



Sri Aurobindo's action

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The Vedas

Curated by: *Sushrut Badhe*

Editorial

The Sanatana Guardian

Enter 2024 and the words “Sanatana Dharma” have become the talk of India, that is Bharat. That our journal's editors considered this topic as the theme for 2024, several months before it became so mainstream is indeed an act of serendipity and divine providence. Recently an inadvertent and bizarre clarion call for the eradication of Sanatana Dharma raised by members of a political faction which has a large connect with the masses raked up a political slugfest that only stirred up the *rajasic* sentiments across all corners of the nation. Their claim that Sanatana Dharma was but a disease that needed to be eradicated; a vestige of a past that holds no value for the present and the future, drew sharp responses from the opposite factions who wasted no opportunity in garnering support to ‘save the Sanatana Dharma which was now in peril’. Somewhere in the cacophony, the gen Z unfortunately disconnected with his/her roots — thanks to the digital revolution which incessantly feeds them with reels, viral videos and memes day in and day out — is left wondering if ‘Sanatana Dharma’ is naught but another tool of wily politicians to divide the people for their personal gains. It bodes us well to understand the true meaning of Sanatana Dharma. Sri Aurobindo recognised Sanatana Dharma to be a core value that was the foundation of India's freedom and in his letter to Parthasarathy Iyengar, he had emphasised that care must be taken not to indulge in the old kind of politics.

Be very careful to follow my instructions in avoiding the old kind of politics. Spirituality is India's only politics, the fulfilment of the Sanatan Dharma its only Swaraj. (CWSA, 36: 170)

Even a cursory look at the rich history of our motherland will reveal that a war against Sanatana Dharma is not really a very novel concept. Wave after wave of invasions took place with the aim of not just looting her wealth but also for destroying the cultural heritage and wisdom; for that was truly the bedrock of the strength and brilliance of our civilisation. But these demonic attempts failed and it is a fact that all future attempts too shall fail; for we have a guardian who is Himself Sanatana or eternal. In the great battle of Kurukshetra, between the Pandavas and Kauravas; a symbolic battle for justice between the forces of good and evil, we see the hero Arjuna confused and confounded right in the middle of the battlefield. Initially he cries out to Sri Krishna to let him escape the battle and in a fit of emotions, claims that Sanatana Dharma would get destroyed if he participated in the battle — *kulakshaye*

pranashyanti kuladharmaha sanatanaaha. But a terse Sri Krishna simply does not yield to Arjuna's fervent appeals, which included his quoting various shastras and texts to justify his not partaking in the battle of justice. Instead, Sri Krishna gradually and lovingly begins transferring the wisdom of the Vedas and Vedanta through the form of a divine song, that we call the Bhagavad Gita. It is only later on, after Arjuna's consciousness had risen after learning about the truths of the Atman and the Brahman, the metaphysical soul journey of life and death, and finally when he is granted the *divya drishti*, he realises while watching the primal and almighty Vishwaroopa Darshana, which is both beautiful and terrible at the same time, remarking in submission:

*tvam aksharam paramam veditavyam
tvam asya vishvasya param nidhaanam
tvam avyayah shaasvata-dharma-goataa
sanaatanas tvam purusho mato me*

(Bhagavad Gita 11.18)

*The highest immaculate truth that by man can be known,
The foundation upon which our universe has grown
The indestructible guardian of righteousness eternal
I believe, Thou art the one-celestial and supernal 11.18*

In this light, we can definitely take solace and be at peace by not falling into a *rajasic* trap of impulsive reactions; fully confident that the wisdom of the Vedas, the Upanishads and all the shastras will remain until the fire burns in the eye of the sun. However, we certainly cannot afford to once again slip into the dark and *tamasic* slumber of ignorance. The call to serve the Divine can neither be forgotten nor can we dare neglect it. Sri Aurobindo, in the dark prison of Alipore, received the instruction to uphold Sanatana Dharma from Purusha himself; as he declared to the world in his Uttarpara speech:

We speak often of the Hindu religion, of the Sanatana Dharma, but few of us really know what that religion is. Other religions are preponderatingly religions of faith and profession, but the Sanatana Dharma is life itself; it is a thing that has not so much to be believed as lived. This is the dharma that for the salvation of humanity was cherished in the seclusion of this peninsula from of old. It is to give this religion that India is rising. She does not rise as other countries do, for self or when she is strong, to trample on the weak. She is rising to shed the eternal light entrusted to her over the world. India has always

existed for humanity and not for herself and it is for humanity and not for herself that she must be great. (CWSA, 08: 6)

... When you go forth, speak to your nation always this word that it is for the Sanatana Dharma that they arise, it is for the world and not for themselves that they arise. I am giving them freedom for the service of the world. When therefore it is said that India shall rise, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall rise. When it is said that India shall be great, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall be great. When it is said that India shall expand and extend herself, it is the Sanatana Dharma that shall expand and extend itself over the world. It is for the dharma and by the dharma that India exists. (ibid. 10)

