lore and its peculiar way of representing sacred truths; it simply discards the sacred. The *pesher* technique - a Hebrew word originally meaning in the Old Testament the interpretation of dreams - does not belong to the esoteric method. It serves to unravel in both Testaments hitherto unexplainable events from the literal, realistic, historical standpoints, because these, as well as names, have been manipulated for specific purposes. It remains purely on rationalistic lines.<sup>2</sup> The rational works from the outer form or appearance which it recognizes as the only valid object of research: words are philologically examined, or an object or historic event, in order to draw logical conclusions and offer a rationally acceptable explanation. This method feels secure on its basis of objectivity and logical deduction, ignoring the fundamental nature of *spiritual texts* which are not based on rational lines or logic and add a totally other dimension to their meaning. It also ignores that its own basis of total reliance on the senses' testimony is as fragile as anything in this world of false appearances.

The esoteric approach fastens far less on appearances; it attempts to probe the essential significance of texts or verses, of ideas or statements, in accordance with its own criteria. Whilst far from discarding word analysis, meaning and origin, always most helpful, (e.g. *dyaus*, heaven whose root *div*, shine, be luminous, hence *deva*, the shining-one, gives out its meaning, the luminous state or *loka*) the esoteric approach aims at penetrating into the *meaning* or *significance* of the thought or event mentioned, at grasping what lies at its core, as well as taking into account the wider compass of meaning in which it may appear. It then draws its

own conclusions. This approach uses intellect as well as intuition. Of this type an example was given in ch. 8 in the esoteric exegesis of Ṛgveda X.90. One may recall the descriptive epithets used for Puruṣa, yet belonging exclusively to three Vedic solar deities, hinting at Puruṣa's nature, the latter completely undetected by those scholars who had noted this fact. It is here obvious that the rational approach needs to be complemented by the intuition. Scope should be given to the *psyche's* innate perceptive capacity to *capture inner links and touch on the essence of the meaning*. At this stage of our mental development this would require some training.

However, let it be realised that psyche does not stand merely for the "unconscious, the ego and the super-ego" of Freud's definition which ignores that fundamentally profound dimension of psyche which has been called the supra-conscious; a state of apprehension which allows the open mind to grasp a much deeper meaning than that to which it is used, and to draw inspiration from that source. Evidently, preconceptions and prejudices block this opening - intuitive flashes cannot break through the barrier of a mind only conditioned logically and prejudiced as to other ways. Thus, just to deny intuition its place in any assessment of sacred texts immediately acts as a blockage. Hence the esoteric approach necessitates a profounder training than mere logic and philology involve. What is of final importance to it is that capacity for grasping the meaning of words or thoughts or verses, that "stepping-beyond" the literal awareness; images and events in myths being stepping-stones to some significance or vision quite beyond themselves. Even St Paul makes allusion to this. (Gal.IV.22,24) (Cf. John II.1-11 and H.P.B.'s Commentaries C.W. XI. p.498-9).

We are thus confronted with two widely different approaches and perspectives; one rather narrow in its view, based on appearances and on what may be logically deduced, whether physical or esteemed an historical fact; the other taking in a much wider compass as well as psyche's basic function - intuition, and its fathoming out of significance. Even so an "historical record" naming a list of gods as having ruled in Egypt, for instance, however authenticated as a record, was not accepted as factual, deemed too fabulous for credence; was ignored - even though some reasonable explanation could be that the "gods" would be far more evolved beings than average humanity (the Hindu thesis) and their lengthy reigns could have represented *dynasties*.

A simple and striking example of the purely objective, literal approach, perfectly correct in so far as it goes, but completely disregarding any spiritual significance, concerns Indra's thunderbolt, the *vajra* of Ṛgvedic texts. J. Varenne in his *Cosmogonies Védiques* (p.97-105) meticulously analyses and appraises Indra's *vajra* in the context of Indra's cosmogonic fight with Vṛtra, the obstructor. Varenne examines the form of the *vajra*: it could be an axe, its metal is iron; it is described as a "red-hot missile" (III.30.17 *tapusim hetim*) which might imply that it has not been heated prior to its use, especially since the "passive past participle *tapta*, heated, is never used with *vajra*". "The notion of thunderbolt never appears when Indra's weapon is being recalled to mind". Hence for Varenne *vajra* is a weapon "of stone or metal, massive, burning, propelling", "rather than a thunderbolt"; "a tool which should have resembled Thor's hammer or the double bladed axe of the Frankish tribes". (p.100)

All this is fine, but a whole side to the *vajra* is left out, of far greater importance in the overall meaning and message of sacred texts. Soma's influence is acknowledged in so far as Indra drinks its juice and its "consumption ... is both the sign and the condition of his [Indra's] aptitude to fight". (p.95) Why is there no acknowledgement that Soma, "king of all celestial seers" (IX.76.4a) is actually identified with Indra's thunderbolt that roars in the vessel (IX.77.1; cf.72.7) wherein it is being prepared? The Soma pressed by stones is the longed-for clear-white thunderbolt (III.44.5), its sap becoming "a thousandfold conquering bolt" (*vajrah sahasrasā* IX.47.3) which Indra revealed. This gives a totally different perspective on the *vajra* which is also the *ghee* whose secret name is *amṛta*, nectar of immortality (IV.58.1). "By which *vajra* [which is] the ghee, the gods clove the strongholds and conquered these worlds" (Śat. Br. III.4.4.6). Soma and bolt are weapons, highly charged, hence dangerous but also enlightening, as with their respective flashes they illumine, whether the environment or the mind. It is easy to draw conclusions.

These highly mystical statements, ignored in Varenne's survey, are yet vital to the spiritual significance of the *vajra*. Far from being only a mere weapon of death, the *vajra* is a weapon of exaltation that cleaves through the dark pall of human mental blindness and destroys all obstacles, hence its danger for the unprepared who may lose their balance. These dangers are real and so it is described as "sharpened by wise insight" which vouchsafes those qualities of "might and courage and ability (VIII.15.7) peculiar to Indra who conquered *svar*,

who is now lord of *svar*, *svarpati*, not the sun in the sky, but its state of spiritual blaze! (as examined in ch.6)

In this context of *svar* conquest, of Soma's enlightening flashes, Indra's *vajra* assumes a role out of all relation to any physical, literal meaning; its psycho/spiritual significance is being totally missed. Soma's flashing insight also is completely disregarded, yet the poets have shown the meaning of *vajra* through its identification with Soma and with ghee. Indra, the *lucifer* in its true meaning of *light bringer*, enables man to reach out to the higher planes of consciousness, to the "triple splendour", the immortal state (VI.44.23).

Another example concerns what may be deduced logically or historically from what appears as a particular historical occurrence such as is brought forward by M. Eliade in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, but does not necessarily imply absolute factual truth, or fit facts hitherto ignored by the historian. The following is a case in point with regard to the process of rationalization:

"In the Graeco-Roman world, the sun having *become the fire of intelligence* ended by *becoming a cosmic principle*." (op.cit. p.150. italics my own)

This claim as an event in the Greco-Roman world is wide of the mark, for the *esoteric tradition* is here well documented and certainly does not agree with the above declaration. Looked at objectively, the sun is stated to have been endowed (by human beings) at a certain period, with the "fire of intelligence" which made it become, in men's minds, a cosmic principle. This is taken as an historic development in the wider history of religious thought. The R̥gveda bears witness to the fact that long before the Greco-Roman time the sun was regarded as a cosmic principle, and certain writings of the Roman Emperor Julian himself, as an initiate of the Mysteries, prove the continuity of this tradition. (See ch.6 pt.2) The sages of ancient India, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Peru, Mexico, Japan, etc. could never have thought of endowing the sun with intelligence or anything at all, or making it a cosmic principle: the sun was such a cosmic principle from everlasting, irrespective of what humans thought! Its phenomenal manifestation enshrined a *noumenal* power that ruled our solar system. The ancients would have laughed at such an arrogant thought to *make the sun* this or that! Our modern disregard of and indeed inability to understand ancient sacred perspectives as recorded by the sages themselves, brings about an erroneous claim in the face of the documented evidence. This problem centres around the moot question: is the universe a random, meaningless, lifeless collocation of atoms, as viewed by a representative of modern thought, Bertrand Russell; or a mighty array of multitudes of elements activated by celestial intelligences, all working together and moving in harmony, as the starry vault demonstrates, to specific inherent laws of mathematical precision? M. Eliade realised that

"The orientation of intellectual activity from Aristotle onwards has done much to blunt our receptiveness towards the totality of sun hierophanies" (p.125)

indeed our receptiveness to anything supra-physical in the universe. How is it that the R̥gvedic seers saw in the sun the "*ātman* of what moves and moves not" (I.115.1) which automatically marks it out as a celestial principle ordering all things from within a centre? What was the meaning of *ātman* which in R̥gveda (VII.87.2a) is identified with Vāta, the wind, Primal Mover, Life Bearer, itself the *ātman* of Varuṇa, Lord of Cosmic Order, that spiritual principle that moves all from within the heart of Cosmic Order, itself the blueprint of the divine *tapas*? (X.190.1) Life, light, enlightenment, even the way to *svar*, as we saw in ch.6, are Sūrya's supreme gifts to those capable of receiving these. As *ātman*, the sun represents the central focus, for our planetary system, of this principle of life, light, enlightenment, hence the sun's *primary* importance for us; *secondary*, only when the whole universe or cosmos is concerned, a distinction seemingly never realised. Since the universe is viewed in a more or less mechanical way, the sun's true significance in sacred texts is totally missed.

The spiritual perception prevalent among the ṛṣis proves that this ancient gnosis dates back millennia. Eliade's logical deduction concerning the sun does not fit the facts, but it suits our preconceptions and ignorance. Further, any claim that this gnosis was unknown to Greco-Roman initiates would immediately be disproved both by the Emperor Julian's own statement and by Apuleius' confession of seeing the "midnight sun" during his initiation, an experience equivalent to the "svar in the rock" of Vasiṣṭha's desire.

The mystical R̥gvedic verses quoted in the present study, left mostly unexplained by Western exegesis, or taken literally and thereby appearing nonsensical, have revealed the inadequacy of a purely rational and philological approach. To the many enigmas of the R̥gveda, to the grand vision of cosmic

order with its hierarchies of celestial beings moving together in harmony, Western exegesis is mostly silent, able only to bicker over literal meanings. The issue of the discarded psyche is avoided, for all must remain within the borders of logic, rationalism, philology, even though without that extra dimension given by the understanding granted by psyche, a lop-sided view results. This is not even seen. The demand made on psyche's intuitive insight may, to the rationalist, seem unrealistic and as unreliable as our unreliable senses. It does demand a specific training, perhaps taxing, but one which recognizes psyche and its functions. But the fact that *sacred texts* are in question, that seers "profoundly moved" are their authors, that poets receive their inspiration from beyond, should at least serve to make us realise that the mere criteria of reason are far too superficial.

The esoteric validity of the ancient perspective is based upon a scale of mirror-like reflections from the subtlest (or highest) to the densest (or lowest) and back to the subtlest. This cosmic *descent* or outward going manifestation of the spiritual into the material, and its upward return to its original source, enriched by the experience offered by matter, and the latter's transformation into a more suitable vehicle for the spirit, are basic to the gnosis, and to the fundamental law: *as above, so below*; hence the mirror like reflection at every level. This mirror image is expressed in a few words in the *Desātīr*:

"All that is on Earth, saith the Lord (Ormazd), is the *shadow of something that is in the superior spheres* ... This luminous object (light, fire, etc.) is the shadow of that which is still more luminous than itself, and so on till it reaches ME, who am the light of lights." (*Desātīr = The Book of Shet the Prophet Zirtūsh*, p.35-39. In S.D.II.p.268)

This is indeed the ageless esoteric *gnosis*. H.P.B. cites St Paul who called our world

"the enigmatical mirror of pure truth' and St Gregory of Nazianzus corroborated Hermes by stating that 'things visible are but the shadow and delineation of things that we cannot see'. It is an eternal combination, and images are repeated from the higher rung of the ladder of being down to the lower". (ibid. p.268)

The Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad summed up the whole evolutionary process in a few powerful words:

"As sparks innumerable fly upwards from a blazing fire, so from the depths of the Imperishable arise all things, and to the depths of the Imperishable they in turn descend." (Muṇḍaka Up.II.1.1)

Since the cosmos reflects, at every step of unfoldment, something of the Source from which it emerged, each further projection is a reflection in denser matter of that Source, becoming more and more limited the further it expands outwardly or objectively, finally becoming an imperfect, or even a distorting mirror. The more limited the part, the more friction occurs, the opposite of harmony. It follows on the principle of reverse reflection that the human being who is capable of introspection, in probing inwards into his innermost being, past all the limited levels and obscurities put up by desires, envies, deceptions, doubts, conditioning, etc. can eventually reach back to that pure reflection of the cosmic blueprint stamped in his own psyche, that harmony reflected in his mind as peace and love and good will to all, that truth reflected in his person as integrity. Hence the Upaniṣads' emphasis on truthfulness and integrity as directives before anyone can step into the arena of *true knowledge*, *vidyā*, the "higher truths" - a point completely missed by Edgerton in his article on the Upaniṣads' teaching (presently to be examined), evidently because most of us are ignorant of this possibility. Without *integrity* there can be no true reflection of a reality inscribed in the depth of psyche, but of which our limited brain cannot know the full expression and the power, except indirectly. The mirror mind brought to full tranquillity, so emphasised by the Buddhists, is one of the methods used to reach out to certain conclusions on the macrocosm and the microcosm. Something of all this is hinted at in the Ṛgvedic hymn of creation:

"Seers searching in their heart's wisdom discovered it [the primordial seed of mind] as the bond between the created and the Uncreate". (X.129.4)

Hence *satya*, in the Ṛgveda, described as the luminous, lofty (*vibhrād brhat*) is

"established on the unshakable foundation of heaven (*divo*)" (X.170.2ab)

that is, in the higher *loka*; and by means of

"insights gained within the heart (*hṛdayasya praketaiḥ*) the Vasiṣṭha-seers secretly sought the thousand branched [tree of knowledge]". (VII.33.9ab)

etc. *secretly* meaning in the silence of the soul. Unfortunately these shades of meaning are lost to most.

#### WESTERN EXEGESIS AND SACRED TEXTS

One factor of supreme importance to the understanding of *sacred texts* is an essential relatedness which should operate between text and translator for the appreciation and understanding of the text. A document such as the Ṛgveda, held sacred for millennia, must be grasped in its spiritual context, its inner significance, in the why of its sacredness, hence must be *understood*. The case of L. Renou's great philological work will be glanced at as indicative of a lack of this very relatedness. Here P. Thieme's survey of what became Renou's legacy gives precious indications of Renou's fundamental lack of spiritual understanding which only confirm my contentions. Thus in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, (vol.77, 1957, review of Books - Etudes védiques et paninéennes. L. Renou. Tome 1), after his summary of Renou's vast contribution to elucidating the Ṛgveda's themes, words, its poetry and obscurities, etc. , Thieme voices his total disagreement with Renou's emphasis on the poets' "literary contests", as Renou imagined, which reduces the sacredness of the hymns to mere "joutes poétiques":

"There is in Renou - and even more so in Geldner ... an unmistakable tendency to secularize the RV, to make, in this instance, the 'powers of speech', a convenient weapon by which one poet defeats the other ... The poems of the RV are, it would appear, meant chiefly for 'literary contests' ... the poet's major concern... is his victory in such a contest, because it secures his future ... If he 'trembles' (*vip*) it is not in the ecstasy of his inspiration - described e.g. in RV 6.9.6 ... his trembling is due, rather, to an anticipation of the ... severe requirements of the rhetorical fight for which he has to prepare his 'thèmes littéraires'." (JAOS p.53)

This steering away from the essential core of *sacred texts* is typical of a whole generation of Western scholars for whom hymns as recondite as those of the Ṛgveda aroused interest as a linguistic challenge, but being pre-historic, could not *a priori* mean anything deeply religious or sacred. As a result, Renou's translations may be clear, close to the verses, but they fail to catch the essence of the poets' flight of the spirit and mystical insight, and also the touch of poetry. Once again *the letter killeth, the spirit giveth life*. Renou's commentaries gave the scholarly world an excellent tool for coping linguistically and analytically with the texts. But this is only the first step towards an approach to the core meaning of the verses. Thieme notes one supremely important quality of the Ṛgveda:

"The poetry of the RV is *sacred poetry* not alone because of its *sacred themes*, but also, and emphatically so, because of *its own transcendental quality*, which *is bound up with its esoteric form*". (op.cit. p.52. italics my own)

This touches on the core of the Vedas, and we might add, its mantric quality, mostly lost to modern readers. This is a very unusual admission for a scholar, it shows a change in attitude and prefigures the better perception of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century scholars. Both Renou and Thieme recognize that the poet cherishes his "miraculous intuition", "by which he is 'lighted up' and made to 'glow', by which (RV6.9.6) 'his ears fly asunder', 'asunder his eye and the light that is placed in his heart'"; but for Renou intuition is just a means of finding the right word. In addition, Thieme admits

"... an essential element of the poet's speech is its secretness: to the non- initiated it is inaccessible as to its content and form" etc.

These ideas

"form a backdrop against which even plain and simple objects take on a peculiar hue: the face value of what the poet says is *tinted by what lies behind it*". (p.52)

One could not have hoped for a better confirmation of the main thesis of the present study. What lies behind this poetry, one might add, is a complete *gnosis* which very few have recognized but which Thieme sensed. Thieme again makes an important point:

"Art, in the RV, is a means, not to show the poet's 'brilliance of mind' (Geldner, correctly refuted by Renou, p. 6), nor to win a prize for literature ('le succès dans la joute littéraire', p.18), but *to work efficient magic*. The greater the art, the more powerful the spell".<sup>3</sup>

In this respect Thieme acknowledges "the poet's deep conviction that it is his poem which renders the

sacrifice efficient", but one may well wonder whether Thieme or anyone else understood the why of this, the *modus operandi*. The present study has endeavoured to somewhat elucidate what this "magic" represented, how the hidden link between man and deva was forged and used for specific purposes bearing upon the ritual.

#### KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH AS MAGIC: A CLARIFICATION

Another important, related factor is that of the ancient understanding of *magic* and its constant misunderstanding by almost all. The R̥gvedic "belief in the magic power of spoken truth", as Thieme puts it (p.54), is evident in the "act of truth", or truth utterance (*satyokti*)<sup>4</sup> based upon one's complete fulfilment of one's being, function, occupation, duty, involving thought, word and deed as being "one", hence as absolute truth to one's self. W.N.Brown in this respect gave a perfect definition and recognized the worth of this kind of truth which

"... is truth of life, truth in one's total conduct, truth in acceptance of responsibilities and performance of duty. It is truth as the metaphysical basis of the cosmic order, which for each human being and each deity is the sanction and ethical basis of his actions. It is the substance of his obligations or duty in the cosmos and it shares a quality which Polonius seems to have had in mind when he admonished Laertes 'to thine own self be true; and it follows as the night the day thou canst not then be false to any man.' "<sup>5</sup>

With this as the metaphysical background to the ṛṣis' stand for truth and their knowledge of psyche's dimensions, it may become understandable how *Vāc*, or *brahman*, the word of power, would produce its effect as irrevocably as the "act of truth" is reported to have done. But as W.N. Brown rightly mentions elsewhere, this does not mean that one can bend the cosmic forces to one's desires: man, in this act of truth, or in the pronouncement of the *word of power*, must be in perfect oneness with the cosmic forces. For "truth" is here vital. The devas were seen as "true to law"; as custodians and accomplishers of the law, for they are "ṛta-visioned" (IV.55.2; V.51.2) and therefore perform their task in accordance with the ṛta. Hence the world order, whether in the heavens or on earth, is the mirror of the harmony existing between the essence of "being" *sat*, and its outer activity, and between the devas and their various groups. The devas respond to a human being through the truth that shines from within the depth of his psyche in harmony with their own being. This accounts for the human "resonance" echoing to the deva resonance and why the deva can respond to the human call and share in the ritualistic work. It is a question of harmonious frequencies, not amenable to the scrutiny of philology, and thus completely missed by our scholars. Any deep discordance in man reveals itself through a false frequency which immediately stops this inner link, (hinted at in respect to human beings in R̥gv.X.71). Hence through the truth realised and lived in his depth, man can appeal to the truth in the divine powers and thereby come within their circle of Cosmic Order. That nowadays this has become extremely rare among our Western races is due to man having turned his back on this inner truth for selfish purposes, gain, cravings, petty ambitions etc. which cut off the human from the very source of his mainspring.

"Speak the truth, act the truth, never swerve from the path of truth" (Tait.Up. I.11.1) is an injunction that was engraved in the human heart millennia ago.

A distinction is made between *ṛta* and *satya*; both are separately mentioned in X.190.1 as emerging from blazing *tapas of the Unnamed*. Truth, *satya*, is the individual expression - whether godly or human of the Cosmic Truth which manifests as the Supreme Law from which all laws derive. *Satya* as integrity in human beings is included in *Ṛta* as Cosmic Harmony forming a oneness, a wholeness. Integrated man whose integrity is irreproachable, thereby commands the elements whose noumena are the devas, for he works in harmony with nature, and *in obeying nature through its laws, nature obeys him*. This is an *occult law* apparently unknown to and undetected by those who criticise certain R̥gvedic religious concepts. This is the background vision of the ṛṣis, underlying their doctrine of *Vāc*, as studied in ch.5, *Vāc*'s correspondences to *ākāśa*'s differentiations, and *Vāc* as the essence of *puruṣa* as cryptically stated in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. Therefore

"One whole governs the moving and the fixed, that which walks and flies, this variegated creation." (III.54.8cd)

"The fair-winged One, one in nature, inspired-seers, by their incantations, shape in many ways." (X.114.5)

"The Seer beholds that Being hidden in mystery in whom all find a single home; in That all this unites.

From That all issues forth. He, omnipresent, is warp and woof mid created things. (Yjv.32.9)

No fuller acknowledgement could be stated of the *oneness* of all life and its fountain-source in That, hence its *sacredness*. This is another instance of the spiritual message of the Vedas unheeded and unappreciated by most of our Western scholars up to the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. This far-visioned truth takes its powerful stand on the inter-linkedness of all constituent elements, as perceived by the Vedic sages, including the relationship between devas and men, their very imperfect brothers.

"Verily one-minded are the devas towards man; together equal in their gift-bestowing." (VIII.27.14ab)

for men and devas take their birth from the same mother's womb (VIII.83.8) - Aditi. This is also the overall message of *The Secret Doctrine*. But it is far from truly understood.

This stand on *truth* takes us to the problem of *magic*. The Western wrong approach to sacred texts leading to wrong conclusions and erroneous translations has not spared the Upaniṣads whose language is no longer mythological and for the most part quite simple. This adds another proof to what D. Frawley called modern man's rigid enclosure "within the preconceptions of his cultural world view"<sup>6</sup> considered the superior one, and his incapacity to transcend this. Thus the whole question of the literal apprehension of sacred texts with a total ignorance of their spiritual meaning also includes the complete misunderstanding even unto distortion of that "divine science" which the ancients called "magic" and the moderns have reduced to "trickery". This should be elucidated in connection with Edgerton's analysis entitled "The Upaniṣads: what do they seek, and why?" (A.O.S.J. 1929)

#### THE DIVINE SCIENCE AND F. EDGERTON

In his presidential address to the "American Oriental Society" Edgerton considered the Upaniṣads' *quest for knowledge* as "not for its own sake" - such as is, according to him, philosophic enquiry among Western philosophers; but for specific, practical purposes; e.g. the means of "attaining salvation", or the "supernatural world", not to speak of all earthly desires that average man keeps coveting; quite so, but as a lead to higher spheres, for the ultimate end, admitted and emphasised again and again, is *mokṣa*, liberation from the trammels of earthly life, all the rest being by the way. Showing how the Upaniṣads, in their approach, are a direct follow-on from the Vedas and the Brāhmaṇas, he summarises the whole quest thus:

"'He who knows' this or that, gets his desire fulfilled" (p.108); "'he who knows' gets anything he wants, by the direct and *magical power* of his knowledge" (p.109. italics mine).

Liberation implies bliss and bliss, as happiness at this earthly level, is essentially the average man's quest, hence *the departure point for the argument*. However, there may be no obvious purpose for Western philosophers in "search for abstract truth about the nature of the universe and man's place in it" (p.101), for enjoying building their theories built by one philosopher but to be destroyed by the next only to scaffold his own, - "except to enjoy the intellectual pleasure of cognizing it, and to share it with others" as Edgerton put it; yet, whether for practical purposes or not, whether he realised it or not, this "enjoyment" is an aim in itself, and comes to the same end: at the lower level, pleasure, joy, enjoyment; at the highest, bliss, *Ānanda*.

In a well known passage of the Bṛhad Upaniṣad mentioned by Edgerton, argument upon argument are heaped upon the protagonists pandering to human desire from one pleasure to another, culminating in IV.3.33 where the highest bliss for worldly men is mentioned; but a hundredfold that bliss is one bliss of those who have won the Fathers' world as a reward for a well spent life; but still a



hundredfold that bliss is one bliss in the gandharva world, and this goes on to the world of the gods, etc. until one reaches the *brahman* state, the highest world - all other bliss becoming meaningless by comparison. No desire fulfilment is worth that bliss - for the average man a pure abstraction.

Edgerton's argument is based upon the superficial assessment of the word *vidyā*, knowledge which he remarks, "all Sanskritists know well", "means in classical Sanskrit also 'magic' out and out" (p.103); this to him as to most scholars meant trickery (witness Geldner), or illusion. However, *vidyā* comprises the *triple veda*, that is, the *insight into the spiritual domain*, plus logic, metaphysics, science of government and practical arts, etc.; according to *Manu* (VII.43) *ātmavidyā* - spiritual wisdom, essentially the quest of the Upaniṣads. One fails to see where *trickery* can enter here, especially since magic was the *divine science of the soul*, *divina sapientia*, known as such by the Greco-Roman initiates.

The modern prejudice is rooted in the denial of certain basic factors known to the Ancients concerning the human constitution and its capacity to "tune in" to other dimensions; thus psyche with its innate powers which, when developed, smack too much of the miraculous, hence trickery. This is reflected in assessments of Patañjali's *Yogasūtras* where the "occult powers" or *siddhis* enumerated and cursorily described, are considered to have no place in such a "rational systematic system" as yoga. It never occurs to these rationalist deniers of psyche that these powers can only manifest in accordance with the hidden laws of nature of which they know nothing. Yoga, an age-old, well tried system, which Professor Corrado Pensa showed as far from including in its scheme of salvation "the popular cult of magic" with "low naturalism", as the usual denigration has it, but rather a system in which the occult powers of psyche form an "essentially organic and unitary structure of yoga"<sup>7</sup>, for the simple reason that yoga is concerned with the psyche and its functions which manifest in accordance with Nature's laws.

One can work out three main divisions to that "divine science":

1) true *knowledge* which goes far beyond the accumulation of facts and their relationship, beyond mental theory and its acceptance and rejection; this *knowledge* implies *identification* from within, from the essence (not the outer form), with the object to be apprehended and known; this implies profound meditation and purification of the person, for without this, no idea may be truly understood, no insight, no depth of soul may be plumbed. Here must be understood that no perversion of mind, no cravings for anything, no emotional storms may be allowed to disturb the serene depth of the mind which only then can mirror the object of meditation in its essence; for instance, can fathom the soul's own depth. All outer failings must fall away *naturally* before any identification can occur; for psyche's depth belongs to the higher dimension to which only those whose body atoms are of the "lightest" kind in both senses of the word *light*, who are free from bodily cravings, whose aspirations are of the purest kind, whose aims and motivations are equally pure, whose mind has been rendered a pure mirror, can attain. Heavy, earthy vibrations, imply low desires that keep the mind at the lowest level from which it cannot rise, and are thus an unsurmountable obstacle. Hence some dictionaries give *tapas* as meaning austerity, penance, etc. but none give the true essence of this strict discipline and what it leads to, for the meaning of *tapas* is far more than mere penance. Obviously, Edgerton had no idea of these requirements, some of which are mentioned in the Upaniṣads. His judgment is, at best, very superficial.

2) the understanding and thereby the efficient use of the *creative word* which implies the knowledge of vibrations/frequencies, their inter-relationship with everything and their effects on surroundings, whether natural, human or celestial; in fact, the fathoming out of *resonance*; hence the capacity to manipulate such energies. This is what the modern rationalists cannot even grasp, yet the Ṛgveda is full of such allusions and indeed expressions such as Agni propping up the sky with truthful mantras (I.67.5; cf. VI.16.35,36 etc.); musicians know and manipulate these frequencies. The ṛṣis' deep knowledge of the subtlest differences and influences of the various frequencies used in their chants opened for them subtler dimensions of which we have no idea. The very proof of this is in the oft quoted verse:

"Who knows not this the eternal-syllable (*akṣara*) wherein all the devas have their abode in the highest empyrean, what will he do with the *ṛk*? They who know sit here assembled." (Ṛgv.I.164.30. See also I.40.5, VII.101.1 and ch. 5)

The seers discovered their own inner resonance in tune with the cosmic resonance during their depth introspection (*tapas*). We cannot dismiss this *vidyā* as illusory because of our sheer ignorance of the power of frequencies and usual incapacity to introspect. The Vedic verses are there to prove it and other civilizations such as the Egyptian, Sumerian, Parsi, etc. knew this gnosis.

- 3) the activating of the flame-divine discovered at the heart of the human being and activated during *tapas, the contemplative exertion* (I.67.3,4; V.11.4; VI.16.13; VIII.44.19) as the great all-driving power shared by man and deva, which at the price of purification, finally leads to complete absorption in the object of meditation, and to illumination.

None of these three points deserves the pitiable, derisive epithet of "trickery" which only denotes profound ignorance of an introspective science which revealed the human psyche to the initiated, and which the Ancients called the "divine science"; which the Ṛgvedic verses studied here, however misunderstood by our Western exegesists, proclaim in what appear as nonsensical yet enigmatic terms. The very fact that the whole domain of these three points belongs to the psyche, itself denied existence, makes them automatically out of reach of most intellectuals. That part of this gnosis, in falling into the hands of disreputable practitioners of ledgermain pandering to basest human cravings, etc., was completely distorted, finds a record in the Greek Magical Papyri. No initiate could have debased himself to such writings. But to automatically judge magic, the science of devas and of psyche, on such writings, without enquiring into what the ancient "divine science" really represented, reflects the *a priori* prejudices of scholars, and indeed a lack of objectivity.

The ṛṣis found the fullness of knowledge in *identification*; this concerns point 1 above. Edgerton's argument runs around the "magic power of knowledge", for him a base, primitive idea without any foundation, which translates itself in the Upaniṣadic "identification" of various factors, following the trend of the Brāhmaṇas. Thus referring to the four *muktis* or releases from the evils of human existence, like death, cycles, time and its ravages, cited in Bṛhad Up.III.1.8

"... most characteristically, these releases are magically gained by *knowledge* of certain thoroughly ritualistic identifications of elements of the sacrifice with cosmic and human powers, quite in the style of the Brāhmaṇas.

Thus by the identification of the hotar-priest with fire, as a cosmic power and with speech, as a human faculty, one wins release from death" (p.102-103)

such "ritual-magic wisdom" being put in the mouth of such a sage as Yājñavalkya! Edgerton failed to realise that it is not the identification of the priest as a person that is in question, but the finding of and identifying with *the inner driving flame-power* within the priest which is the same as that all driving cosmic force manifesting on earth as fire and which is, in its essence, equivalent to the power of the *creative word* - Vāc and Agni being the two sides of the one power. As H. Aguilar (one of the few Western scholars who understands the Vedic idea of sacrifice) remarks concerning the *yajña*:

"Without first conceiving the sacrificial fire within, it would be of little avail to kindle the external fire..." (*Sacrifice in the Ṛgveda*. p.47)

in his comment on the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa statement:

"... but when he builds Agni after taking him up into his own self, he causes Agni to be born from Agni, the immortal from the immortal, the sinless from the sinless..." (Śat.Br. VII.4.1.1. op.cit. p.47)

This complete interiorisation has been denied the Ṛgvedic seers. But the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa reveals it as a *sine qua non*, without which the ritual could not be effective, or communion with the devas achieved.

A description of this kind of *inner identification* which has remained ungrasped by exegesists, is found in Chāndogya Up. (IV.10ff) where the boy disciple Upakosala, left alone by his teacher, cried out in despondency and would not feed any more. At last occurred a shift in the level of the boy's perception: and a voice from the fire told him that *prāṇa* is *brahman*, bliss is *brahman*, know thou *brahman*; that in the heart lotus resides *brahman*; that everything is alive with a divine life beyond sense perceptions and fundamentally everything is one, though different in appearance; therefore all things are expressive of *brahman*. Whereupon the fire, the earth, the sun and moon and stars, the lightning, everything was transformed, life was transformed. In this obvious mystical experience a change in the level of awareness

occurs opening the door to psychic insight. When the teacher returned from his journey, he observed, in the boy's eyes, a transformation. There and then he gave him the final hint: he who glows in the depth of your eyes is *brahman*, thus summing up the teaching. The same doctrine is found in Uddalaka's dialogue with his son Śvetaketu (Chānd.Up. VI.1ff) and in Chāndogya Up.VIII.7ff. where Prajāpati leads Indra and Virocana from illusion to illusion till finally only Indra realises the essential meaning of the truth of truths.

If we have somewhat grasped the Ṛgvedic verses concerning Agni and Vāc as  
 "On him [Agni] their own kin, they mount as on a ridge on earth" (V.7.5) and  
 "they tracked down Vāc to within themselves". (X.71.3)

we should be able to grasp what lies behind *identification: a search into the inner dimension of psyche* where lies the fundamental link with the ultimate: in the human being the *flame-spirit* and its *divine resonance* which takes one to cosmic dimensions. This inner search is wide of the average Westerner's horizon. Such an *identification from within* was put very succinctly in the Maitri Upaniṣad:

"That which is in the fire; that which is in yonder sun, and that  
 which is in my heart, that is one." (Maitri Up. VI.17)

The seership and insight of the ṛṣis of the Ṛgveda lead to the themes being developed and explained in the Upaniṣads, based on *knowledge through identification*, i.e. the experience of mystical oneness. Most Christian mystics never explained their union openly or directly, as it was against Church dogma, but Meister Eckhart gave startling hints. The same kind of *knowing* is suggested in the Biblical "Be still and know that I am God"! (Ps. 46.10) The continuity of the gnosis is again demonstrated. It is easy for Reason to dismiss this kind of *identification* or *union* as illusory or hallucination or trickery, yet it knows nothing of psyche's dimensions and activity, and thus, strictly speaking, has no right to criticise. One might recall here how Plato, in his Socratic dialogues, skilfully proved how precarious is intellectual discussion which, going round and round in circles, never really gets to the core of the problem of truth.

The ultimate question as worded by Edgerton is:

"With what shall we identify the one thing by knowing which all is known?"

for which the final conclusion is:

"The knowledge of the One which is All, and its identification with the human soul is then a short-cut to the satisfaction of all desires, the freedom from all fear and danger and sorrow" etc. (p.112)

"He who has true knowledge is saved, directly and immediately,  
 and precisely by virtue of that knowledge" etc. (p.102)

That knowledge concerns

"the real nature of the soul and its position in the universe, its relation  
 to the rest of the universe and its guiding principles". (p.102)

All this is correct but what Edgerton fails to perceive is that any mere formulaic "identification of something or other with the First Principle of the universe" will carry no weight, for it remains at the superficial formula level of the mind which cannot identify with anything. *Identification* is a soul realisation, not a mental formula glibly repeated, which is all that Edgerton perceived. He had absolutely no inkling of the meaning of identification. The *formula* pertains to "head knowledge" remaining only at the superficial level of theory, opinion, not reaching that innermost experience far beyond this level.