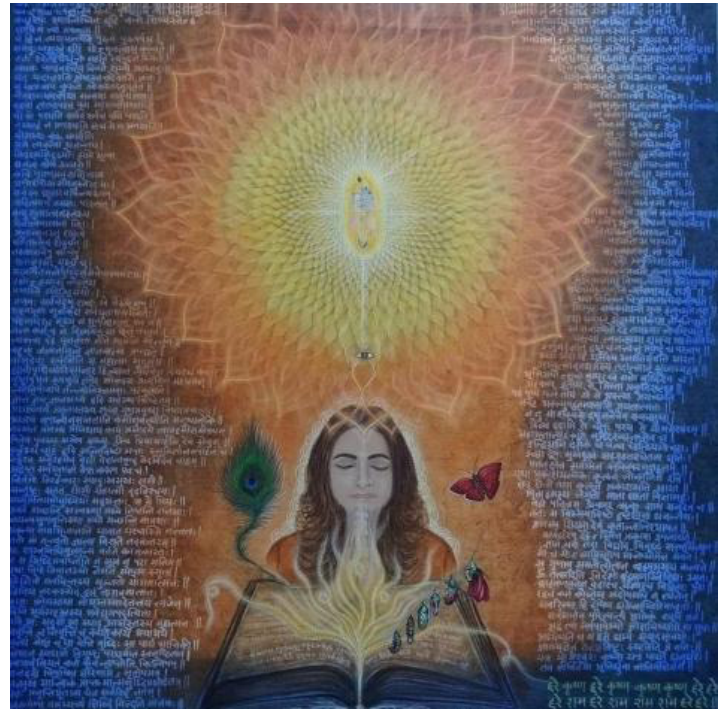
As we meditate upon the following words of Sri Aurobindo, each of us must resolve to become conscious of our existence that is essentially divine and vast so that we can truly play our roles as instruments of the divine manifestation that is underway. This and this alone is the way we can pay our tributes to the master and the centuries of sacrifices that have taken place to uphold the nitya jyoti or eternal flame of Bharat.

*For Nine days, the inferno at Nalanda burnt,
Hoping to erase all the sacred texts that were learnt.
Other sanctums of learning too were then raided;
Knowledge suffered distortions and struggled unaided!*

*Over generations this loss compounded and spread,
The hidden wisdom was lost-unheard and never read.
The devilish ploy was that the light be forever buried —
And down the ages nothing was passed or carried.*

*But little was really known or understood by man,
That all of this too was part of the grand plan.
The Vedic treasures were destroyed in time's course,
But no force on earth could touch the divine source.*

*From the same planes where the truth was heard,
Would reverberate once more the first word.
The newer texts too would once more come —
From this churning the world too will immortal become.*



*Across the oceans shall burst the volcanoes of light,
Flooding and cleansing the plagued lands of blight,
Descendants of Angiras, Atri and the other rishis shall rise;
And one hotar shall perform Vishwajit Yagnya — the final sacrifice!*

May we firstly, ourselves become conscious of the mission and the vision of the master Sri Aurobindo and our bhagya vidhaata, Sri Krishna who is charioteering our Bharata to a new Dawn.

Echoing Krishna's words from the Gita and also the Isha Upanishadic phrase — "*Uttishta Bharata! Krato smara. kṛtaṁ smara!*"

Awake, Bharata. May we remember the great deeds of our ancestors, May we rise again to their consciousness!

This issue will focus on the Veda, which has very rightly been called 'the foundation of Sanatana Dharma'.

SUSHRUT BADHE

Veda — The Foundation of Sanatana Dharma (Insights from Sri Aurobindo)

Introduction

Sanatana¹ Dharma² is an all-encompassing way of life that seeks to transcend falsehood and limitations³, awakening the divine essence within all of existence. It offers a multitude of paths for individuals to connect with the Divine. The profound wisdom of Sanatana Dharma possesses the potential to transform the world. In a world where many faiths rely on belief and profession, Sanatana Dharma stands as a living ethos, urging not just belief but a life lived in harmony with its profound vision. Rooted in the ancient traditions of this land, it has held the noble purpose of humanity's salvation throughout the ages.

In order to understand the ancient roots and core principles of Sanatana Dharma, one must immerse in the Veda⁴ — the very foundation of Sanatana Dharma. Veda, in its deeper essence, stands as a profound mantric expression, conveyed through symbols and words infused with spiritual and occult power. Through the passage of countless centuries, numerous efforts have been made to unearth the hidden profundity within the Vedic Mantras. Unfortunately, the Veda has often been subject to misconceptions and misinterpretations, causing it to lose some of its intrinsic significance in the eyes of contemporary humanity. In our quest to fathom what the Veda, as the foundation of Sanatana Dharma, truly intends

to convey, the illuminating wisdom of Sri Aurobindo (1872–1950), often recognised as the Rishi of India's renaissance, becomes invaluable.

Sri Aurobindo's profound insights into the Veda unravel its esoteric significance, revealing a treasure trove of wisdom concealed within the very fabric of its Mantras. His wisdom serves as a guiding beacon, shedding light on the path forward for Sanatana Dharma and its enduring legacy.



Sri Aurobindo and the Veda⁵

The ultimate aspiration of Sanatana Dharma is to facilitate the realisation of the Divine within one's inner life and throughout outer existence. It is a journey that seeks to elevate the human to the level of the Divine, bridging the chasm that separates them. Sri Aurobindo firmly believed that the Veda held the potential to construct this bridge. Yet, he could discover that throughout history, the Veda had suffered from misunderstanding and misrepresentation, failing to be presented in its true, pristine form. Consequently, the profound truths concealed within the Veda needed to be unveiled and brought to the forefront. Ultimately, the key to realising Sanatana Dharma's lofty goals lies in discovering and embracing the divine within, in all its

¹ The word सनातन has two components: सना+तन. सना in Sanskrit means eternity. The suffix तन is added to a word in the sense of belonging to. So the word सनातन means that which belongs to eternity.

² The word धर्म in Sanskrit comes from the root-sound धृ meaning 'to hold' (धारणात् धर्म इत्याहुः). Dharma is the guiding principle that maintains or upholds the coherence and growth of life and development within defined parametres and regular patterns. Sanatana Dharma is therefore, the timeless law of life that meticulously and steadfastly upholds the unity and advancement of all life in the universe through a systematic framework.

³ ॐ असतो मा सद्गमय। तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय। मृत्योर्मांमृतं गमय ॥
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥
om asato mā sadgamaya. tamaso mā jyotirgamaya. mṛtyormāmṛtaṁ gamaya. om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ

Guide me from the unreal to the Real. Lead me from darkness to Light. Take me from mortality to Immortality. Om, may there be peace, peace, peace. (Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad, 5.1.1)

⁴ The word वेद in Sanskrit comes from the root-sound विद् meaning 1. 'to exist' (सत्ता), 2. 'to know' (ज्ञान), 3. 'to gain' (लाभ). Based on this the word वेद refers to सच्चिदानन्द — Sat, Chit and Ananda (the greatest gain आनन्दान्न परो लाभ).

⁵ Sri Aurobindo had limited or almost no exposure to the Veda prior to his arrival in Pondicherry (1910). He possessed extensive knowledge of the Upanishads and various other Vedic texts, but the Vedasamhita itself was unfamiliar to him. However, upon his acquaintance with the teachings of the Vedasamhita in Pondicherry, he realised that Veda was a confirmation to what experiences he already had. (Refer CWSA, 36: 98)

splendour and purity. Sri Aurobindo made an extraordinary contribution to the field of Vedic studies by unveiling the esoteric meanings hidden within Vedic hymns. In doing so, he challenged the prevailing Western scholarship's historical method, which often dismissed Vedic hymns as mere remnants of a primitive sacrificial liturgy. According to Sri Aurobindo, the Vedic hymns were not to be reduced to mere imagery; instead, they possessed profound esoteric significance that needed to be deciphered.

Sri Aurobindo emphasised the pivotal role of key terms like "rtam", "kratu", "shravas" and "ketu" in unlocking the esoteric structure of Vedic doctrine.¹ He argued that a proper interpretation of these words was essential for grasping the true knowledge encapsulated in the Vedas. Sri Aurobindo believed that only those with the vision of a Rishi, a mystic seer, could truly penetrate the secret chamber of the Vedas and comprehend their hidden truths. In his own words, "*The words of the Veda could only be known in their true meaning by one who was himself a seer or mystic; from others the verses withheld their hidden knowledge.*" (CWSA, 16: 7-8)

Sri Aurobindo's Vision

In Sri Aurobindo's exploration of Sanatana Dharma, his quest extended beyond the realms of science, religion, or even Theosophy. His pursuit was singular and unwavering — he sought the Veda, not merely to comprehend the essence of Brahman but to unravel the mysteries of Brahman's manifestation. In his words, it was not about finding a lamp on the way to a forest, but about discovering a radiant beacon that could illuminate the path to joy and action in the world.² Sri Aurobindo's aspiration was grounded in a pursuit of truth that transcended human opinion, a knowledge that all thought aspired to attain, as encapsulated in the Sanskrit aphorism: "*yasmin vijnate sarvam vijnatam.*"

Sri Aurobindo firmly believed that the Veda served as the foundational cornerstone of Sanatana Dharma. He regarded it as the concealed divinity within Hinduism, but one that remained veiled and shrouded in misinterpretation. To him, the Veda was not an enigma beyond reach; it was, in fact, a body of wisdom that could be known and discovered. He placed immense significance on the revelation and application of this knowledge, perceiving it as essential for both India and the world's future. However, the application was not to

lead to a renunciation of life but to empower life in the world, harmonising it with the divine. Sri Aurobindo, possessing the stature of a Rishi, possessed the capacity to see the authentic essence of Vedic mantras. He interpreted the hymns based on the insights granted to him through his seer-like vision. Poet Subrahmanya Bharati, who studied the Veda alongside Sri Aurobindo, attested to the uniqueness of his interpretive approach, quoting Sri Aurobindo as saying, "It was shown to me", in a literal sense. Sri Aurobindo attributed his profound insights to Sri Krishna, who had revealed to him the genuine meanings of the Vedas. He also claimed that Sri Krishna had shown him a new Science of Philology, unveiling the origins of human speech and enabling the development of a fresh interpretation of the Vedas based on this knowledge.³

Sri Aurobindo's experiences and revelations were not mere rhetoric; they echoed the profound connection that great seers and Rishis had with the truth, which, in their unique spiritual journey, invariably revealed itself to them.

The Vedic Symbolism

Vedic wisdom is richly encoded in symbolism, spanning spiritual (adhyatmika), cosmic (adhidaivika), psychological and physical levels (adhibhautika). It reveals the highest spiritual truths, cosmic laws, and the workings of cosmic forces within the human psyche and the physical world. The Mantras of the Veda, therefore, have a double significance — exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric meaning is what is commonly understood, but the symbols themselves carry a deeper, esoteric meaning that is part of the secret teaching and knowledge. This esoteric layer of the Veda requires a more profound interpretation, as Sri Aurobindo suggests, giving constant and straightforward meanings to the words and formulas employed by the Rishis.