So far we are not told how one may get to that state of identification. There is need of something more, something important, specific and difficult is missing from all these theoretical identifications taken at their face level; there is need of the entrance into activity of that transformative agent, the heart *cakra*, open door to psyche, which alone can bring a change in the level of awareness. (Recall the tale of Upakosala, Chānd.Up. IV.10ff). The statements chosen by Edgerton hardly go into the method or means of identification. The Bṛhad Up. IV.4.22 gives the first kindergarten steps. Thus concerning the "space in the heart" where lies the "ruler of all"

"such a one the Brahmans desire to know by repetitions of the Vedas,  
 by sacrifices, by offerings, by penance, by fasting"

in other words by purification and *tapas* in its first grades, steps equivalent to the abc of language

learning, steps found in all religions. Then comes the second stage, the surmounting of desires. Then in IV.4.23 comes the third step, meditation, the inner process, the crux of the whole endeavour. The steps belie Edgerton's jump to the erroneous conclusion that "he who knows" gets anything he wants by "the direct and magical power of his knowledge" (p.109) - which sounds like the flashing of a magical wand and lo and behold one knows! The facts are totally different and expounded in the Upaniṣads.

In fn.28, p.113 Edgerton considers the dialogue between Gargya, a good talker but vain, and Ajātaśatru concerning the statement that the "soul's true form" is its identification with the One, the true form "in which all his desires are satisfied, in which he is without desire and without sorrow" (Bṛhad Up.IV.3.19) and Edgerton asks the question:

"Who is this soul that 'has no desire'? None other than he who *knows* the soul - knows, that is, the esoteric truth that his own soul is one with the universal soul or Brahman."

This is admitting an Upaniṣadic truth, but he interprets this great mystery which, for the disciple or the mystic, constitutes the supreme goal, as

"that is, when he knows the world-soul as himself, he controls it, which is the soul of everything, and so controls everything; nay rather he is everything." (p.113)

Unfortunately for the veracity of Edgerton's extremely worldly and degrading conclusion, the important point which seems to escape him, as it does all rational, profit-bound minds, is the essential meaning of such *knowledge* which is hardly explained in that passage. Did he unconsciously wish to debase the main purport of the Upaniṣads' teaching? His argument hangs on a complete ignorance of the human *spirit-impregnated psyche*. He thus goes on: when there is no statement made "of the profit ensuing to one who knows thus" or of

"the practical, magical benefits of such 'mystic knowledge' ... clearly stated in connection with almost all similar expressions" (p.114)

Edgerton asks

"but is it conceivable that perfect knowledge should have no practical reward, when imperfect and partial bits of knowledge have just been asserted to have each their appropriate rewards?"

This is a perfect example of rational misapprehension so deplorably common among our scholars. Is it conceivable that hankering after, or pandering to human pitiable, profit bound cravings and conditionings still operate in the domain of *perfect knowledge*? By the time the human being has reached complete *identification* with his soul, all desires fall away irretrievably. Is it conceivable that one cannot conceive this simple fact of psyche? This is where the action of *tapas* over-rides everything else, but of this the scholar knows nothing. There can be no wish even to control the universe, such desires belonging to the lowest levels of the human person, the earth-bound *kāma-manas*; they can have no power over the *spirit-impregnated soul*. This is very apparent in the Upaniṣads, why is it not recognized? Śri Aurobindo who, like many other mystics, reached that stage, knew something of this exalted state, has this to say:

"For at the gates of the Transcendent stands that mere and perfect Spirit described in the Upaniṣads, luminous, pure, sustaining the world but inactive in it ... and the mind when it passes those gates suddenly, without intermediate transitions, receives a sense of the unreality of the world and the sole reality of the Silence which is one of the most powerful and convincing experiences of which the human mind is capable..." (*The Life Divine*. Ch. 3. Quoted in *The Teachings of the Mystics*. p.64.)

"Most powerful and convincing": after this who can still hanker after *controlling the world*, or after any other such worldly bauble? "Who knows thus" is far beyond all mental weaknesses, for that knowledge belongs to a much higher plane of understanding which does not seem to have illumined Edgerton. His conclusion is that of some one imprisoned in his profit-making world-view typical of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, but not of the forest dwelling mystics of the Upaniṣads millennia ago. To fail to grasp this *vidyā* is to fail to understand the true import of *tat tvam asi*, the very core of Upaniṣadic teaching.

Such *direct knowledge* 8) is akin to the *Act of Truth* which involves absolute truth to one's self in thought, word and deed, - an extreme rarity - but it is only *akin* to it, for *direct knowledge* pertains to an even deeper level of truth of being than that of the whole person, it goes to the core of the *ātman*, the *flame-spirit*.

So the Upaniṣads' *direct knowledge* cannot be realised by mere thinking about it, or by declaring it, or by any mental activity as the ṛṣis themselves have insisted upon. There is another way to this *vidyā*, previously described, perhaps far more stringent, yet testified to by many sages. Hence erroneous translations lead the reader completely astray, as the following;

"That subtle soul (*ātman*) is to be known by thought (*cetas*)

wherein the senses (*prāṇa*) fivefoldly have entered.

The whole of men's thinking is interwoven with the senses.

When that is purified, the (*ātman*) shines forth." (Muṇḍaka Up.III.1.9)

This translation is rather inadequate. Apart from the fact that the *ātman* is *not the soul* but the *flame-spirit* whose *vehicle is the soul bridging* the innermost to the mind, the word *cetas* is not mere thought, though linked to *cit* which in fact means to perceive, understand, fix the mind on, *shine*. Our word *thought* is vague, has no power, but *cetas* is powerful. Monier Williams gives it as "splendour, consciousness, intelligence, *thinking soul*" all of which are far beyond thought and imply a depth wherefrom shines *soul understanding*, insight, knowledge, for all of which we have no single word. Note the word *splendour* which can only refer to *soul enlightenment*.

The first line as translated by Hume is contradicted in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad thus:

"Not through much learning is the *ātman* reached.

Not through the intellect and sacred teaching.

It is reached by the chosen of him - because they choose him.

To his chosen the *ātman* reveals his glory.

Not even through deep knowledge can the *ātman* be reached

Unless evil ways are abandoned, and there is rest in the senses,

concentration in the mind and peace in one's heart. (Kaṭha Up.II.23.24)

Though Mascaro's translation be far from literal, it gives the very essence of the Upaniṣad's meaning. In the Muṇḍaka passage an important lesson is taught, usually undetected. It refers to the withdrawal of the five sense-organs - those ultimate manifestations of *prāṇa*, which are now turning inwards to fuse with their inner counterpart. As they merge inwards so does the mind withdraw its attention inwards; our thinking is interwoven with the senses which lead the mind outwardly to the objective world, during the waking state, but now lead it inwardly to that seat of *splendour*, *cetas*, which Monier Williams gives out as "the thinking soul"; this is the higher aspect of the mind, soul illumined, which now looking inwards, casting off all shackles, finds its seat of power, *psyche*. To our usual breathing out and in, there corresponds a parallel breathing out and in, but with a different rhythm; it is that inner, underlying rhythm of *prāṇa* that now takes over and leads the mind inwards to its source, *psyche*. That underlying inner rhythm is intimately bound up with the cosmic rhythm. The simple words, "when that is purified" imply an enormous endeavour and new experience. Such withdrawal occurs during depth meditation, but is also part of the process of dying.

The whole passage is very terse; in a few words it collapses a vast field of the most subtle and revealing experience. Unfortunately it remains a dead letter for most who know not the *psyche*.

The Bṛhad Upaniṣad (IV.4.23) admits that in meditating on *brahman* its meaning is revealed within the soul and all beings are seen in *brahman*. With such realisations evil can no longer touch the person, all desires fall away. It does not say why, but *within the soul* gives the clue. Similarly

"Who so realises the *ātman* has become all beings,

for him verily where is delusion, where sorrow

who can behold such oneness. (Īśā Up. 7)

*Tam tvam asi*, inwardly, fundamentally is the reason for "love thy neighbour as thyself". Not a word about all this from Edgerton; his conclusion is just : *control of all*, the greatest boon offered by the Upaniṣads.

The quest of the Upaniṣads is the quest of the innermost truth only found after all blockages are removed and one stands *naked* so to speak in the presence of the "Ancient of Days" - the Ātman, Brahman, Puruṣa. These names refer to the same One and only Reality, here called *flame-spirit* or *flame-divine*. Edgerton's complete failure to get to the core meaning of the Upaniṣads' profoundest teaching, reducing it to "controlling" all, proves that no rationalism and philology, no worldly objectivity full of preconceptions, unaccompanied by an understanding of the human psyche and its activity, and an intuitive perception of the

possibility of mystical union or identification, will ever fathom out *sacred texts*. That "divine science" which revealed psyche to humans, *ātman* to psyche, also revealed how to reach out to that final *identification* which alone is real *knowledge*, the real, ancient meaning of *magic* so sorely travestied and totally degraded by all denigrating modern ignorance. *Identification* is mystical union, is *yoga*, and Patañjali outlined the steps towards this union. This union was voiced by Christ as "I and my Father are one" and by the Sufi martyr as "I am the truth", both of which sayings, being misunderstood, led to the death of those two mystics who knew.

#### SOME MORE STUMBLING BLOCKS

Examples of such scholarly interpretations as have been examined in the course of the present study, e.g. W.N.Brown, A.B.Keith, F.B.J.Kuiper, P.Mus, L.Renou, J.Varenne, only prove how the spiritual message of the Ṛgveda is practically non-existent in their contributions, however excellent their philology, and the relevant verses dismissed, - as unintelligible or simply ignored. In the case of Kuiper or Mus, an enquiry into terrestrial, human activities, such as a social charter, or sun-racing as religious rites during arctic winters, is elaborated and substituted as of highest importance, with no thought given to the fundamental fact that we have here sacred texts with a spiritual meaning. The essence of the Ṛgvedic message is not even touched.

Against any deeper appreciation of the Ṛgveda stand: 1) literalness to the point of absurdity; 2) the underlying, unconscious prejudice still present that *prehistoric* means *primitive*, hence irrational, hence simple-minded, exemplified by the naturalistic images (cf. Renou, Varenne, Mus, Brown, Keith). One might well here quote A. Coomaraswamy's remark in "Measures of Fire":

"The customary designation of the early Greek and Indian philosophies as 'naturalistic' is a betrayal of the truth. It is we, for whom "such knowledge as is not empirical is meaningless" (Keith), who fail to distinguish the adequate natural symbol from its reference, we who see the pointing finger rather than the moon itself." (p.389 fn)

Keith's admission shows up the complete blockage that prevents the rationalist/empiricist from understanding *sacred texts* whose psycho/spiritual contents range far beyond the mere empirical. Having emptied the universe of all life, by which is meant biological life, most intellectuals are incapable of distinguishing between *zoe* or "infinite being" and *bios* or the "living and dying manifestation of this eternal world in time" (*Myth of the Goddess*, p.148); but the Greeks were quite capable of this, hence their two different words; 3) the constant exteriorising, as lifeless natural products, of the elements, earth, water, wind, fire, which for the seers meant the "garb" of living *noumena*; hence a devaluation of the sun shorn of its *numinous* quality, or the misconstruing of the "netherworld"; and the complete disregard of that fundamental basis to vision, to seership, *psyche*; in fact these are non-existent; 4) sheer lack of spiritual insight and a refusal to recognise not just the Vedic revelation, but even the Greek spiritual revelation as valid, only the latter's rational aspects have won appraisal.

It seems too difficult to grasp that to the vision of the ṛṣi, every phenomenon, every element harboured an inner core of vibrant life, of *zoe*, a *noumenon* in a different dimension. The ṛṣi related what he perceived in his own soul, as in the cosmos, to a higher reality in a network of divine forces with which he communed. The many varied physical aspects which appear as separate, were all interlinked through that vast network. This is the very substance of the Ṛgvedic vision with which the rational mind feels at a loss and degrades in its interpretation. What was viewed as sacred in the Ṛgveda has become so empty that it bears no spiritual meaning any more. Hence what Thieme has called the "secularisation" - one might add, even to the point of vulgarisation of the Ṛgveda - is accomplished. However, fortunately for this sacred text, more recent scholars, like Gonda, Panikkar, Aguilar, Mitchiner, Knipe, are reversing this narrow, false trend.

Another vital problem, in connection with the psyche and a whole generation of Western scholars' incapacity to understand its statements, concerns the notion of the "underworld" which Kuiper, following the Greeks, placed under the earth. We may recall that in his book *In the Dark Places of Wisdom*, P.Kingsley observed that, at the root of Western as well as Eastern mythology, lurks

"the idea that the sun comes out of the underworld and goes back to the underworld every night. It belongs to the underworld." (p.68)

Strange belief which can but bring a smile of derision to the all denigrating intellect. But is our understanding of the underworld correct? This idea of the sun issuing from a darkness or underworld is based upon a knowledge of psyche's zone of interconnections and opposite polarities, quite different from the rational mind's zone of activity; one being concerned with seeing and feeling at a subtler, subjective level, the other with seeing at the objective level where everything is demarcated. In the above description is a psychic combination of several factors which the mind discriminates from four different standpoints:

- 1) psyche's own depths out of which emerges the subjective light of illumination (cf.I.50.10); reflecting the sun's emergence to manifestation from the great unknown and its sinking back into the great unknown; this is reflected in the sun's objective appearance from and disappearance in the darkness, morning and evening.
- 2) the abode of the dead, sometimes called astral world; called *hades* by the Greeks, the world of shadows that gives the impression of being beneath our objective senses, hence the terms "descent" into the "underworld".
- 3) the *unconscious* first observed in the West by Freud, then probed more deeply by Jung and his followers.
- 4) that darkness from which emerges the sun every morn, implying the unknown, the fearsome, sometimes even harbouring evil.

That this uncharted darkness could hold the seed of light, or sun, as well as the seed of evil, is against all logic of "either or". In psyche's domain there is no "either or"; this we fail to grasp as a truth underlying our physical/mental reality and therefore relevant in sacred texts. The *unconscious*, it has been discovered, comprises all opposites in tension or resolution, depending on the maturity or immaturity of the person. This accounts for the ancient records of opposites held together in the one deity without creating havoc: thus the *ghorā tānu*, or awful mien of Varuṇa with his dreaded noose, who yet listens to and forgives his devotee. The image is created by the mind's reaction at encountering two polarities in the one figure. Our logic of "either or" belongs only to the rational mind whose hegemony disappears at the psychic level.

The term "underworld" or "netherworld" with the connotation of "subterranean" which means under the earth, or even "destruction" which it seems to have among some, is erroneous as descriptive of the unknown "beyond" of the Ṛgveda which is certainly not under the earth but in the *transcendental realm*, or transcosmic, quite beyond our space-time dimension. This misunderstood aspect of the ṛṣi's thought will now be taken up with regard to Kuiper's interpretation of the "underworld" in the Ṛgveda. His remark in the following statement shows immediately where one stumbling-block lies:

"It remains one of the unsolved problems of Vedic mythology why terms for 'nether-world' and 'primeval world' can alternate with 'heaven', the 'highest heaven', 'the third heaven'. Possibly these terms primarily denoted the mysterious world of the totality of the dualistic cosmos, Viṣṇu's third step, and were then also used in application to the undivided primeval world..." (*Ancient Indian Cosmogony*. p.225)

The first sentence of the above quote evidences the usual failure to detect the different dimensions of the psychic world where, in its first zone, all polarities are held together, and a wrong interpretation of netherworld. The refusal, however unconscious, to recognize the psyche runs *counter to the Ṛgveda as the record par excellence of psyche's dominant activity*, its visioning, its far sightedness, its capacity to tune in to higher vibrations lost to our outer senses, its inner knowledge, etc. There is however, in the second sentence, an inkling that the "totality" of the cosmos might be meant, but why the emphasis on the "dualistic cosmos" when the Vedic cosmos was viewed from various aspects, such as the threefold, fourfold, sevenfold, as discussed in previous chapters. Kuiper finds it difficult to reconcile the totality of the cosmos with his idea of the "nether world" which he places in "subterranean waters", perhaps too influenced by some Greek ideas. The words *nether* or *under* fit awkwardly to describe the world of subtler matter beyond the senses, for it is not under the earth or under the senses but quite in another dimension. This netherworld Kuiper understands in a completely physical sense as the following shows:

"The nether world (that is, the *subterranean waters and the nocturnal sky*) is Varuṇa's realm and here is the seat of Ṛta, which is 'hidden where they unharness the horses of the Sun' (R.S.V.62.1) ... This nether world was enclosed in the primordial hill, the firm rock which Indra opened ..." ("Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest" I.I.J. IV.1960. p.226; italics mine)

In *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* (A.I.C.) Kuiper remarked concerning the term *parāvāt* which means "distant" that "it has long been observed that it (*parāvāt*) often denotes the under world" (p.224)

and in his article "The Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest" he *identified* this *parāvāt* with the netherworld which is very arbitrary and most questionable, stating "... which in the Ṛgveda always denotes the nether world" (p.226). So "Varuṇa is the god of the cosmic waters beneath the earth" (ibid. p.249) - literally? Yet Varuṇa - if taken literally, "*looks down (avapaśyan)* on the truth and untruth of men" (VII.49.3). How to reconcile logically the upper and lower locality? Kuiper endeavoured to do so in his "The Golden Germ" (A.I.C. p.37ff), but no one seems aware of the fact that the first zone encountered in the psychic world is the inverted counterpart of the physical world. But the verse in: "bottomless (*abudhne*) [space] Varuṇa sustains erect the trunk of the tree [of life]" (I.24.7) admits the nowhere and everywhere of Varuṇa. The spatial "waters" wherein moves Varuṇa are all embracing and accord awkwardly with Kuiper's subterranean waters as Varuṇa's realm. And his "location" of the seat of Ṛta, the Cosmic Order, is even odder! Thus Indra is to come from different directions, including *svarṇara*, the domain of *svar*, "or from afar (*parāvato*) 9) from the seat of ṛta" (IV.21.3.) This "seat of Cosmic Order", claims Kuiper

"which Geldner took to mean 'den hochsten Himmel' must rather refer to the nether world, for the sun rises in the morning 'from the seat of Ṛta' (...I.164.47) and Uṣas, who comes 'from afar' (*parāvataḥ* I.92.3) awakens 'from the *sadas* of Ṛta'. (IV.51.8)". (A.I.C. p.224-5)

This strange association of the seat of Ṛta with the netherworld as the "subterranean waters and the nocturnal sky" which only belong to the terrestrial sphere and are not cosmic, borders, from the esoteric standpoint, on the absurd. The real origin and seat of ṛta is clearly admitted in Ṛgveda X.190.1 where it is said to emerge from blazing *tapas*, the transcendental meditation and action that caused the universe to manifest; its ultimate seat is in the transcendent, and by reflection everywhere and nowhere. How can Ṛta, an abstract conception considered the Law ruling the universe (IV.5.11ab; 23.8-10; I.123.9cd; V.80.1; X.65.5, etc.; Athv. XII.1.1, etc.) have its seat in subterranean waters or in the nocturnal sky? It can only have it in limitless space, in the depth, to be mirrored on earth as the divine Law. Kuiper seems to take literally, at their physical level, the "Where they unharness the horses of the sun" (V.62.1) metaphors of the poets, the netherworld enclosed in the "primordial hill" and the "firm rock" which are but images, stepping stones towards apprehending another, more subjective dimension. In this particular context how can one disregard the metaphysical significance of Ṛta?! 10) Which on earth manifests as the law of cycles, the orderliness of the natural processes - the apparent rising and sinking of the sun in regular succession, etc; hence the figure of speech which could be translated as ṛta emerges with the sun-rise in eternal time sequence and sinks with the sun in the beyond.