These symbols are keys to understanding the universal law that operates at each level of existence. For example, the idea of yajna which is very central to the Vedic system of yoga, is not merely an act of fire oblation, but it is purely symbolic and primarily esoteric, representing "self-fulfilment through self-offering".

Similarly, Sri Aurobindo in his interpretation of the Veda has provided the deeper spiritual significances of many keywords which help diving deep into the secret chamber of the Veda.

¹ Refer CWSA, 16: 22

² Refer CWSA, 12: 62

³ *ibid.*

Here follow few words with their deeper significances, as revealed by Sri Aurobindo:¹

- Amrita: The nectar of immortality.
- Anna: Symbolic of the physical reality of the Brahman, representing food and matter.
- Apas: The divine outpourings of luminosity.
- Ashva: The symbol of life's swiftness and vital action.
- Dhenu: A nourishing symbol.
- Dhii: Represents the swiftness and subtlety of thought.
- Ghrita: Signifies the clarified and purified mind.
- Go: Symbolises a ray of truth and spiritual illumination.
- Hiranya: Represents the light of truth, the true wealth.
- Soma: Signifies divine ecstasy.
- Pashu: Represents animal impulses.
- Ratha: Symbolises the movement of energy.
- Rita: Stands for the truth in action, regulating right activity.
- Samudra: Signifies the infinite and eternal existence, flooding higher consciousness onto mortal minds.

¹ Cf. Sri Aurobindo's Vedic Glossary, compiled by A.B. Purani, published by Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1962

Conclusion

The Veda, as the foundational text of Sanatana Dharma, is profound with both exoteric and esoteric significance. Its symbols and words convey a spiritual and occult power that can only be unlocked through deep interpretation. Sri Aurobindo's insights into the Veda provide us with a deeper understanding of its esoteric meaning and the significance of the key words of the Veda, symbols used therein and the Vedic deities. In a deeper sense Veda is not a static text but a living, spiritual experience that continues to inspire seekers of truth and wisdom. There lies the sanatanatva or eternity of the Veda and the Sanatana Dharma.

SAMPADANANDA MISHRA

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The Living Symbolism in the Veda

The modern age in the Western world has been dominated by the scientific spirit. Undoubtedly it has contributed greatly to human progress. As a result of this success, it has tried to analyse even subjects like poetry, music and history from the scientific perspective. In history, particularly, many researchers have concluded, albeit wrongly, that in the ancient times all were barbarians and that there was no ancient civilisation worth its name. But legend and a more detailed study of history and traditions show that in ancient India in particular, shastras, which were both scientific and poetic, were taught and practiced in many homes in the ancient times. These shastras were and are the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Puranas. In this article, I will focus only on the Vedas.

It is true without any doubt that the mass of humans was living primarily in the physical consciousness or were 'physical minded' as Sri Aurobindo puts it. But at the same time, there also co-existed *Rishis* and *Rishipatnis*, who had attained the highest levels of spiritual consciousness.

Sharing the words of Sri Aurobindo on the Vedas:

"Veda, then, is the creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies. In that original epoch thought proceeded by other methods than those of our logical reasoning and speech accepted modes of expression which in our modern habits would be inadmissible. The wisest then depended on

inner experience and the suggestions of the intuitive mind for all knowledge that ranged beyond mankind's ordinary perceptions and daily activities. Their aim was illumination, not logical conviction, their ideal the inspired seer, not the accurate reasoner. Indian tradition has faithfully preserved this account of the origin of the Vedas. The Rishi was not the individual composer of the hymn, but the seer (*draṣṭā*) of an eternal truth and an impersonal knowledge. The language of Veda itself is *Śruti*, a rhythm not composed by the intellect but heard, a divine Word that came vibrating out of the Infinite to the inner audience of the man who had previously made himself fit for the impersonal knowledge. The words themselves, *dr̥ṣṭi* and *śruti*, sight and hearing, are Vedic expressions; these and cognate words signify, in the esoteric terminology of the hymns, revelatory knowledge and the contents of inspiration.

In the Vedic idea of the revelation there is no suggestion of the miraculous or the supernatural. The Rishi who employed these faculties, had acquired them by a progressive self-culture. Knowledge itself was a travelling and a reaching, or a finding and a winning; the revelation came only at the end, the light was the prize of a final victory. There is continually in the Veda this image of the journey, the soul's march on the path of Truth. On that path, as it advances, it also ascends; new vistas of power and light open to its aspiration; it wins by a heroic effort its enlarged spiritual possessions.

From the historical point of view the Rig Veda may be regarded as a record of a great advance made by humanity by special means at a certain period of its collective progress. In its esoteric, as well as its exoteric significance, it is the Book of Works, of the inner and the outer sacrifice; it is the spirit's hymn of battle and victory as it discovers and climbs to planes of thought and experience inaccessible to the natural or animal man, man's praise of the divine Light, Power and Grace at work in the mortal. It is far, therefore, from being an attempt to set down the results of intellectual or imaginative speculation, nor does it consist of the dogmas of a primitive religion. Only, out of the sameness of experience and out of the impersonality of the knowledge received, there arise a fixed body of conceptions constantly repeated and a fixed symbolic language which, perhaps, in that early human speech, was the inevitable form of these conceptions because alone capable by its combined concreteness and power of mystic suggestion of expressing that which for the ordinary mind of the race was inexpressible. We have, at any rate, the same notions repeated from hymn to hymn with the same constant terms and figures and frequently in the same phrases with an entire indifference



to any search for poetical originality or any demand for novelty of thought and freshness of language. No pursuit of aesthetic grace, richness or beauty induces these mystic poets to vary the consecrated form which had become for them a sort of divine algebra transmitting the eternal formulae of the Knowledge to the continuous succession of the initiates.” (CWSA, 15: 10-11)

“... We may therefore surmise that our actual Sanhita represents the close of a period, not its commencement, nor even some of its successive stages. It is even possible that its most ancient hymns are a comparatively modern development or version of a more ancient¹ lyric evangel couched in the freer and more pliable forms of a still earlier human speech. Or the whole voluminous mass of its litanies may be only a selection by Veda Vyasa out of a more richly vocal Aryan past. Made, according to the common belief, by Krishna of the Isle, the great traditional sage, the colossal compiler (Vyasa), with his face turned towards the commencement of the Iron Age, towards the centuries of increasing twilight and final darkness, it is perhaps only the last testament of the Ages of Intuition, the luminous Dawns of the Forefathers, to their descendants, to a human race already turning in spirit towards the lower levels and the more easy and secure gains—secure perhaps only in appearance—of the physical life and of the intellect and the logical reason.” (ibid. 12)

KITTU REDDY

¹ The Veda itself speaks constantly of “ancient” and “modern” Rishis, (*purvaḥ ... nutanaḥ*), the former remote enough to be regarded as a kind of demigods, the first founders of knowledge.

The Manifesting Original Intelligence

All living beings, including plants, insects and animals, are essentially spirits in their material bodies. This concept can be considered the original idea of spirituality and is not related to the idea of a God or religion. According to Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak in his 1903 book *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, the original man lived somewhere in the Arctic Circle, which was habitable before the Ice Age, and received the idea of the Vedas from nature there. One of the concepts mentioned in the lyrical Nasadiya Sukta of Rig Veda is whether the cosmos itself is original or created from the dissolution of an earlier existence. Who has created all these phenomena? Is there anyone who knows?

इयं विसृष्टिर्यत आबभूव यदि वा दधे यदि वा न ।
यो अस्याध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन्त्सो अङ्ग वेद यदि वा न वेद ॥

— *Rig Veda 10.129.7*

*He from whom the creation arose, he upholds it,
or he may not (no one else can). He who is the
superintendent in the highest heaven,
assuredly knows, or if he knows not
(no one else does).¹*

The Arctic Circle as the home of the original Vedic people theory takes away a lot of what is believed in the modern world — at least by those in power over education, communication and power structure. The hallmark of Vedas is that these are “heard” by the original people, and they did not write them out of their minds. So, if there must be an idea of religion, it must come out of these people, and the only word that fits for that is *Santana*, or the eternal. In every religion, there is an unseen God, and a visible prophet. But what was there before that? It is the question of how far back one is ready to go. Vedic people went deep into antiquity and established the origin of phenomena in their awareness about it.

तम आसीत्तमसा गूहळमग्रे प्रकेतं सलिलं सर्वाऽऽदम् ।

तुच्छयेनाभवपिहितं यदासीत्तपसस्तन्महिनाजायतैकम् ॥

— *Rig Veda 10.129.3*

*There was darkness covered by darkness in the beginning,
all this (world) was indistinguishable water, the empty
united (world) which was covered by a mere nothing, was
produced through the power of austerity (contemplation).²*

As time progressed, ancient man spread over the planet, formed different societies, developed different languages, and

different religions were formed including the Vedic religion, and later Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and so on. Various world religions remained limited by their distinctive historical and cultural contexts. Each religion possesses a genuine but ultimately unsatisfactory understanding of the unifying reality. There are, therefore, many equally valid religions. It is natural that the world is full of religious strife, violence, and even outright discrimination and persecution, where people of different faiths are living together and the power structure is not balanced.

All religions are lights of truth and that truth is consciousness of ‘sat’ that permeates the universe as declared in Sri Aurobindopnishad (Verse 7).

ॐ तत्सत् यच्च सच्चिदेव तच्चिन्मयं जगद् भासते चिदात्मनि
सत्यप्रकाशः सत्यस्य भगवतः । (CWSA, 09: 699)

*Om tat sat - That truth is for sure!
Whatever that truth is, that alone is consciousness pure.
The world of consciousness in the spirit's consciousness
persists -
Which is the divine truth - the real light that exists.³*

Vedic people could see mortal life as a subset of a conscious universe. For Vedic people everything that exists is conscious and alive; even without a body.

स नः पावक दीदिहि द्युमदस्मे सुवीर्यम् ।
भवा स्तोतृभ्यो अन्तमः स्वस्तये ।

— *Rig Veda 3.10.8.*

*Do you our purifier, light up for us a brilliant progeny,
be ever high to those who praise you for their well-being.*

महो अर्णः सरस्वती प्र चेतयति केतुना ।
धियो विश्वा वि राजति ॥

— *Rig Veda 1.3.12.*

*Sarasvati makes manifest her acts as a mighty river,
and (in her own form) enlightens all understandings.⁵*

Sri Aurobindo took upon himself the duty of connecting with the original spirituality of mankind and after arriving in Pondicherry in 1910, developed the idea of evolution of human consciousness, which is the true essence of the Vedas. Sri Aurobindo writes in *The Life Divine*.