"Where they unharness the horses of Sūrya" (V.62.1)

takes us into that uncharted zone which the mind can hardly penetrate, equivalent to the "zero point" whence is the dissolution and the resolution of all things. The "watery womb" (II.38.8) which Varuṇa is said to seek at sunset, is this world of all possibilities, this matrix wherein seethe the blueprints of all things to come, and not just some subterranean waters. Night, darkness, implying the unknown, would be identified with this invisible but potential world. Indeed the Naighaṅṭuka (1.12) as observed in ch.4, identified water with the womb of ṛta, a revelation in itself, for "water" means *ākāśa*, but for Kuiper

"the words *ṛtasya yoniḥ* womb of Ṛta [said] to be equivalent to 'water'

(Naigh.1.12) ... the parallelism between *parāvāt*- and the 'seat of Ṛta' in IV.21.3

suggests the inference that that 'seat' was situated in the nether world." ("Bliss of Asa". P.107)

In the context of ṛta, the term *parāvāt* might well mean "from the furthest away", i.e. the highest dimension. The glimpse given here looks out into a vast beyond from which all derives and to which all returns - truly a reflection of the cosmic process of outgoing and ingoing outlined in the sky, visible for all everyday; a symbolic significance indeed, yet seemingly completely lost to the modern mind.

However, in his "Cosmogony and conception: a query" (A.I.C.) Kuiper admitted that "we are not here concerned with purely philological data alone but with a coherent system of religious notions" (p.95). Exactly, and it is high time to recognise this fact. Reviewing opinions as to "the place where Ṛta... was considered to reside" as for instance "in the Western ocean, etc., etc.

"the point at issue is, whether 'the seat of Ṛta ... was in the western ocean (that is, in the underworld) or rather, as is the almost unanimous opinion in heaven". (p.96)



Considering that the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa shows the "western quarter" asking the sun to set in it and giving him "Ṛta and the night", (II.25.13-14) and the Śatapatha Br. (X.6.4.1) refers to "the birthplace of the night ... in the western sea, where the sun sets" (p.96) this all, according to Kuiper,

"testifies to the existence of a system of cosmic notions that was common to both the oldest and the later texts of Vedic tradition. Lüder's idea of Ṛta residing in a celestial ocean (*Varuṇa* 2:594) will therefore have to be replaced by that of the western ocean and the subterranean waters as its residence, a notion which still survives in the epics ... " (p.96-97)

The latter is obvious among the Ancient Egyptians where the West was the abode of the departed souls. The whole argument is puerile and will never solve any difficulty, considering it is the *image of the sinking sun* in the west, into the darkness of the unknown, that brought this idea, whereas the *beyond* has always meant the transcendent, hence whether *celestial* or *western ocean* as a *locality* does not matter in the least. The *beyond* generally refers to *the celestial*. There is no inkling that these kinds of demarcations and orientation belong to the brain only, and not to the transcendent with which Ṛta and Varuṇa are certainly concerned!

Nevertheless Kuiper's remark in "Ancient Aryan Verbal Contest" that

"... the well-spring is the place where Man comes into contact with the nether world and, since Ṛta resided in these waters ... also with Ṛta itself"

follows from his admitting that

"inspiration is suddenly born from Man's unconscious mind" (p.249,248)

which implies identification of the unconscious mind with the netherworld, the waters and ṛta. This "well-spring" however, images psyche's first dimension wherein ṛta is mirrored, as ṛta is reflected in the "primordial waters" mirrored in man's heart, i.e. in psyche, whence seers drew their inspirations; truly the place or rather the state of consciousness wherein man comes in contact with the beyond, not necessarily only the netherworld in its meaning of abode of the dead, but not as "subterranean waters". The mention of the "unconscious" is a step forward in the elucidation of Vedic riddles; but there is no inkling that the unconscious comprises various levels of psychic awareness and therefore psychic zones; that the Ṛgvedic imagery is constantly probing zones of what we miscall the unconscious. There is also little recognition that such words as *kha*, *utsa*, *kośa*, *adri*, *aśman*, *harmya*, are connected with 1) descriptions of *psyche* as a *receptacle* in whose oceanic depth steadily burns the flame-divine, and 2) entrance to which is as difficult as forcing a mountain to open up, hence the oft mixing of images. Hence "in the ocean, in the water, in the udder of heaven" has Agni been kindled, macrocosmically and microcosmically, outwardly and inwardly - the ocean: the infinite; the water: the *ākāśa* of space, of the heart. The images are very significant if one only realised that psyche and the transcendent are in question, but no one stops to ponder on this, and scholars take it all literally making nonsense of the verses.

The closed well of II.24.4, shut by a stone, shows the "unconscious" as impenetrable, but when forced open by the Lord of Prayer, an aspect of Agni, it lets out rays of light from which the ṛṣis draw inspiration. As seen in V.45.1, also IV.16.4 and 6, in order to open the "rock of heaven" the ṛṣis used their *rhythmic mantras* (the meaning of "verses"), that is, the frequencies of their vibrating chants, much in the same way as those other ṛṣis used the frequencies of the solar beams, each linked to a Vedic metre, for their specific purpose; thereby they found their relationship to the deeper resonance of psyche. Observe that the image "the rock of heaven", here does not refer to the unconscious, but to the *higher consciousness*, another subtlety undetected.

However Kuiper cautiously (he used the expression "it may be assumed") recognized that since "... *guhāyām* in the Upaniṣads is a substitute of the later language for such Ṛgvedic terms as *vraje*, *ūrve*, *aśman*, which all denote the nether world viewed as an enclosure, the parallelism between the revelation of the 'sun in the rock' and the Upaniṣadic vision of the *ātman* 'placed in the cavity' is apparent."

("Bliss of Asa". p.125-6. A.I.C. p.85-6)

The whole passage is another important admission of Kuiper - apart from the reference to the "netherworld" which here has no place, for it is psyche that is in question, not *hades*. Kuiper practically gives out that the solar blaze of *svar* is the effulgence of the *ātman*, though he would not have understood it this way, hence again unwittingly confirms the continuity of the mystical/esoteric tradition. In this respect he also observed the parallelism existing between the "macrocosmic opening of the primordial hill and the microcosmic opening of

the mind". ("Bliss of Asa." p.125) The primordial hill images the coming into manifestation, into form, of the objective universe, enclosing life, consciousness, creativity, etc. to be slowly unwrapped. He perceived that the "heart" within which the "Vedic seer gets his vision ... is equated to the cosmic mountain and its subterranean ocean" - rather the ocean of space mirrored in the psyche. The Chândogya Upaniṣad mentions the mirror-like effect of the heart-*cakra*:

"As large as the universe outside, even so large is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the sun, the moon, the lightning, and all the stars ... (Chând. Up. VIII.1.3)

Kuiper, like Regnaud and Hillebrandt before, also perceived

"the parallelism between the Vedic mythological concept of Agni hidden in a secret place and *agni/ātman* which here is *nihito guhāyām*",

but Kuiper went a step further, for

"they did not recognize that what we find in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad is ... a direct continuation of an old Vedic tradition of meditative practices." (ibid. p.125. A.I.C. p.84-5)

- another step forward! However, it is not really a question of reconstructing

"... on the basis of the texts, the cosmological ideas about light in the darkness of the nether world, which obviously was considered a mystery, no less than the presence of potential life in death" (ibid. p.123. A.I.C. p.83)

but rather of understanding the various zones of psyche which orthodox psychology ignores, dumping whatever it recognizes into its rather meaningless "unconscious"; incapable of grasping that darkness holds within its core the essence of light; hence the implication of the two parallel mystical experiences of light out of the darkness of the so-called "unconscious" (only so to our brain), and life out of death. Whilst so many fail in this basic understanding, the ṛṣis were fully cognisant of this, and so were the Egyptians and the Sumerians. The fluidity of the "unconscious" does recall that of water, not just water under the earth.

After Kuiper's several recognitions as mentioned above, it is surprising to find that he cannot get rid of his naive literal-mindedness. Thus concerning Ṛg. II.24.4 which he translates:

"The well that has a rock for orifice and streams of 'madhu', (the well) which Brahmaṇaspati split open with force, that all 'sun-seers' have drunk; together they have poured down abundantly the spring of waters" (II. 24.4)

he remarks:

"The same generative and life-promoting water, however, was also believed to fall from heaven as rain. This raises the fundamental question as to how this water was thought to ascend to heaven a difficulty that to my knowledge has never been stated. This is particularly manifest in stanzas like II.24.4." ("The Heavenly Bucket" A.I.C. p.144)

This absurd problem is non-existent, for the well is no subterranean spring of water, but the wellspring of inspiration within the psyche. To take the verse literally means that all humanity, except for the blind, must be drinking from the well and see *svar*, whereas only those who have drunk from these *honeyed waters* that foster illumination have achieved *svar* vision - the solar-illuminated sages. This is confirmed in the following:

"... Bounteous Soma favoured us with his light whereby our forefathers of old ... *svar* finders, burnt-through [to] the rock, [to] the cows". (IX.97.39cd)

Soma helps to make the *svar* splendour manifest through his enhancing the visionary insight of the ṛṣi. Thus further addressing Soma

"Through thy mental power, with thy bright eyes, thou hast opened out heaven's stall, fostering the vision of ṛta for the ritual" (IX.102.8)

the ritual being the human re-enactment of the Cosmic Order. The Ṛgvedic verse on Indra's search for the "treasure" of heaven, as translated by Kuiper

"He found the treasure of Heaven, laid down in secret place, like a bird's young enveloped in the rock, inside the endless rock" (I.130.3. "Heavenly Bucket". p.140)

(comparable to the following three verses

"... Indra found the true sun dwelling in darkness" (III.39.5)

"... What lay hidden, secretly concealed in the water, he held in his right hand" (6)

"... He chose the light, discerned it from the darkness ... (7) )

makes Kuiper remark:

"The words 'treasure of heaven' ... may denote the sun while imprisoned in the primordial hill before it is delivered by Indra. It must be admitted, however, that in V.45.1 *divo viṣyann adrim ukthaiḥ*, 'opening the rock of Heaven with his verses' the addition of *divo* cannot easily be explained." (ibid. p.141)

Just so, to take such an allegorical account literally is incredibly naive and absurd. The meaning is obvious: the treasure of heaven or solar illumination is found in the *crypt of the soul* to which access is tantamount to opening a mountain. A similar but more laboured absurdity than Kuiper's, is found in Lüders's *Varuṇa* concerning the "sun in the rock" (p.317-20) culminating in Lüders's declaration that *Varuṇa*'s dwelling must be in the highest heaven for the resting place of the sun can only be there, and one "can also deduct ... that the sun has been thought to be locked in a rock there" (p.318) . This is where philology fails utterly and where a knowledge of psyche and the "unconscious threshold" which leads to it, and its rock-like, seemingly impenetrable access, explains the difficulty. "Below the threshold" of brain consciousness is the usual phrase for those who penetrate in this domain, but it adds to the confusion; there is a feeling of penetrating "below" what we know through our physical senses which we place as "above" everything else, hence the images of cave, well, mountain to be burst open, etc. The zone of shadowy forms gives the impression of "descending" into an unknown dimension, hence the Babylonian, Hindu, Greek texts describing this zone as "under world". The "descent" into a cave is illusory, the thick darkness likewise, it dissolves; the world of shadows fades away; these are mere phases of a perception trying to get its bearings.

A most instructive passage is found in Atharvaveda IX.5.1 concerning the path taken by the departed soul who has to cross the "great darkness" - first step in the journey through the beyond. So Agni is asked to

"... conduct him thither; let him go, foreknowing, unto the world of the well-doing;

crossing the great darkness variously, let the goat step unto the third firmament." (Athv.IX.5.1)

Whitney's choice of translating *aja* meaning "unborn" as well as "goat", as goat, may seem odd, for obviously the reference is to the "unborn" part of the human being; but it may be explained as that which, during life, *sacrificed* to the gods, viz., the man, (remember the various divisions of the human constitution) now goes to heaven as the sacrificial animal. There is no doubt that the point of the "great darkness" proves the ṛṣi's knowledge of the meditative process and its *equivalent* in the process of dying. The *Tibetan Book of the Dead* is also a milestone in such knowledge, but coloured in accordance with its own religious culture.

The issue of psyche is constantly evaded, and yet *sacred records* are the expression of psyche. Thus claiming that the *fire* (Kaṭha Up. I.14); that *Puruṣa* (Muṇḍ. Up.II.1.10); that the *udgītha*, the *sāman* (Maitri Up.VI.4); that *Prajāpati* hidden in the cavity of the heart (cf. Ṛgv.VII.82.3) piercing from within the channels of the mind to enjoy the objects of the senses (Mahān. Up.II.6), that all these point to "the conclusion that the notions associated with the 'cavity' were rooted in mythology" evades the issue of their origin, the *psyche*, by projecting them in their expressions, rather than their real root. Did mythology represent for Kuiper some airy-fairy domain of the primitive mind, as it did for most other Orientalists, or rather, fundamentally, "the repository of man's cosmic sentiency"? One finds the answer in his "Cosmogony and Conception: a query" for there he broke new ground and conceded that for the Vedic Indian "the myth was a way of viewing the world and his life in the context of a given set of values." (p.123) Thus Kuiper found it "unacceptable to treat myths as mere fantasies or literary motifs, a procedure still not uncommon among philologists" - quite a step forward towards a better appreciation of ancient texts. There is in all Vedic notions and myths an essentially *experiential knowledge* of the *numinous*, of the depth of psyche, which must be recognized.

In the above mentioned article Kuiper was bold enough to step from the beaten track of philology and explore the possibility of prenatal consciousness, as a step towards understanding the cosmogonic myth and its origin. He realised that

"Accepting the possibility of prenatal nonsensory perception involves, indeed, a drastic change in one's general outlook on the problem of human consciousness." (p.113)

"Orthodox" psychologists disbelieve in this, since for them "consciousness only begins to develop after birth" and there is nothing to feed it before birth - a mere hypothesis. Experiments conducted by Innatist psychologists have shown that even as early as a few days old babies can recognize, respond to, and change

their behaviour with regard to their mother's voice, image, etc. Here prenatal experience rather than peer teaching forms the basis of the learning process. Also

"the large majority of psychiatrists have so far felt unable to accept the conclusions at which Fodor had arrived in his psychotherapeutic practice" (p.113) namely "that events which have taken place during the prenatal period apparently have been recorded by the embryo and can be reproduced in dreams in his postnatal adult life". (p.112)

For here Kuiper realised that

"the possibility of reexperiencing one's own conception might be of the greatest importance for our interpretation of religious phenomena and particularly of cosmogonic myths." (p.113)

The interesting data, given by a Dutch psychotherapist, M. Lietaert Peerbolte (*Prenatal Dynamics, 1954, p.176*), which he quotes, opens specific horizons till then quite closed:

"the faculty of recollection is connected with the ovum... In Freud's terminology we have to do with a state of oceanic feeling. The ovum has the feeling of bobbing about, as it were, on a large expanse of water and simultaneously of being part of this water. One cannot yet speak of a real consciousness. There only exists an experience of infinity and of the ovum being part of this infinity" (p.113),

the experience being "depicted in dreams by large waters", etc. That memory is said to be on the side of the ovum is of great esoteric interest; for *ākāśa* is the form giver, so the ovum belongs to it, and since *ākāśa* is the word or sound, it is the recording sounding board of nature, hence the memory. The above step takes us beyond the normal sensory experience, it is very akin to the dream experience which stands on the threshold of the psychic realm. But such admission would involve a further "drastic change" in our materialistic outlook and an admission that consciousness stretches beyond the physical body which only encapsulates a fragment of it; in short, that it has its source in another dimension of the mind, which is not the brain, and even beyond the mind. What is of further esoteric interest is not only the large expanse of water being experienced, which recalls the Ṛgvedic Waters of Space, but also the "state of oceanic feeling", of an "experience of infinity" and of "being part of this infinity", the infinite which Aditi represented in the Ṛgveda. The mystical experience is somewhat similar, only with a focus of consciousness a hundred times concentrated as a result of clear sightedness born of vast experience. The prenatal experience is a massive feeling, yet it makes its mark; the mystical is supra-conscious and its mark is overwhelming. Both are part of the cosmic out- and in-breathing.