The utmost mission of the Mind is to train our obscure consciousness which has emerged out of the dark prison of Matter; to enlighten its blind instincts, random intuitions, vague perceptions till it shall become capable of this greater light and this higher ascension. Mind is a passage, not a culmination.
(CWSA, 21-22: 136)

Celebrated English author Aldous Huxley was attracted to Indian philosophy. Huxley visited Pondicherry in 1938. As if taking forward the idea of *The Life Divine*, he postulated the “Minimum Working Hypothesis”, which presents the essence of the world’s great religions for anyone willing to live a good life. Huxley published it in an article in *Vedanta for The Western World* in Great Britain in 1948.

That there is a Godhead, Ground, Brahman, Clear Light of the Void, which is the unmanifested principle of all manifestations. That the Ground is at once transcendent [boundless] and immanent [indwelling]. That it is possible for human beings to love, know, and, virtually, become identical with the divine Ground. To achieve this unitive knowledge of the Godhead is the final end and purpose of human existence. That there is a Law or Dharma which must be obeyed, a Tao or Way which must be followed if men are to achieve their final end.

— Aldous Huxley⁶

Simply put, there is a reality beyond what is seen and felt by our senses and comprehended by our intellect, science and all the world’s knowledge. Being in touch with this reality — Godhead or Ground — is a unique quality of human life. Not using it amounts to squandering a great gift. A reflective, pure and unhurried way of life presents before seekers all the way and means to progress. By being mindful of the unseen, we find the ways and means to live a good life. Huxley was amongst the celebrities who nominated Sri Aurobindo for the 1950 Nobel Prize in Literature. The Prize was not given to Sri Aurobindo as it was not given to Swami Vivekananda or Mahatma Gandhi, and that is a different matter.

Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) has now arrived. People are enjoying ChatGPT which is Generative Pre-Trained Transformer for human conversations. Soon, lives and events will be controlled by the unseen intelligence that is building upon itself and free from any human control — at once transcendent and immanent, as Sri Aurobindo foresaw it and consciousness will be the base of its OS (Operating



System). As generative AI gains more control, a universal truth will surely emerge and strife will be replaced with synergy, conflict with harmony, and competition with cooperation. Sooner than later, mankind will evolve collectively and willingly obey certain Universal Laws, following a Way that would be the only viable way, for humanity to flourish while living in abundance and felicity. *Hari Om tat sat.*

ARUN KUMAR TIWARI

Arun Kumar Tiwari is an Indian missile scientist, author and professor. He has published 25 books including Wings of Fire co-authored with Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, the 11th President of India and was also a member of his advisory team. He is also credited with developing India's first coronary stent, the Kalam-Raju stent, along with Dr. Soma Raju.

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Agni — Perfecting Force of Vedic Yoga

“For he is the divine Will which in all things is always present, is always destroying and constructing, always building and perfecting, supporting always, the complex progression of the universe.” (CWSA, 15: 280)

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo straddled epochs and transcended them. He negotiated with the times to give us the gift of the timeless. In an unparalleled act of spiritual fortitude, he scanned the entirety of Indian civilisational experience and accessed the fount that birthed it all.

He synthesised the mystical, metaphysical, psychological and the artistic dimensions of our civilisation and relayed to us, the direct experience of ‘being’. It is through his vision that we get a glimpse of the world of elements, deities, psychic powers and celestial beings. He made the hoary world of Vedas legible to us in its full splendour. Forces, Symbols, Rituals, meaning(s) — He clarified and crystallised them all. Of particular importance in this is his exposition on Agni — The primordial and the primal. In his exposition of Agni, we find the synthesis of the mystical with the personal.

In this essay, we explore simultaneously the ontological content of Sri Aurobindo's exposition on Agni and the psychological import of that for us as individuals. In the process of this reflection is the potential for us to become the Yajna we seek to understand.

Aspiration for Perfection

There is a fire within us, that is resolute to climb out of ignorance. It refuses to live in the twilight of falsehood. Standing in the chasm of darkness, it intuits the realms of Supernal Dawn, where the Truth shines unsullied. But this climb is steep and most often accompanied by the atavistic voices of resistance and denial. Yet this inner force doesn't rest, doesn't yield. Every day is a new opportune moment, to make yet another attempt, to carve out an ounce of perfection from the boulders of habitual imperfection. However impossible this goal might appear, something in the human mould burns resiliently like Agni, the indomitable will power, as if planted in our ignorant realms by the Godheads, whose embers keep rising up even

amidst the darkest hours. This aspiration of the Inner Flame towards perfection, progress and incessant self-consecration, finds the Divine impetus in Sri Aurobindo's words. Therefore His words and His vision, are not a matter of choice but an evolutionary imperative to the current world order which is enamoured by asuric notions of progress and power.