Psycho-therapeutic discoveries may not after all be so beyond the orbit of sacred texts as one might imagine. One might here recall the esoteric axiom: as above, so below; as in the macrocosmic infinity of the "waters of space" which here take on a specific meaning, *ākāśa* the container of all occurrences, all forms, all sounds, so in the microcosmic, prenatal, amniotic waters of birth, where some kind of massive well-being, hence awareness does exist, to be refined to pure consciousness in ever higher measures. Is there also here a "recapitulation" of past happenings, as evident in the human embryo? The future may be very enlightening.

#### GUPTAVIDYĀ IN THE VEDAS; A SUMMARY

Summing up the specific tenets of what may be called a *secret doctrine* hinted at in the Ṛgveda (examined in chs. 3 to 8) it may be noted that two of the most esoteric branches of Vedic gnosis concern: the *secret fire*, Agni, its outer aspect mirroring but at the same time masking its inner aspect, its ramifications extending from the human heart (I.67.3-4) right to the sun with its seven rays (I.109.7), and its influence on humans, as well as the moon and the action of its borrowed light on human subtle nature; revealing man as the microcosm of the macrocosm, and the ṛṣis' capacity to tune into the higher realms of the human psyche which themselves mirror still higher spiritual realms of cosmos.

the sound/vibration or *frequency* at the root of all creation and of man: Vāc, the measuring and fashioner of Nature whose habitat is also man; *akṣara* the eternal vibration in the syllable whose knowledge gives the key to the devas' own frequencies; *brahman*, the word of power, all three facets of the *Logos* of ancient India that allowed the ṛṣis, through the domain of sound, to enter the elusive spiritual dimension. This gave them the power, through their mantric chants, to commune with and influence the devas .

Both these fields are wide off our present narrow mental orbit and can but appear preposterous to a myopic viewpoint. Yet these two key doctrines imply a far- and deep-sighted vision, macrocosmic in compass as well as microcosmic, as therein man is perceived as "the measure of all things", all things being in effect reflected in man. They account for the visionary status of the ṛṣis. This is indeed the esoteric doctrine of the ages, however differently presented.

From the above standpoint, the mystery of fire and its exalting or consuming action within the human being, and the mystery of sound and its formative or destructive facets, its resonance in far spreading harmonics, but its no less dangerous capacity through over-stimulated frequency to shatter, are two of the most occult of life's mysteries. We may understand the why of this doctrine being kept secret. Agni and Vāc in the Ṛgveda, or *akṣara*, were seen as facets of one and the same tremendous power residing at the heart of the cosmos as at the heart of the human being (cf. I.72.6; 67.3-6; X.5.1-3; 71.1.3; 125, etc.). The ṛṣis used these powers for harmonious cooperation with the devas. From the psyche's own inner experience, the seers implied in their hymns that intelligence is a spiritual flame innate in us, seated in the heart (I.67.3,4), in "the ocean of the heart" (X.5.1), expressing itself through flashes of insight and mental activity driving us even to highest achievement. For this "charioteer of the Transcendent" (I.77.3) that "raises the mortal to highest immortality" (I.31.7) once discovered and listened to, assumes an unprecedented status within the human being as the "inner Ruler immortal", the all powerful mover, the *ātman* of the Upaniṣads. This is part of the sacred message of the ṛṣis' lore, so little understood.

However, the intimate connection of Agni with the *svara* within the manifested world as within the human being, is hinted at in successive Ṛgvedic verses, but has remained a dead letter to Western exegesis, as indeed does the significance of the *secret fire* in the human being and its innermost frequency as its corollary. But H.P.B., as early as *Isis Unveiled*, wrote this enigmatic phrase which points directly to the *secret fire*:

"The chief problems of every theology lie concealed beneath this imagery of fire and the varying rhythm of its flames." (I.U.II. p.410)

This innermost frequency of the flame-spirit in cosmos and in man awaits re-discovery.

Furthermore, three *successive perspectives* apparent in the *Ṛgveda*, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, concerning the ṛṣis' far reaching insight into the nature and meaning of fire and sound and their blending as *one* in the higher dimensions, can be clearly traced, pointing to the continuity of the same secret tradition:

Agni in Ṛgveda VI.16.35 is described as

"flashing forth as the father's father in the mother's matrix, in the imperishable syllable" - cosmically, *ākāśa*, the mother's matrix "woven warp and woof on the *akṣara* (Bṛhad.Up.III.8.11; JUP I.23); microcosmically, the human heart *cakra*; ritualistically, the Vedic altar. In these few words is traced here the ṛṣis' cosmic vision and the activity of Agni as the Father within the Mother who is both *ākāśa* and *akṣara*, essence, cradle and word; fire and sound frequencies are merged but to emerge when manifested as separate. The flame-divine emits its own frequency and Agni's cosmic tasks are performed through "effective mantras" (literally *truthful* I.67.5); this does not mean that fire was thought to chant mantras to prop up the sky, etc. but that the frequency of that which manifests on earth as fire is demarcative in its action, and yet supports all forms of life through its own rhythmic vibrations at the heart of all things. The "three times seven words secreted" in Agni are not only the ṛṣis' discovery of the frequencies within their own inner fire and its various centres of force with each its own vibration, but also the means whereby they in concert protect the *amṛta* (I.72.6); that is, the access to cosmic consciousness whence all separateness falls away. Further, Agni takes them into "the journeyings of the devas" (ibid. 7cd). Agni's inner, leading role is clearly spelled out.

2) The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* X.3.1.1 refers to the "seven metres produced by Agni", thereby implying that particular frequencies can be and are produced within the secret fire. Ch. 5, section on *Sound and Light*, discussed how certain Vedic metres were ascribed to certain devas, to Agni the *gāyatrī* with its three octosyllabic verses paralleling the threefold cosmic division, to Indra the *triṣṭubh*, etc. Each seer discovered or was granted a metre or form of *sāman*: thus Vasiṣṭha received the *svara* of the *rathantara* (X.181.1) which enabled him to "behold" Sūrya (I.164.25b) - our solar orb? or that solar effulgence deep in the psyche which Ṛgv.I.50.10 and Athv.VII..53..7 allude to as discovered beyond the darkness? With further statements such as

"by means of the *akṣara* they measured the seven *vāṅīḥ*" (Ṛgv.I.164.24b) one can be assured that a whole doctrine of sound, its various notes, frequencies, etc. had been developed long before the Upaniṣads time.

3) The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* claims that Vāc consists of *tejas*, fiery energy, radiance, (Chānd. Up. VI.5.4), that Vāc "shines and glows in Agni as its light; he who knows this shines and glows with fame ... with eminence in sacred knowledge" (Chānd. Up. III.18.3). The Ṛgvedic verses that lead to such a conclusion are a) X.71.3, the tracking of Vāc right to within the ṛṣi; Vāc who considers herself the womb of the world, (X.125) but also resides in the ṛṣi; b) Agni seated in the secret spot where he is found by those who chant their mantras fashioned in the heart (I.67.4; cf. Kaṭha Up.I.14); c) Agni, "flashing forth in the *akṣara*", asked to "bring us the prolific word that it may shine in heaven" (VI.16.35,36), hence Agni the flame-spirit as the bearer and revealer of the *word*. (cf. I.164.37cd).

Moreover *flame* and *resonance* being at the heart of the human psyche, the *secret doctrine* inherent to the Ṛgveda regarding the psyche embodying the resonance of the *Logos*, as encapsulated in "the essence of *puruṣa* is Vāc" (Chānd.I.1; cf. Chānd. III.18.3; Bṛhad.III.1.3) remains to this day meaningless. The Chāndogya continues to expound the gnosis of the mystical link - *ākāśa-vāc-puruṣa* - as well as the link between the sun and human beings, so alien to our empirical myopic outlook, and goes further in its revelation of what the seers discovered. For it takes the human solar link through the gates of death:

"But when he thus departs from this body, then he ascends upwards with these very rays of the sun." (Chānd.Up. VIII.6.5)

too irrational for us, but nothing is useless in the universe, neither physically nor psycho/mystically. H.P.B. explained, as we have seen, that the solar rays were known for their mystical properties and, one might add, so is psyche, otherwise all the testimony of "divine union" and exaltation of mystics of all the ages and faiths would never have been possible. The essential oneness of such revelation is *inscribed* in these ancient texts but who, especially among Christians and rationalists, has recognised this?

Such statements and their parallels in later texts, as shown above, and so many others brought out in the present study, only prove the antiquity and continuation of the gnosis. To ignore the mystical purport of Ṛgvedic verses as precursors of the Upaniṣads' standpoint, goes against the very evidence of the texts themselves and only proves the failure of the rational mind to fathom them in their real meaning, in accordance with "the spirit that giveth life". The "gap" between the early and the later *śruti* is only in the scholars' prejudiced mind. 11)

Far from being mere poetic fancies, Ṛgvedic visionary verses are expressive of an inner reality discovered, lived through, gazed upon in wonder and awe, assessed and voiced by means of images, allusions, myths, allegories, vibrant chanting. 12) Such "myths" as those of Agni and Soma concern the mortal's search for and finding of that flame-immortal secreted in our own deeper depth, transcendent in its far-reaching light, exalting in its influence and transformative power; hence mysterious fire to be kindled inwardly and outwardly, nectar of immortality or fiery liquid that not only burns but to enhance vision and inspiration and also destroys - Soma is asked "not to terrify us", "not to strike our heart with thy vehemence (VIII.79.8; IX.96.1; 90.3; 73.6; 87.2; 31.6) not to go down beyond the navel (Yjv.34.55) - realistic prayers proving that Soma will act in accordance with the purity of the person, raising him to the heights, or lowering him to the gutter.

## THE QUESTION OF INITIATION

Initiation, which in the Ṛgveda centres around *sūrya/svar*, has for a long time been denied *a priori*, except for the Greeks. But a change of attitude is occurring. Kuiper, in spite of his literal-mindedness, recognized that the *kavi*, the inspired-poet, was an initiate into something beyond the usual. Vasiṣṭha being taken into the boat upon the ocean and made a ṛṣi by Varuṇa, clearly proclaimed in VII.88, is quite a proof. Kuiper detected that

"... what the seer aspires to see is 'the mystery of Agni's presence in the darkness of the stone-house' (X.46.3 *jāta ā harmyeṣu*) just as it had been seen by those gods and mythical seers who (probably at the beginning of the new year) descended into the nether world as 'sun-finders' (*svarvid-*, *svarḍṛṣ-*) ..." ("Bliss of Asa". p.111)

Although Kuiper realised that Agni is somehow linked to *svar* as flame of radiance, the spiritual meaning of the mystery of the "stone-house" is not elucidated but associated with mythical seers and their "descent" into

the netherworld etc. - Kuiper's basic theory. Strangely, Kuiper does not seem to have seen, or was ignorant of, the parallel between Lucius Apuleius' beholding the "midnight sun" at his initiation and Vasiṣṭha's desire to see "the *svar* in the rock" (VII.88.2); both "suns" (Kuiper translates *svar* by sun) referring to that blazing light that looms out of the darkness, both occurrences connected with initiation. *Svar* is hidden in the stone, in rock-like darkness, i.e. in the casket of the all enfolding *ākāśa* which, to the inexperienced vision, is impenetrable darkness, that can yet reveal its flashing jewel. (The firmament is called a "resounding stone" in V.56.4 and *ākāśa* is nature's sounding board, and even the sun is called a "variegated stone" in V.47.3). In both the above narratives of initiation, the sun or *svar* is not our solar orb, but the dazzling effulgence which suddenly confronts the neophyte.

Kuiper also recognized that the "knowledge of the Cosmic Order", so evident among the ṛṣis was "not only the prerogative of the gods ... but also of the *initiated seers* (*kavi*- X.64.16) whom such epithets as *ṛtajñā*- 'knowing the cosmic order', *ṛtāvan* (keeping to the law or Order) etc., are almost exclusively attributed". ("Bliss of Asa." p.127. italics mine.)

This insight enabled him to admit that

"... Agni's birth, or the vision of the sun in the darkness, was the central theme of what can be denoted by no other term than Aryan mysticism"

and to suggest that in VII.88 (Vasiṣṭha's initiation into ṛṣihood)

"... the contemplation during life-time of the 'sun in the rock' was part of the initiation ... In exactly the same way Zarathustra speaks of 'the most blissful union with Asa' as something to be attained during life-time, that is, he prays to become an *asavan* - in this life already." (ibid. p.124, 127)

Unwittingly Kuiper is here revealing an esoteric injunction, viz., to achieve *real knowledge* in this very life. This tenet thus goes back to Vedic/Avestic times and most probably quite beyond. He remarks

"... that the words 'in which world [heaven] the sun [really *svar*] is placed (*yasmin loke svar hitam* IX.113.7), when compared with the 'the sun in the rock' (*svar yad aśman* VII.88.2), suggest the idea that the later speculation of the Upaniṣads about the *ātman* 'placed the cavity' is a direct continuation of the older mystical speculation of the Veda." (ibid. p.124) -

quite an admission, even though incomplete. One point of great importance is that the poet, in the above only partially quoted verse, is asking Soma

"place me in that immortal, undecaying world, there where perpetual light [radiates], in that world [*loke*] where *svar* is established." (IX.113.7)

Through its adjectives *undecaying*, *immortal*, *perpetual*, etc. the verse admits that *svar* is really a heavenly *loka*, a celestial dimension, hence in human beings a supreme state of consciousness. This does not seem to have been understood. However, Kuiper's realisation of a "direct continuation" of the Vedic mystical tradition (not speculation for the ṛṣis were seers) is also a step forward after the point blank refusal to any mysticism in the Ṛgveda to which one was used, but it is relegated to mere "speculation": the ṛṣis knew the meaning of *svar* for they experienced it in the higher stages of their *tapas*. Nevertheless Kuiper must have understood something regarding this experience since he could write:

"Of the ecstasy which accompanied this [religious] experience a precious document has been preserved in RS.VI.9.6. One gets the impression that the seer, by meditating upon the sacrificial

fire

(st.5), attained a vision of the cosmic mystery, the 'sun in the rock' (or, Agni in the nether world

into

which the sun enters in the evening ... " etc. ("Bliss of Asa". A.I.C. p.83-4)

rather the solar blaze irrupting through and putting an end to the darkness of the "unconscious".

The fact of *initiation* is proved by Kuiper himself, but another aspect of it is hidden in the "fourth brahman" which is really the fourth higher stage of consciousness linked to Sūrya. This is represented in the case of Atri, a seer, whose link with Sūrya is clearly implied in V.40.6:

"In the fourth [degree] of *brahman*, Atri found Sūrya [till then] immersed in darkness",

another evident admission to the stages of *tapas* leading to the vision of the solar effulgence of *svar*. For Ludwig this verse referred to an eclipse which he dated to 1001 B.C. Since several levels of interpretation are

possible in sacred texts, this could be acceptable. But the fact that the word *brahman* appears, distinguished by the number four, points to a subjective, spiritual experience over and above any other meaning. This bears upon the tale of Atri narrated in various Ṛgvedic verses centred on the *tapasvin*, the practitioner at his meditative task.

The controversy with traditional translations of certain verses and thereby interpretations concern the verbs *uruṣya* and *vṛ* which bear various meanings, and the grammatical case of the instrumental ("with cold") which can also mean "during", or "time throughout", as established in Macdonell's *Vedic Grammar for Students* (parag.199(5), p.307). In his study *Heat in the RigVeda and the Atharvaveda*, C. Blair exposed the whole problem and the evidence against the usual translation of *vṛ* as "ward off" is given on p.147, to which study the reader is referred. 13)

Suffice here to mention that *tapas*, in its religio/spiritual meaning, has not been understood for decades and even recently has been translated as *heat* (which is only the physical outcome of *tapas*). However, D. Knipe in his *In the Image of Fire*, 1975 offered valuable insights into *tapas* and broke new ground by crossing cultural boundaries - African, Indian, also Christian, for Christian mystics obviously experienced the assaults of the *numinous flame*, just like the *ṛṣi*s (cf. St John of the Cross). Contrary to Renou who claimed that *tapas* was unknown before the Xth maṇḍala was composed, Knipe produced

"evidence that pushes the limits [of the knowledge of *tapas*] back to the earliest Vedic expressions, and even beneath them to the Indo-Iranian epoch ..." ( p.111)

and emphasises that

"certainly the principal means by which the Vedic *ṛṣi*- are able to 'see' and 'create' is their possession of *tapas*. They are, in fact, born of *tapas* (*tapoja*) or 'made' by the inspiration provided by Agni or Soma, and are 'very hot' (*tapiṣṭha*) like a ritual vessel that Agni heats. (Athv. XI.1.16)" (p.95)

that all roots and derivatives of *tapas*

"having to do with 'burn' and heat' must be seen in the light of Vedic India's total expression, *in myths, symbols, speculation, and particularly rites* - all reflecting fundamental religious experiences of fire and heat. No amount of philological analysis, or of counting up grammatical occurrences, can offset the need for a *sound understanding of the Vedic experience*, and the hermeneutical attempt to articulate it." (p.111. last two lines of italics mine)

In Atri's case, the *tapasvin* who had been led to the pit - or cave or darkness, what we call the "unconscious" which is anything but unconscious - was unable to come back to the physical level, so called on the Aśvins who delivered him from the "great darkness" (cf.VI.50.10; I.117.3; VII.71.5). The point which interferes with all "orthodox" interpretations, is that Atri is using Agni for a specific purpose: he sharpens Agni's blade with his prayer (VIII.73.8,9); this blade is Atri's own inward, numinous fiery probe cutting through the layers of darkness, thereby activating the flame's power. 14) This is the process of *tapas*, nowadays called *tapasya* by the Hindus. Similarly,

"Human libations sharpen Agni like an axe for the sake of fiery-energy (*tejas*)" (III.2.10), that energy which manifests as radiance, distinguishes the *tapasvin* and sustains him in his efforts to pierce through to the higher dimensions. In the above verse, the whole ritual is meant to activate the priest's inner fire even to exaltation, to making the leap to the transcendent. In the final analysis, this was the purpose of the rite and the exulting chant, and the key-word here is *tejas*.