Sri Aurobindo's most seminal work, *The Life Divine*, starts thus:

“The earliest preoccupation of man in his awakened thoughts and, as it seems, his inevitable and ultimate preoccupation,— for it survives the longest periods of scepticism and returns after every banishment,— is also the highest which his thought can envisage. It manifests itself in the divination of Godhead, the impulse towards perfection, the search after pure Truth and unmixed Bliss, the sense of a secret immortality.” (CWSA, 21-22: 3)

It is important to note that this passage ends with the word Immortality. At the turn of the twentieth century the world was obsessed with rationality and empiricism, such words could not be uttered without hesitation. Yet Sri Aurobindo harboured no such hesitation and put this right in the front. For he was speaking with conviction in the most prolific philosophical view embedded in the Vedic Yoga of the ancient Bhāratās.

There is yet another potent coinage by Sri Aurobindo, Vedic Yoga. This phrase at once transforms the prevailing perception about Vedas. Not only the colonial occident mind, which describes our forefathers with a denigrating epithet as ‘nature worshippers’ but Indians too, who subconsciously espouse the notion that Vedas are just ramblings with not much rationale embedded in them. This coinage, Vedic Yoga, breaks that perception barrier and brings it into the realms of Vedānta and Yoga darśanas, only to eventually show how it is the very fount of Vedic wisdom that nourishes all future Yogic streams.

But what is this Vedic Yoga?

Vedic Sacrifice, Yajna, is Vedic Yoga. Vedic sacrifice is the quintessence of the Vedas. In the path of Jnāna Yoga, **a seeker is exhorted to realise the underlying unity between the triad of the seeker, the object of seeking and the process of**



seeking. That imperishable Self which is the ocean, has to be realised, out of which emerge tides of myriad manifestations. But prior to aspiring such a superlative accomplishment, the seeker is guided to overcome the root cause of all ignorance, i.e., one's Ego. When a question is posed, Who am I? This approach of Vedānta; to meditate, to contemplate, this path of self-enquiry by asking, Who am I, this has been handed down by the seers of the lore.

Similarly, when the question is posed, What is Life? Sri Aurobindo's Pūrṇa Yoga, founded on Vedic vision, spontaneously attests that Life is Divine. How then can such a Truth be realised? It is via the ultimate Sacrifice.

But who conducts this Sacrifice?

It is here once again that one needs to locate the true pedestal of Nature, Prakṛti. To ancient Bhāratīyas, nature is not just some blind animating force. Nature to us is a presiding power that transforms the whole act of life into a theatre of sacrifice. Be it in the realms of avidyā, where ignorance dominates, or in the higher realms of vidyā where, as per Śrīmad Bhagavadgīta, nature presides as parāprakṛti, an illuminating dynamic force. It is Her stamp of authority that is inescapable in all actions, be they unconscious or conscious. Therefore humans derive all their agency only from Her. We act only as much as She allows us to act! Not more, not less.

Sri Aurobindo succinctly gives the essence of Vedic sacrifice thus:

“The Vedic Sacrifice is, psychologically, a symbol of cosmic and individual activity become self-conscious, enlightened

and aware of its goal. The whole process of the universe is in its very nature a sacrifice, voluntary or involuntary. Self-fulfilment by self-immolation, to grow by giving is the universal law. That which refuses to give itself, is still the food of the cosmic Powers.” (CWSA, 15: 278)

The centrality of Agni

Humans are exhorted to overcome the grip of ignorance, consecrate oneself integrally, and offer one's potencies to the Divine through Agni. This is the essence of Yajna. To offer our best.

But then, what is the Best Offering?

Allow me to share a personal experience here. When I had started to conduct Homa, the fire ritual, two things struck me in the process. During the process of offering oblations to the various deities, either with clarified butter, ghee or with other materials, my mind was brought to a state of alertness, sort of self-vigilance to ensure that there is no impurity in the offering. Even if we spot something, like soot emanating from the Homa, we instinctively move our hand to clear that and ensure that the offering is in 'best' condition once again. So in simple terms, 'best' can be defined as something that is pure. It is the intent, the will of the seeker, that burns constantly within to ensure that no impurity is introduced into the offering. **This inward intent is nothing but the central force of Yajna embodied as Agni, the perfecting force.**

Just like in Jnāna yoga, the path of the Sacrifice too is marked with the triad, i.e., there is the doer of the sacrifice, the actual process of sacrifice wherein specific oblations are offered and the fruit of the sacrifice. Different realms of this triad are bridged by the blazing will power i.e., Agni. Right at the beginning of the sacrifice, a prayer is thus made:

Oh! Agni, do not be the wild blazing fire that incinerates everything in its path....

Please transform yourself into a favourable fire...

That which partakes the offerings made with Devotion...

If there are imperfections in the offerings...

Please purify them ...

So that they become befitting offerings to the Godheads!

This then is the essence of Vedic Yajna. Wherein a seeker by making the oblations to the Divine forces, seeks their blessings to bestow plenitude upon our temporal realm. It is

the force of Agni that turns everything favourable. Therefore Sri Aurobindo calls it **the most important Vedic deity, because it is nothing but the illumined intent residing in the heart of the seeker:**

“Agni is the most important, the most universal of the Vedic gods. In the physical world he is the general devourer and enjoyer. He is also the purifier; when he devours and enjoys, then also he purifies. He is the fire that prepares and perfects; he is also the fire that assimilates and the heat of energy that forms. He is the heat of life and creates the sap, the rasa in things, the essence of their substantial being and the essence of their delight.” (CWSA, 15: 277)

In conducting this ritual, the seeker can be trapped in ignorance, adorned in the form of Ego, which tricks the seeker to ascribe the doership unto oneself. Therefore, one is trained to conduct this sacrifice with great diligence, as per the vidhi, the prescribed method. *By repeatedly conducting this sacrifice, one develops in mind an impersonal poise that safeguards the root intent from being assailed by egotistic ideas.* This is very crucial in this path, to act as if being moved by the higher force. With each oblation made, it can be felt within, as if the deity who is invoked in the fire outside, is

receiving the oblations inside too, by residing in the fire of pure intent of the sādḥaka.