Why the "fourth *brahman*", or fourth degree of prayer or incantation? 15) Renou's explanation, based upon an analysis of the first stanza of Atharvaveda VII.1.1, may serve to give us an idea of that process of meditation which leads to communion and union. Thus the fourth *brahman* is

"... the end of an inner progressive realisation, the stages of which are marked out by *dhītī*, 'intuition' ... *manasā*, 'reflection' ... *ṛṭīyena brahmaṇā*, the third brahman (that which enhances *vāvṛdhānāḥ*); last, *turīyeṇa*, the fourth or final stage which grants the right 'to think the name of the cow' " -

in other words, to call out through the right invocation, (Vāc/Aditi is the Cow) to grasp the meaning of the mystery of Agni's presence in the darkness. Renou adds appropriately

"It is not accidental if in a RV hymn (X.67.1) Bṛhaspati, i.e. the 'master of brahman' has



also 'engendered' the 'fourth' by similar stages."

("Sur la notion de brahman". *J. Asiatique*. 237. 1949. p.11)

16)

It is the conquest of the "unconscious", rather of psyche's dimensions, culminating in *svar*, that is constantly at stake in these tales or longings and eulogies, these claims and begging for a sun that is not out there in the sky, but shines in the heart of psyche; a conquest that needs preparation, meditation, initiation, in other words the whole gamut of *tapas*; whose great promoters were embodied in Agni, in Sūrya, in Soma, whose goal was to grant that transcendental state of consciousness the seers called *svar*, which once realised is desired again and again. The spiritual dynamo recognized at the core of cosmos and its child man, perceptible in the Agni hymns, in Sūrya and his various aspects - Savitṛ the vivifier, Pūṣan the shower of the way, Vivasvat the sacrificer, etc. - and in Soma the granter of ecstasy, and its culmination in *svar*, underlies the sacredness of the Ṛgveda, but has been missed totally by "orthodox" scholars. A collection of hymns such as the Ṛgveda was not deemed *sacred* for nothing, but because it was the repository of a precious lore and a message of spiritual import for humanity, however little we have understood it, and however much some have made of it a mirror of their own worldliness.

### H.P.B.'S PIONEERING CONTRIBUTION

At a time when literalism and superiority complexed prejudices had descended like a blight over Western intellectuals and prevented them from entering into the spirit of the Oriental sacred texts which were being translated; when little was known of "primitive" people dismissed as irrational, hence inferior to Western man; H.P.B. courageously revealed the existence of a "Science called *Guptavidyā*" (S.D.I.p.xxxviii) going back to the night of time, and in particular hinted at in the Vedic vision. "Courageous" in this case is not an exaggeration. She herself reminds us of what we tend to forget or just ignore:

"However great and zealous the fanatical efforts, during those early centuries [of the Christian era], to obliterate every trace of the mental and intellectual labor of the Pagans, it was a failure; but the same spirit of the dark demon of bigotry and intolerance has perverted systematically and ever since, every bright page written in the pre-Christian periods ... However superhuman the efforts of the early Christian fathers to obliterate the Secret Doctrine from the very memory of man, they all failed. Truth can never be killed; hence the failure to sweep away entirely from the face of the earth every vestige of that ancient Wisdom, and to shackle and gag every witness who testified to it ... " (S.D. I. p.xl.)

That ancient wisdom has surfaced once again, but all the sacred texts of the nations ever bore witness to it; only the "key" was lost. Since H.P.B.'s life-time, a revival of interest is evident. H.P.B. also apprises us of the difficulties that had to be faced just before her time, difficulties of which most of us have not the faintest idea, but which stemmed from the general incredulity and arrogant stand of the intellectuals. Thus

"Have not the [Vedas]... been derided, rejected, and called 'a modern forgery' even so recently as fifty years ago? Was not Sanskrit proclaimed at one time the progeny of, and a dialect derived from, the Greek, according to Lemprière and other scholars? About 1820, Prof. Max Müller tells us, the sacred books of the Brahmans, of the Magians, and of the Buddhists, 'were all but unknown, their very existence was doubted, and there was not a single scholar who could have translated a line of the *Veda*... of the *Zend-Avesta*, or ... of the Buddhist *Tripitaka*', and now the *Vedas* are proved to be the work of the highest antiquity whose 'preservation amounts almost to a marvel'."

(S.D. I. p.xxxvii-viii. Quoted from *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol.I. p.24. 1867.)

This science, or *guptavidyā*, H.P.B. explained in its esoteric implications, another dangerous step to take, which antagonised all rationalists and religious people and, in her outline of the history of our planet and of humanity, some scientists. Her survey ranged not only from the *Vedas* to aspects of Buddhism, many of which texts had not even been translated, to the *Kabbalah*, to Zoroastrianism when nothing was known of its esoteric side, to the ancient mythologies relegated to useless fables, or to the "disease of language" at a certain stage of its development ! She also corrected misconceptions and mistranslations of the "Orientalists". 17)

The unprejudiced reader must have observed that certain explanations or remarks quoted from *The Secret Doctrine* are of general and/or specific application to the esoteric wisdom as it appears in the *Vedas* and the *Kabbalah*. More specifically, H.P.B. revealed the cosmic import of the Vedic vision (18) at a time when no one saw any vision in the four collections of hymns, and she insisted on the sacredness of the Vedas (19) so damaged by the "Orientalists" and still suffering from this damage. She refers to the

"Vedas - the greatest of all authorities, though needing the key to read it correctly." (S.D. II. p.616)

"The *Ṛgveda*... the oldest of all the known ancient records, may be shown to corroborate the occult teachings in almost every respect" (S.D.II.p.606; p.59)

"The Vedas, are and will remain forever, in the esotericism of the Vedānta and the Upaniṣads, 'the mirror of the eternal Wisdom'." (S.D.II p.484)

Long before J. Gonda's revealing work, R. Panikkar's masterly panoramic survey of Vedic thought and the "avant-garde" scholars mentioned in the present study, who in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, started to invert the trend of contemptuous ignorance, H.P.B. revealed the significant basis of the seers' insight. Their innate capacity for uplifting their mind to reach higher dimensions of existence so closed to us, she explained, and gave clues to the understanding of the texts.

In our scepticism we may disregard the evidence of the *Stanzas of Dzyan* which H.P.B. claimed to have translated and on which she commented, we cannot deny the fact that she gave in her *Secret Doctrine* a profound insight into the ancient lore, Vedic, Mazdean, Kabbalistic, Gnostic, Greco-Roman (Pythagoras, Hesiod, Plato, Julian, Marcus Aurelius) etc. Through her own far reaching sweep of vision, she opened out to the general public the religio/philosophical thought underlying all antiquity as had never been done before. The surviving texts once more came to life, all pointing to the simple dictum made long ago in the *Ṛgveda* and maintained throughout her own work: "Truth is one, inspired-sages clothe it in varied garbs" (I.164.46), an inspired, wise pronouncement, especially in the face of the narrow dogmatism that engulfed Western humanity during the past two millennia. The Christian world of her day could still not tolerate this, its truth being still the only truth one could distinguish and accept. (20)

#### H.P.B.'S ELUCIDATION OF VEDIC PROBLEMS

In so far as the Vedas are concerned, H.P.B. explained the meaning of specific Vedic or later words, names and ideas, such as *ākāśa*, *ātman*, *brahman*, *pr̥thivī*, *pradhāna*, *hamsa*, Aditi, Vāc, Soma, Garuḍa, the solar rays, the devas Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, the Gandharva perhaps the most enigmatic of all, etc.; even the meaning of particular verses of esoteric significance, such as the seven pathways or landmarks established for the weary mortal (*Ṛvg.X.5.6*; S.D. II. p.191,fn); or *Ṛgv.X.90.15* whose significance has never been elucidated (S.D. II. p.606-7); or *Ṛvg.X.71* where she remarks on the ṛṣi's seership associated with hearing, notably verse 4 which means that every enunciation produces an image in the ether which the seer perceived. Sometimes she left the enigma for us to solve, e.g. Viṣṇu's "ascending higher step being taken in the highest world (*Ṛgv.VII.99.1*; cf. I.155.5)" which the "Orientalists" take to be "the *Divo Rajaḥ*, or the 'sky' ... But it is something besides this ... The sentence *pāreṣu guhyeṣu vr̥teṣu* ... has yet to be explained." (S.D.II. p.622.fn.)

*Ākāśa*, far from being understood in her time and even to this day, she called "primordial matter or *Mūlaprakṛti*", considered the "fifth Universal Cosmic Principle" (S.D. I. p.13,fn) - to be distinguished from the fifth terrestrial element, ether. (See ch.3 for Śaṅkara's comment on *ākāśa* as the Supreme Self and A. Giri's comment on the element *ākāśa*, or ether, being but an effect of unmanifest *ākāśa*, etc., a distinction since then apparently forgotten). Elsewhere *ākāśa* is called a "radiation of *Mūlaprakṛti*" (S.D.I. p.10), the "Soul of the world" (ibid. p.140), "the vehicle of Divine Thought" (ibid. p.326), etc. Symbolised by "water" in the *Ṛgveda* and the *Brāhmaṇas*, it is called the "body of Nara" in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*, differentiating into seven planes or levels of manifestation, the seven *conditions* of matter corresponding to the seven *states* of human consciousness. This explains the otherwise enigmatic *Ṛgvedic* "sevenfold foundation of the ocean" of space (VIII.40.5) or the "sevenfold divine waters" (X.104.8) very poorly explained if at all by Western and Hindu scholars (e.g. D. Chand in *The Atharvaveda*, p.754 fn). H.P.B. not only showed the waters as the image for *ākāśa* - to this day taken literally - but also showed Aditi as the personification of the infinite waters, hence of *ākāśa* which she called by the Greek word "aether".

In explaining the activity of Fohat, the mysterious link between Idea and cosmic substance, Fohat the "transcendental binding Unity of all Cosmic Energies", the "Steed" of the "Thought" which is the "Rider", "running along the seven principles of *ākāśa*", etc. H.P.B. revealed a great deal of his counterpart in the Vedas: Agni, the mysterious "seven-rayed flame" who "circumscribes seven stations" or zones, his spheres of activity (X.122.3; IV.7.5; see ch.4,pt3); Agni who is the "Son of the Waters", which scholars take literally but which, H.P.B. warned, "are not the liquid we know, but Aether, the fiery waters of space" (S.D.II.p.400.fn). Obviously, these fiery waters are the Ṛgvedic "solar-powered", "solar-possessing" waters (*svarvatīr āpaḥ* V.2.11; I.10.8; VIII.40.10.) for which there has been no valid explanation.

Referring to the "three occult degrees of fire" (S.D.II. p.114) H.P.B. regarded these as equivalent to the Vedic Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya. Agni has three seats, three tongues, three bodies (III.20.2) - "I am the threefold radiance" (III.26.7)- quite apart from being the "seven-tongued flame" radiating throughout space (ch.4,pt 3); Agni the Primal Mover, Eternal Flame-Spirit, identified with *kāma*, desire, in the Atharvaveda; Vāyu also Primal Mover though already differentiated on the plane of manifestation, represented by Mātariśvan who is both flame and wind; now manifesting as the Cosmic Breath or pulse and as *prāṇa* in human (and animal) breath; whose principal seat, in our solar system, is Sūrya our cosmic fountain-source of life-energy (*ādityo hai vai prāṇaḥ* Praśna Up.I.1); indeed three degrees of fire. We tread here in occult metaphysics of which the Ṛgveda gives hints.

"... The Aether of the Ancients is *universal Fire*" claimed H.P.B. and then quoted from Zoroaster and Psellus to show the difference between terrestrial fire and the Flame-spirit. Thus Zoroaster:

" 'Consult it only when it is without form or figure'... which means without flames or burning coals. 'When it has a form - heed it not' teaches Psellus; 'but when it is formless, obey it, for it is then *sacred fire*, and all it will reveal thee shall be true.' (*Effatum XVI*, 'Oracles of Zoroaster' S.D. I. p.331)

This is the secret fire of which the Vedas sang, the flame-spirit seated in the heart *cakra*, of which the Brāhmaṇas stated that to ignite the outer fire in the proper way, the inner fire of the priest had to be kindled.

H.P.B.'s range and depth of insight which allowed her to detect and explain the deeper meaning of the Vedas, marks her with the imprint of the "initiated" - a status very far from the disreputable "charlatan" to which ignorant, unfounded denigration has reduced her in the eyes of the scholarly and the general public. Her questions as to "why is the *sūsumna* ray ... that ray which furnishes the moon with its borrowed light" and "why is it the ray cherished by the initiated yogi", are quite revealing of what she knew of the esoteric doctrine but was not prepared to let out too much. Only some one stamped with the hallmark of initiation into the sacred gnosis would know that the initiated yogi would cherish this ray and what this ray represents in the domain of psyche.

H.P.B. not only revealed the mystical significance of Agni, but also of Vāc, the Vedic word, the fashioner of forms. She gave the key meaning to certain enigmas of Ṛgveda I.164. which, coupled with certain statements of the Upaniṣads, made sense. Vāc, "the most mysterious of the Brāhmaṇical goddesses" is for her

"... a form of Aditi - the principle higher than Ether - in *Ākāśa*, the synthesis of all the forces of Nature; thus Vāc and Kuan-Yin are both the magic potency of Occult sound in Nature and Ether - which 'Voice' calls forth Hsien-chan, the illusive forms of the Universe out of Chaos and the Seven Elements." (S.D.I. p.137)

Since sound or vibration is considered in the *śruti* an "attribute" of *ākāśa*, the foundation of nature, it is understandable that Vāc would be the synthesis of all the forces of nature. But who among Western scholars has been aware of this, and who could, during her time and long after, grasp the identification of Aditi with *ākāśa*, with Vāc? These are the various ways of ancient perception's expression, all hinted at in the Ṛgveda.

The knowledge of the far pervasive underlying factor of *ākāśa* (or the *svarvatīr āpaḥ*) influenced the ṛṣis in their search for and choice of the right sound to produce the mantra that would attract the right devas to their rituals, to enter into communication with them and produce the right effect. No intellectual search was this, but rather an inner probing and listening to the higher frequencies leading to subtler resonances of spiritual existence. It was this knowledge of the right vibrating effects on environment, humans and devas,

that gave the ṛṣis power over phenomena. In deriding what appears as humans commanding devas, scholars ignore both this and that other fact that devas and humans are of one common origin (VIII.27.14; 83.8d).

The secret of the mantra and of the sound/vibration power was an unfathomable riddle in H.P.B.'s life-time and thus dismissed or denigrated, and to this day still remains a problem, though attempts have been made to understand it, more so at non scholarly levels. As early as *Isis Unveiled* (1875) H.P.B. wrote:

"The Vāc of the *mantra* is a spoken power, which awakens another corresponding and still more occult power, each allegorically personified by some god in the world of spirits, and, according as it is used, responded to either by the gods or the Rakṣasas (bad spirits). (I.U. II.p.410) 21

The sounds we emit may have good or bad repercussions according to our state of mind or the purity of our motivation. Compare the above with what Gonda wrote a century later:

"... the function of mantras does not end in conveying an ordinary sense. It is even generally admitted that they exert extraordinary power with which they are vested not so much through expressing that sense as through their 'sound-vibration'..."

"The Vedic mantras exist eternally, representing principles which are co-existent with the very cosmic processes and they are even to survive that process..." ("The Indian Mantra". p.272-3)

It should be realised that the underlying power of voiced vowels is of utmost importance; that certain vowels are *generative*; on the one hand, undulating, sustaining, nurturing, giving rise to a perpetual continuation of sounds which in its operation is always creative. Here the enigmatic prayer to Agni appears most appropriate:

"O Knower-of-birth, Pilgrim Fire, bring us the generative word (*brahma prajāvad-*) that it may shine in heaven". (VI.16.36)

the word that bears progeny: the creative word. On the other hand, other vowels are cutting, destructive, like the sword that separates one form from another. The "knower" uses words accordingly. The sound which Vāc represents is both creative and destructive, sustaining and cutting. Not for nothing are the verbs *mā* to measure out and *takṣ* to chisel, cut, used for shaping cosmos out of chaos. What comes out of the mouth, if directed from the depth of psyche, is the result of the controlling principle - the outcome of the two controlling energies of breathing in and breathing out, centralised in what precedes these two rhythms which are the centripetal and the centrifugal. Breathing out contracts, breathing in expands; between each of these is the space that incorporates both and the essence of each. This is the mystery of the eternal breath.

What gives the clue to the human capacity to enter another dimension of existence is the doctrine of a much subtler parallel or counterpart to the physical body; an intermediate veil(s) between that body and the innermost flame-spirit; not invented but seen by the ancient seers. Of this no scholar of H.P.B.'s time and even up to recently had any inkling. Yet it is hinted at in Ṛg v.X.16.5 and 14.8 ("unite with the form of splendour"; cf. also Athv.XVIII.3.59 and Śat.Br. XIII.2.7.19); in the Maitri Up. (VI.21 discussed in ch.6, pt.2), in the Chānd. Up. (VIII.6.5) etc. It was investigated in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in the work of Sir Arthur Avalon who translated *The Tantrik Texts*, 1913, and wrote *The Tantra of the Great Liberation*, 1913, *The Serpent Power*, 1919, etc. But no scholar, if indeed aware of these works, perceived that the essence of these teachings appears in the Ṛgveda in multiple hints. Long before these publications, long before Gonda's *Vision of the Vedic Poets*, (1963) or A. Padoux's investigations into the first speculations on the powers of the word (summarised in ch.5) H.P.B. revealed these doctrines and explained them. (See *Collected Writings*, and vol.4 for her "Esoteric Papers" where she explains the subtle constitution of man which throws light upon the Ṛgvedic allusions, for instance, the "form of splendour"). This is knowledge enough - for so long enshrined in sacred texts which even to this day few understand - to point out how deep and broad was her compass of vision.

#### THE PROBLEM OF INTERMEDIARIES AND THE ONE GOD

It was also very courageous of H.P.B. to face the great stumbling block to the appreciation of *The Secret Doctrine*, and thereby to that of the Vedas and other ancient texts; viz., the problem of intermediaries or celestial beings between the Ultimate Divine Source and our terrestrial sphere. For this problem seems to have

reintroduced the "hated" and hunted out "gods" of antiquity whose existence is not merely denied by our modern intelligentsia, but denigrated. For the esoteric tradition these intermediaries are a necessity, and indeed a fact to the seer. In a universe whose Source is beyond human conception, whose phenomena are each related to their noumena as the directing power, there must be intermediate categories of intelligences, higher and lower, to direct phenomena and link all from the highest to the lowest. We have seen how celestial entities are considered in *The Secret Doctrine* to be the reflectors of what is called the Universal Mind, *Mahat*, which itself is the *Logos* or *word* made manifest in the universe, which "*Logos* made manifest" is seen in *Ṛta*, the supreme law. So the *Logos* is essentially the voice and pattern of the Cosmic Order. Necessarily celestial beings, rooted in that *Logos*, reflect what is deeply imprinted in themselves, hence cannot but act in accordance with the great Law of progressive manifestation and harmonious working together, as inscribed in the "Sons of the Infinite, [Aditij]" who "vision the Cosmic Order and establish it" (IV.55.2cd). This reflection implies an inter-relatedness with all creative forces rooted in *ākāśa*, from which all emerges; leaving no room for that haphazard collocation of atoms of some modern thought, but rather evincing a directive intelligence and solidarity among the various groups' performance, each doing its specific work, of whose oneness the ṛṣis sang in their hymns:

"One is the mighty godhood of the shining-ones" (III.55.1) who

"rule over the whole world in accordance with the *ṛta*" (IV.63.7c),

a vision of the world full of hope and assurance of worth, out of all relation to that nihilistic modern view as exemplified by B. Russell in his declaration of despair:

"...that man is the product of causes which have no prevision of the end they were achieving, that his origin, growth, hopes and fears, loves and beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocation of atoms; that no fire, no heroism ... can preserve an individual life beyond the grave ... that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins - all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand." ("A Freeman's Worship" from *Mysticism and Logic*.)

This contrasts starkly with the ancient Vedic thought of which numerous quotes have been given, based upon a vision that far from conducing to committing suicide (of which in our 20<sup>th</sup> century there have been too many cases) gives hope and purpose to humanity (cf. *Ṛgv.*X.5.6, *Athv.*XII.1.1 etc)

H.P.B. in *The Secret Doctrine* acknowledged the imperfections of manifestation, viz., "that adaptations *do* occur", that the "fittest *do* survive" at the expense of the weakest, etc. and of course far worse in the human world where useless massacres of human beings and of animals *do* occur in every age... In other words, the world was not created by a perfect God but is slowly evolving to a greater perfection in accordance with the cyclic laws. (Cf. S.D.I. p.439 where she states that the immediate creation of our earth has never been attributed to the UNIVERSAL DEIFIC PRINCIPLE by the Ancients.)

Many have been the attempts at grasping those elusive inklings of a Divine Principle in its many ramifications and at defining it in terms that the human mind could accept; the idea of manifested *Logos* is one of these, as also of Universal Mind or *Anima Mundi*. Schuon, in his *The Transcendent Unity of Religions* explained the difficulty of apprehending Divinity remarkably well, and in harmony with *The Secret Doctrine*:

"Perhaps the most important among the conceptions that are inaccessible to exoterism is, in certain respects at least, that of the *gradation of universal Reality*: Reality affirms itself *by degrees*, but *without ceasing to be 'one'*, the inferior degrees of this affirmation being absorbed, by metaphysical

integration or synthesis, into the superior degrees ... Furthermore, Being Itself, which is none other than the Personal God, is in its turn surpassed by the Impersonal or Supra-Personal Divinity, Non-Being, of which the Personal God or Being is simply the first determination from which flow all the secondary determinations that make up Cosmic Existence. *Exoterism cannot*, however, admit either *this unreality of the world or the exclusive reality of this Divine Principle*, or above all, *the transcendence of Non-Being relative to Being or God*. In other words, the exoteric point of view cannot comprehend the transcendence of the supreme Divine Impersonality of which God is the personal affirmation; such truths are of too high an order, and therefore *too subtle and too complex from the point of view of simple rational understanding*, to be accessible to the majority or formulated in a dogmatic manner ..." (op.cit. p. 38; italics my own)

Such contention is that of *The Secret Doctrine*; H.P.B. could have written this paragraph. She was taken to task for using this word "Non-Being", meaningless to the rational mind, but perfectly understandable to the intuition. She explained that

"... a Deity, a Being, 'having a mind like that of man, only infinitely more powerful', is *no* God 22) that has any room *beyond* the cycle of creation. He has nought to do with the *ideal* conception of the eternal universe. He is, at best, one of the *creative subordinate* powers, the Totality of which is called the 'Sephīrōth', the 'Heavenly Man', and Adam Kadmon, the *Second Logos* of the Platonists". (S.D. II. p.544)

We should reflect on this *synthesis* of the Heavenly Man offered by both writers, each in his/her own way, and as appears in the sacred records of humanity. "*The Secret Doctrine* admits", writes H.P.B.

"a Logos or a Collective 'Creator' of the Universe; a *Demiourgos* [sic] ... [who] is no *personal deity* - i.e. an imperfect extra-cosmic god - but only the aggregate of the Dhyāni-Chohans and the other forces". (S.D. I.p.279-80)

Thus, the *Demiourgos* is "the qualitative compound of a multitude of creators and builders". (ibid. p.380 fn)

"The Sephīrōth are the collective Adam Kadmon, the 'Heavenly Man' or the Logos". (ibid. II. p.234)

The Heavenly Man, called Puruṣa in Ṛgveda X.90, from whose body the four human castes were born, and animals and the sun and moon and Agni, Indra, Vāyu, and the hymns, chants, metres, is obviously also the *synthesis* of hosts of creatures, planets, elements, sounds, etc. Compare this with the "Form omnipotent" of the Lord Kṛṣṇa which Arjuna wished to see and which confronted him in all its awe-full mien (*ghorā tānu*):

"Here, today, behold the whole universe, movable and immovable, standing in one in my body ... (Bhg. Gītā 11:7)

If the splendour of a thousand suns were to blaze out together in the sky, that might resemble the glory of that Mahātman.

There Pandava beheld the whole universe, divided into manifold parts, standing in one in the body of the Deity of deities. (ibid.11:12,13)

... the glory filleth space; the universe is burning, Viṣṇu, with thy blazing rays." (11:30)

Just as innumerable cells, each with its prescribed task to perform, animate the human body, whilst the real human being acts beyond the activity of his cells in thought, words and deeds, so analogically innumerable creatures, human and deva, etc. performing their allotted tasks, form the manifested body of a celestial entity. This is a viewpoint seldom envisaged, evident in the *sacred texts*, that deserves considering.

In this respect the findings of M. Eliade in his *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, 23) is also in line with H.P.B.'s assertions concerning Supreme Beings:

"Nowhere in primitive religion do we find Supreme Beings of the sky playing a leading role" (p.50)

"The transcendence of God is directly revealed in the inaccessibility, infinity, eternity and creative (rain) of the sky." (p.40)

The number of typical cases of the sky gods of Africa withdrawing from men is great. However much of a "creator omnipotent" the Supreme Sky-god might be, he

"plays a quite insignificant part in the religious life of the [Yoruba] tribe." (p.47)

Among the Yorubas of West Africa, for instance, the sky god was called Olorun which means "Owner of the sky". He gave the impetus to creation, but

"handed over the finishing and governing of it to a lower god, Obatalla." (p.47)

Similarly, Babylonian Anu "God of the heavens", enthroned on the summit of heaven, delegated his power to Enlil to rule over the heavens and earth, and to fix the destinies of humans. Again, the Supreme Being of the Semang on the Malacca Peninsula created all except the earth which he delegated to Ple, his subordinate, to create. For the Tubumkas "the Creator is too unknown, too great for the common affairs of men" (p.48) - quite a contrast with our Christian arrogant decrees of what God is and does. Have these "primitives" or these ancients greater respect for the Supreme Divine Principle than our Christian theologians? Even if there be

exceptions to such ideas among primitive people, on the whole these examples bring another proof to H.P.B.'s claim of an ancient revelation assuming various garbs among various peoples. The sky-god's aloofness is typically one of these. Porphyry's description, among the Geeks, sums up the ancient initiates' attitude to the Deity:

"To that God who is above all things, neither external speech ought to be addressed, nor yet that which is inward." (*De Abstinētia*, II, 34. S.D. I. p.425)

For Proclus, the Deity of deities is

"the Unity of Unities, and above the first adyta ... more ineffable than all silence, and more unknown

than all Essence ... concealed amidst the intelligible gods". (*On the Theology of Plato*. p.110) S.D. I. p.426)

"In Vedic times", writes D. Frawley, "the many were used to reveal the One. In Upaniṣadic times the many were reduced to the One. In later times the many had to be rejected altogether for there to be any hope for the realization of the One." (*The Creative Vision of the Upaniṣads*. p.41)

The idea of a Supreme Unknowable "Causeless Cause of all Causes", to quote H.P.B.'s own words, who, she declared, could never be mentioned or speculated upon *outside* initiated circles, has long been denied to the Pagan world which, *ipso facto*, made Christianity, in the eyes of its followers, vastly superior to the ancient and Oriental religions. Even Islam could not be accepted as an equal since it had no Christ to offer, but a book however inspired. Lack of mention of a universal Deific Principle and focus only on its agents misleadingly called gods, lent further fuel to the conflict between the old and the new two religions. The many gods of the ancient religions do not detract from the One Supreme Source - beyond all the intermediaries or movers and activators of creation and above all beyond human tendency to degrade all sacredness, which is exactly what has occurred to the idea of Deity. The anthropomorphising of God has completely desecrated the concept of That which is after all the Unknowable origin of all, venerated by the initiates and the great thinkers, sages and mystics of all ages and races. But, H.P.B. writes

"... neither the collective Host ... nor any of the working powers individually, are proper subjects for divine honours or worship. All are entitled to the grateful reverence of Humanity, however, and man ought to be ever striving to help the divine evolution of *Ideas*, by becoming to the best of his ability a *co-worker with nature* in the cyclic task. The ever-unknowable and incognizable *Kāraṇa* alone, the Causeless Cause of all causes, should have its shrine and altar on the holy and ever untrodden ground of our heart - invisible, intangible, unmentioned, save through 'the still small voice' of our spiritual consciousness. Those who worship before it, ought to do so in the silence and the sanctified solitude of their Souls; making their spirit the sole mediator between them and the *Universal Spirit*, their good actions the only priests, and their sinful intentions the only visible and objective sacrificial victims to the *Presence*." (S.D. I. p.280)

No earth-bound, pride-bound, dogma-bound theologian could ever have written such a noble homage in veneration to the Deity.

It should not be forgotten that, however far beyond our human mind the Supreme Universal Source may be, there was always another facet presented, closer to the human mind and heart, writ large over all sacred records: the possible communion with the divine representatives of one's choice. Thus in ancient Egypt the following prayer:

"It is you, Amun, Master of the silent man, who comes at the call of the unhappy one. I call on you when I am in affliction and you come to save me, to give me breath in my misfortune, to save me when I am a prisoner."  
(From the *Wisdom Literature: Egyptian Religious Texts and Representations*.  
ERT Bollingen Series. 40. N.Y. 1954-74.)

Thus from the Ṛgveda:

"O youngest one, whatever sin we have committed, through our human condition, through want of sense, make us sinless in the sight of Aditi, pardon every offense whatsoever, O Agni." (IV.12.4; cf. I.31.16)

The knowledge among the educated was always that within man lies the spark of spiritual reality, call it by whatever name you wish: in Egypt, Osiris, Isis, Amun, etc.; in the Vedas, Agni the link between man and the Supreme Reality, the inner monitor, or Varuṇa etc.; or the Puruṣa in the cavity of the heart; among Christians the Father in heaven, and Christ, the "hidden man of the heart" of St Peter. This is testimony enough of the need of the human psyche for spiritual communion and solace and its knowledge of where to find it.

#### H.P.B.'S MESSAGE OF HOPE

For her staunch stand on the eternal ancient gnosis reaching out even to the 19<sup>th</sup> century and on the ancient vision of the One Unnameable Source and its celestial "movers", *theoi*, acting in unison to create a world of wholeness, H.P.B. had to face the factions of the unshakable Christian theologians and missionaries, and the scientific and scholarly world; to these should be added the flippant and cynical critics and ignorant public for whom a "secret" doctrine spanning the ages of supposed total ignorance, was inconceivable and more of a joke than anything else; a pretty appalling background to her efforts to bridge the gulf in understanding then existing between West and East and to point to the cracks in the fortified domain of materialism and Christianity. With extraordinary singleness of purpose, diligence and dedication, and a daring flaunting of crippling prevalent conventions and opinions, she laboured for almost twenty years to give the sceptical West the grandest message it had yet received for many ages, to draw together East and West to share the higher philosophical thought of Oriental mysticism. She emphasised the necessity of brotherhood for mutual understanding and universal renewal, what R. Panikkar, a century later, called cross cultural fertilization. She opened the eyes and mind of those who had not yet gone blind, or were not yet deadened, through false or bigoted indoctrination, to the heritage left to humanity by its great sages of past millennia, which the intellectual elite of her time, through extreme conceit and ignorance, was in the process of degrading and throwing away.

The principles enunciated in her *The Secret Doctrine* - the One Divine Life at the root of manifestation, the rhythmic periodicity of every manifested life, the outgoing and ingoing of the Great Breath or Cosmic Pulse in its involutory and evolutionary tidal waves of lives, assuming various forms and thereby shaping the various kingdoms on earth, and the obligatory pilgrimage of every spark from the One Divine Hearth throughout the planes of manifestation in accordance with the One Law - all interblend and reveal a mighty interaction and interlinkedness working towards some apotheosis of the form aspect of life to serve as a worthy chalice for the Flame-Divine. What was hinted at throughout the Ṛgveda finds explanations in H.P.B.'s monumental work, together with a panoramic view of what is that *guptavidyā*. This panoramic vision is subtly evoked in the image of Śiva's whirling, fiery, celestial dance, and in the celestial chants of the *Yajurveda* (Yjv.31.18; 20.25; 32.8).

In addition to restoring to the Vedas their lofty significance and sacredness, to religion and mythology their essential meaning, H.P.B.'s message embraced the universe as well as man; Deity as well as deva; timelessness as well as time; the infinitude of space as well as those spaceless, timeless, spiritual dimensions that few dare to fathom. It gave, through the translation of and commentaries on the *Stanzas of Dzyan*, a splendid vision of life within the framework of our solar system; it revealed a cosmic spiritual history as well as our planet's prehistory; this in dire contrast to the pernicious doctrine of a mechanical universe haphazardly put together and the absurdity of human existence; it pointed to man's unique role and spiritual purpose in our planetary scheme. It maintained man's divine origin in so far as his mind/soul was concerned, and his perfectibility, when every effort was being made to prove man's descent from an ape ancestor, consciousness a by-product of molecular motion, and human life purposeless.

One thing is to grasp the significance and vastness of a cosmic vision with its ramifications as unfolded in certain sacred texts and explain it; another to invent it all. It seems rather that H.P.B.'s *The Secret Doctrine* is truly a synthesis of the ancient philosophico/mystical thought, the accumulated wisdom consigned to the sacred records of certain peoples, and that she is responsible for this synthesis. These records do need some key to unravel their core meaning and H.P.B. provided this. Many of her assertions are being vindicated more and more as further discoveries are being brought to our notice - e.g. G. Smith's Assyro-Chaldean tablets' and the Kabbalah's evidence, Eliade's investigations in comparative religion, Idries Shah's revelation



of Sufi influence in the very bastion of Christianity, the evidence of man's antiquity pushed back and back with more and more recent discoveries. H.P.B.'s principal claims are now very far from preposterous.

A.P. Sinnett summed up her message and its reception thus:

"She was concerned with bearing a message to the world of grave importance and infinite solemnity. It was not half uttered, not a hundredth part understood, before it was snapped up by every lively journalist in search of a new joke ... " (H.P.B. *In memory of Helena Petrovna Blavatsky*. London, 1931. p.33.)

so non-existent was the respect shown for and understanding of the *sacred lore* of the Ancients and the Orientals. Only ignorance can deny that the vision emerging from a real understanding of the Vedas, for instance, the vision of Cosmic Order, the sunshine splendour of the prayers and the hymns to the devas, enshrined in the R̥gveda, is one of powerful grasp of some truth quite beyond the human mind and of majestic wholeness: the One Law, the One Truth, the One Endeavour - a vision of hope for humanity, bringing humans and celestial beings closer together in mutual interaction for the benefit of the whole. The message given in the Vedas is one of freedom and wholeness (R̥gv.X.100) and it applies nowadays more than ever:

"Open yourself, create free space, release the bound one from his bonds!

Like a new born child, freed from the womb, be free to move on every path." (Athv.VI.121.4.

Panikkar's

translation)

This was indeed the message of H.P.Blavatsky; for her it meant: let your mind be free to move on to the higher path of the spiritual call! 24)

The revelations of certain mysteries of cosmos, nature and its child humanity, inherent to the *veda* and its poetic utterances in the four Vedas, which have been examined here in some details for scholarly attention, which are inherent to other traditions and sacred texts as also shown, and H.P.B.'s masterful handling of these as a whole, demand at long last recognition. They provide profound inklings into the cosmic inroads, into a universe projected from a stupendous hearth of activity into an orderly unfoldment to objective manifestation, based upon a gamut of frequencies that create the music of the spheres, the scale of harmonics underlying all worlds, all forms, from the macrocosmic to the microcosmic. In revealing this mighty interlinkedness of all living forms, this ancient gnosis, H.P.B. added another dimension to our present narrow, lifeless perspective which is in dire need of deepening, of transformation.

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## CHAPTER 10

### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> H.P.B. claims that "Zoroastrian Esotericism is identical with that of *The Secret Doctrine*" (S.D.II. p.356) and all through that work gives examples; a claim which only after her death began to be substantiated. Thus

"Ahriman is the manifested *shadow* of AHURA-MAZDHA (Asura-mazda), himself issued from Zervan Akarana 'boundless (circle of) Time' or the Unknown Cause. 'Its glory', they say of the latter, 'is too exalted, its light too resplendent for either human intellect or mortal eye to grasp and see'. Its primal emanation is *eternal light, which, from having been previously concealed in DARKNESS was called to manifest itself and thus was formed Ormazd, the King of Life*'. He is the 'first born' in BOUNDLESS TIME, but, like his own antitype (pre-existing Spiritual idea) *has lived within darkness from all eternity...* (S.D. II. p.488; see also II. p.480; 291; 517; 607-8, 609, etc. for other examples.

The sevenfold *earth chain* in respect to the Mazdean scriptures is also explained such as the misunderstanding of Dr Geiger concerning the description, in the Avesta, of the earth as "septempartite" and "tripartite" - "the *Avesta* has not borrowed the idea from the R̥gveda, but simply repeats the esoteric teachings". See S.D.II. p.758-9 for the full explanation and comparison with the S.D. sevenfold earth chain. 2. See B. Thiering's *Jesus the Man*, 1992, for an explanation and application of this method.

3. Op. cit. p.53-4. Translators like Geldner, Oldenberg, Renou, Varenne, may give the exact meaning of words philologically, but all too often fail to give the essence of the meaning which is not grasped. Among the exceptions are R. Panikkar who cannot be considered completely Westerner. Translators like W.O'Flaherty, with sheer lack of poetic sensitivity, cater only for the lowest denominator among readers and totally destroy the sacredness of the Ṛgveda. One of the worst degradations of a cosmic hymn is her translation of Ṛgv.X.190. Stanza 1 is reduced to "Order and truth were born from heat as it blazed up..." and *tapas* in a note is equated with "the primeval erotic or ascetic heat of the Creator"! There is no inkling of the profoundly spiritual meaning of *tapas* far beyond any human erotic or ascetic blaze. (D. Knipe also degrades the concept of *tapas* to an "erotic daydream of heat in the dark waters" of space, in X.129). Similarly the last verse (3) of X.190 totally misses the spiritual meaning: "The arranger has set in their proper place the sun and moon, the sky and the earth, the middle realm of space, and finally the sunlight."

This enumeration of the *three main divisions of Vedic cosmogony* termed heaven, earth, (spiritual and physical) and mid-region, adds a fourth, here translated sunlight which in a cosmic hymn is meaningless. The word *sky*, moreover, devalues the spiritual import of heaven; Dyaus, the deity is intimately linked to *dyo*, heaven, both rooted in *div*, to shine, be luminous, the quality of the spiritual domain. Heaven and earth are two dimensions, as shown elsewhere, to which is added an intermediate one, and then a fourth, this is not even understood; sunlight is only our sun's light on the earth. The fact that *svar* is enumerated *after* the three main cosmic dimensions, is not even taken into account. The whole thrust of the hymn is here destroyed.

4. See E.W. Burlingame, "The Act of Truth". *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. 1917.

5. "Duty as Truth in the Ṛgveda", *India Maior*. 1972. p.59. Also "The Metaphysics of the Truth Act" (*satyakriya*). In *Mélanges d'Indianisme à la mémoire de L.Renou*. 1968. Institut de civilisation Indienne. Fasc.28. pp.171-7.

6. D. Frawley in his *The Creative Vision of the Early Upaniṣads*, put it succinctly and to the point:

"Central to the malaise of modern man is that he is rigidly enclosed within the preconceptions of his cultural world-view. He cannot see another culture, he cannot see nature, his fellowman or even himself apart from his whole rather stifling network of information which has become his world. What is required is an action of transcendence in which we dissociate ourselves from the preconceptions of our world-view and open ourselves up to another world-view, in this case the spiritual world-view of ancient man. This action of transcendence will give us the distance and the vision to understand ourselves better and to see our own world in a detached light, in which alone the solution to our problems can emerge." (op.cit. p.47-8)

7. "On the Purification concept in Indian Tradition" in *East and West*. Rome. n.s. vol.XIX.Rome. 1969.

Republished in *Yoga Quarterly Review*, no.5, 1972. That Jesus was reported to have quelled the storm, raised the apparently dead to life and other miracles, has been attributed to his "divinity" in accordance with the new Church dogma. Nevertheless, this was the abc of that "magic" taught in the temples of old. In his book on Empedocles, the philosopher but also the *magus*, *Ancient Philosophy, Mystery, and Magic*, P. Kingsley touches upon the abc of magic and declares: "... before the realm of magic was torn in two by the mutually hostile claims of religion and science, to accumulate knowledge and information about the world - and be able to synthesize and use it - was precisely the task of the magician." (p.229) Then follows a quote from M. Mauss, who recalls that the Greeks considered some branches of magic *applied physics*: "That is why magicians received the name of *physikoi* and that the word *physikos* was a synonym of magic" (*A General Theory of Magic*, 1972, p.143.) This aspect concerns the understanding of how the elements work, their link with their noumena, the various underlying frequencies, the various methods of healing, etc. Observe that *ātmāvidyā* is the very last stage, far beyond all *māyā*. The whole subject concerns the *essence* not the form with which alone science deals. Hence the complete misunderstanding.

8. This *direct knowledge* implies the possibility of complete fusion of the psyche with the higher flame-spirit, or *ātman* of which the *Yajurveda* sings "I have known this Heavenly-man" etc. (Yjv.31:18). The citations of Plotinus, Meister Eckhart and Śri Aurobindo (given in ch.2) on their own experience, come to mind.

Plotinus's final words settle the question:

"We cannot detach the Supreme to state IT; if we have seen something thus detached we have failed of the Supreme which is to be known only as one with ourselves."

(Ennead VI.9.10. MacKenna's rendering. 1962). But an interesting side aspect which may prove of great help in mind training and observation is already evident in a theoretical physicist's work, Dr Stephen M. Phillips. He advocates the technique of "direct cognition" which does imply the use of a supra physical faculty far from recognized among scientists. This possibility of fusing the mind with any object of concentration is well known to yogis, but that it should have attracted the notice of a scientist and be actually practised by him is remarkable. Among his publications are *Extra-sensory Perception of Quarks*, 1980, and *ESP of Quarks and Superstrings*, 1999, both on this subject and what he has discovered. This is really one step towards finding and using the psyche's own faculty.

9. Strangely, for Kuiper "... this much is obvious that the *parāvata-* which could be identified with *Nirṛti-* was not a dwelling place of the Devas" (ibid. p.225)

how then account for Indra, a deva, coming from *svaṛṇara* "or from afar (*parāvato*) from the seat of ṛta" (IV.21.3) and how could the seat of ṛta apparently identified with *parāvata* be equivalent with *Nirṛti*, dissolution? The zero point wherein all dissolves is also the point of resolution of all things.

10. The word *ṛta* is used in accordance with different parameters, yet all centred on *Law*, order, established norms, such as the seasons, cycles, birth and death, etc. Thus even the *dhīḥ* is said, as pointed out by Gonda, to be "filled up with *ṛta*" (II.16.8) "that does not mean that it is ṛta" (*Vision*. p.126) or that ṛta is enclosed in the *dhīḥ*, but rather that, whether as "inspired thought" or "intuitive insight" to be turned into a eulogy, the *dhīḥ* is to be shaped in accordance with the principles behind vision-thought-wording. See Gonda for X.31.11 where ṛta seems to have failed in a ṛṣi's words.

11. Enough proof has been given in the present study but other well known examples, usually referred to the Upaniṣads without acknowledging their original source, are listed and examined in my *Vision of Cosmic Order in the Vedas* (pp.285ff.)

12. D.Frawley confirms this variety of meaning:

"In the Vedic language the words are much fewer but have more complex meanings which can vary greatly by association and juxtaposition". (*Creative Vision of the Early Upaniṣads*. p.42) This is well exemplified in J. Gonda's *Dhāman* where he recognizes and investigates the many meanings of the word. For Frawley the Seers "... just had to learn how to turn over, to revolve in its multifarious facets the basic universal language that structures all things" (ibid. p.43) - the language of frequency, the shaper of forms. "The Vedic language is a root mantric language, which being universal reveals everything. The ancient seers were masters at shifting not their vocabulary but their level of apprehension of the language." (p.42) This most important statement gives the clue to many a riddle. They "used language not to draw conclusions about the world but to open up hidden dimensions to the world. In short their language was purely spiritual and not at all literal." (p.43) Such completely alien perspective contrasts starkly with our very basic but myopic view and may seem an impossibility to the modern reader. It may be immediately denied but one day will have to be admitted. In like manner, some 50 years ago Renou rejected Śri Aurobindo's Vedic symbolism thesis - not half as forthright in language as Frawley's statements - on the plea that thereby the Veda "ceases to be a document of prehistory" (*Religions of Ancient India*. 1953. p.17), in other words, primitive humanity was incapable of using symbols. Unfortunately for Renou, poetry came first as obvious from all the *sacred texts*, and poetry uses the language of symbols above all.

13. A summary of Blair's study in so far as Atri is concerned was given in my *The Cosmic Waters*, with his contention that the claim that the Aśvins "warded off" the scorching heat from Atri runs counter to two specific statements, one concerning Agni's action and one concerning Atri's action with Agni:

"Putting down thy foot in secret like a thief

thou hast enlightened and freed Atri ... " (V.15.5 Oldenberg's trans.)

Atri "sharpened the blade of Agni with his prayer" (VIII.73.8) for which Blair offers the translation:

"you chose (i.e. gave) the fire of heat (of the sun's rays) to Atri". But the fire meant here is not that of the sun, but of the inner, the *numinous flame* which the ṛṣi was in the process of kindling. Hence whether the Aśvins "warded off" the fire of heat to protect Atri's body or not, would not affect the fundamental meaning of Atri's *tapas*. Agni himself is said to have saved Atri in X.80.3. The whole subject needs revising in the light of the *tapasvin's* exertion which has been completely missed.

14. “You Aśvins gave to Atri ... heated nourishment (and) strength” (I.118.7 Blair’s translation) and “made the heated gharma favourable to Atri” (I.112.7). In the first quote Blair takes *taptam* as qualifying *urj* (vigour, strength, refreshment); in the second, one could say that just as the vessel or *gharma* is ritually heated, so may it also be considered the symbolic counterpart to the physical body in which resides Agni. In making the *gharma* favourable to Atri the Aśvins were protecting his body.

15. The *fourth brahman* or fourth degree of prayer or invocation - which reminds one of the degrees of prayer expounded by St Teresa of Avila - is a state of consciousness, of complete absorption in the revelation, whatever that be; in the Ṛgveda, *sva*, the entering into the *solar splendour*; but the technique of its realisation or attainment is only glimpsed at in the *Upaniṣads* and the *Yogasūtras*. The four stages towards absorption can be brought in parallel to the four states of consciousness, 1) waking concentration; 2) dreaming during which another dimension may be reached; 3) deep sleep (of the senses during which another kind of absorption develops, *dhyāna*) and 4) *samadhi*, union, oneness; and also may be paralleled to the four *kośas* or envelopes of the human constitution as outlined in ch.8.

16. On p.11 ff Renou discusses the apparent fact that the “fourth” brahman could be at the origin of the speculation on the fourth in the Upaniṣads. Cf. the *Taittirīya Saṁhita* VII.3.1.4 “Stanzas, melodies, sacrificial formulas, are limited, but of *brahman* there is no end.” Cf. also Atharvaveda II.1.2:

“May the gandharva, knowing the immortal, proclaim that highest abode that is in secret;  
three quarters (*pada*) of it [are] deposited in secret; whoso knoweth them, he shall be the father’s father.”

17. For instance “So untrustworthy are some translations of the Orientalists that in the French translation of the *Harivaṁśa* it is said: ‘the seven Prajāpatis, Rudra, Skanda (his son) and Sanat-Kumara proceed to create beings.’ Whereas as Wilson shows (vol.I. p.78.fn) the original is: ‘These seven ... created progeny; and, so did Rudra; but Skanda and Sanat-Kumara restraining their power, abstained (from creation)’”. (S.D. I.p.457-8) See also Darmesteter’s quotation on the ‘seven Keshvars of the earth’ (S.D. II. p.602) and H.P.B.’s comments.

18. For example in relation to the cosmic correspondences to the four divisions of Vāc (see ch. 5) as explained in *The Secret Doctrine* but not explained in Western exegesis; in relation to the solar rays, to the sevenfold chain, the sevenfold *ākāśa* or foundation of the world, etc.

19. “... The Vedas - the secret meaning of the latter will never be understood by the present generation of Orientalists...” (C.W. XIV. p.361)

Only in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century does one find at least a better attitude, an improved understanding and interpretation. In *Isis Unveiled*, having in mind Max Muller who denigrated the three other Vedas, she wrote

“We can never admit that the three other Vedas are less worthy of their name than the Ṛg-Veda hymns...  
The very name of the Vedas ... shows them to belong to the literature of those men who, in every country, language and age, have been spoken of as ‘those who know’ ...” (I.U. II.p.415)

20. Unfortunately for the Christian claim of *uniqueness* the comparative study of religions proves the opposite. Already in *Isis Unveiled* H.P.B. wrote:

“We believe rather hazardous on the part of Renan to assert so dogmatically, as he does, that Jesus ‘ignored the very name of Buddha, of Zoroaster, of Plato’; that he had never read a Greek nor a Buddhistic book, ‘although he had more than one element in him, which, unaware to him, proceeded from Buddhism, Parsism, and the Greek wisdom’ (*Vie de Jesus. Ch.xxviii*). This is conceding half a miracle, and allowing as much to chance and coincidence ... [Renan’s] opponents have the best reasons in the world to suspect the contrary. When they find that - 1, all his [Jesus’s] sayings are in a Pythagorean spirit, when not *verbatim* repetitions; 2, his code of ethics is purely Buddhistic; 3, mode of action and walk in life, Essenean (of the Pythagorean school known as *Koinobioi*); 4, his mystical mode of expression, his parables, and his ways, those of an initiate, whether Grecian, Chaldean, or Magian, ... it is difficult to escape from the logical conclusion that he belonged to that same body of initiates ...” (I.U. II. p.336, 337) Such statements in H.P.B.’s time were anathema.

21. H.P.B.’s remark is quite pertinent:

“... one should at least get a correct idea of the enormous occult importance of the Vedic pronunciation

of Sanskrit and understand the full meaning of the term *vāc* in its relation to *Ākāśa*, in other words,

become aware of the mutual relation between *the sacred sound* and the ether of space... ” (C.W. VI,p.89)

22. To transcend the limitations of any belief structure is extremely difficult for the sincere believer. Here it is that what has been called the *Wisdom tradition* of Eastern religions and the *Prophetic tradition* of the three monotheistic religions (really rooted in Judaism) do clash. The moral and at the same time transcendent God remains anthropomorphic, i.e. limited, made in the image of man. Hence as H.P.B. stresses “He” cannot compare with the *Causeless Cause of all Causes*, He belongs to the relative world. The Westerner stresses the social inactivity of the *Wisdom tradition* as against the social commitment to improvement in the Christian religion. The former is not at fault; the lethargy of the Oriental society is. The great message of the *Bhagavad Gītā* allied wisdom and action when Kṛṣṇa advised, fight since it is your duty to fight; translated in modern terms: fight for the betterment of all. This message is forgotten by critics of the Eastern religions.
23. Apart from a few studies such as *On the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Andaman Islands*, by E.H. Man, published in London in 1883, and on *The Melanesians* by R.H. Codrington, 1891, most studies on the beliefs of primitive peoples were carried out from the 20th century onwards, hence long after H.P.B.’s death.
24. It is only in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century that Dr Vernon Harrison has re-examined the Hodgson Report against H.P.B. and found it wanting in every respect. The incriminating letters were found forgeries, the evidence of the “handwriting so weak, partisan and confused”, the report riddled with biased statements, “conjectures” used as “facts”, whilst no evidence was given in favour of H.P.B., although no less a person than A.P.Sinnott could have been brought in as witness for her defence. In short, every means was used to discredit her, without giving her a chance to offset the “balances”. “As an investigator, Hodgson is weighed in the balances and found wanting.” “His case against Mme Blavatsky is not proven” sums up Dr V. Harrison. But no important publicity was made on this report and so H.P.B.’s name still stands falsely vilified on a false report. (Published in the Society for Psychical Research. *Journal*, vol.53, April, 1986. Reported in *Theosophical History*, April 1986, p.126-128.)