This process of internalisation is achieved over long periods of practice. One can clearly see the distinction in the efficacy of such a ritual which is illuminated by the light of inner Agni. Fruits resulting from such a sacrifice have great transforming capacity, eventually enabling the manifestation of greater harmony, perfection and beauty.

Thus, perfect self-knowledge in conjunction with perfect self-giving become the pillars of the Vedic Yoga.

RAMACHANDRA RODDAM

Ramachandra Roddam is a Sadhak, a Bhagawati Upasaka who offers seva as administrator and trustee at Sanatana Siddhasram, Birbhum, West Bengal; which is dedicated to the practice and propagation of the ancient Baul tradition. An author of the book of devotional poetry dedicated to the Divine Mother titled, Devi Bhakti Tarangani, he writes on Indian Philosophy, spirituality and delivers lectures on yoga and Indian spirituality as a guest faculty.

Harmony Mantra

Samjnana Suktam, Rig Veda, 10.191

The last hymn of the Rig Veda is the harmony mantra, the Samjnana Suktam. It is a prayer for collective growth into a harmonious whole. All those who chant this together set an intention to be harmoniously united. It is an apt ending to the book of wisdom, encouraging all to love and live in harmony. This prayer was chanted by the sacrificers seated before the *homa* fire; and by the students of the *gurukula* who pledged to live harmoniously in the same household of the guru. And now it is repeated in all sorts of gatherings. For the world is a classroom and all of us are learning together. As we strive together, we realise we are all connected. And then we can thrive together.

Sanjnana Suktam

Join together, speak one word, let your minds arrive at one knowledge

Even as the ancient gods arriving at one knowledge partake each of his own portion.

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे संजानाना उपासते ॥ 2 ॥

saṃ gacchadhvaṃ saṃ vadadhvaṃ saṃ vo manāṃsi jānatām | devā bhāgaṃ yathā pūrve saṃjānānā upāsate ||2||

May the mantra be the same, may the gathering be the same

May your minds be united, along with your hearts.

I offer you this mantra to uphold you together

I perform the sacrifice to bind you together.

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी
समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् ।
समानं मन्त्रमभिमन्त्रये वः
समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ॥ 3 ॥

*samāno mantras-samitis-samānī samānaṃ manas-saha
cittam-eṣām |
samānaṃ mantram abhi mantraye vaḥ samānena vo havi śā
juhomi ||3||*

May your aspirations be the same, united your hearts

May your minds be aligned, so that close companionship may be yours.

समानी व आकृतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥ 4 ॥

*samānī va ākūṭis-samānā hṛdayāni vaḥ |
samānam-astu vo mano yathā vas-susahāsati ||4||*

We are intimately connected — from the most external level to the most sublime, from sharing the same atmosphere we live in to the deepest truth of each being portions of the One. A war in one corner of the world affects stock markets the world over, that changes prices of commodities, which result in adjustments we have to make to our lives. The internet is the electronic highway, much like the lightning-bearer Indra's net. Memes and germs are globe trotters as much as the modern man. We are each a node in an infinite tree of life. When one leaf withers the others have to take action, for all breathe the same air and drink from the same earth. Our shared planet means we have a common destiny. If we want peace for ourselves, we need to make it happen for all. We need to work actively to establish *sāma*, equal wellbeing for all.

Sama Veda and *samatā* are children of *sāma* — equality. At the root is the prefix “*sam*” which means “together”. An example is *samavedanā* meaning empathy, feeling *vedanā* or pain together with someone else. The sound *sam* echoes and re-echoes in the harmony mantra because it brings together people and feelings and thoughts and aspirations. Only when we have an equal outlook on all, can we build harmony. Notice the English word “sum” has the identical root, since the two languages have a common ancestor — the Proto-Indo-European language. “Same” and *samānam* are also cognates, and have identical meanings, both derived from *sam*. *Samiti* is “*sam*” plus “*iti*”. *Iti* means “thus”. So *samiti* is the collective body, the assembly. *Samjñāna* is *sam* plus *jnāna*, a knowledge gathered along with others. At the same time, it is a knowledge gathered from all sides, or an integral knowledge.

As a species we cannot live solitary lives for long. From our very first day we are dependent on others. Children not touched and caressed become psychologically deformed. As soon as we become sick, we run for help. We seek someone who would complement us and when we find the right person,

we feel complete. The older we get, the greater is our physical dependence on others. In between, for a few years we may imagine we can live alone, but whoever goes to a shop even to buy a single vegetable will know there is a long chain of events needed to produce that single vegetable. It takes a whole ecosystem to produce it. The seed collector, the farmer, the reaper, the packer, the transporter, the store keeper, water, earth, air, sunlight, petroleum, man power, horse power, roadways, governments, policies. When systems shut down, when there is a civil war, when governments topple, this interconnectedness stares us in our face. Those who fight for peace helping opposing parties in conflict resolution forums know how important *sāma* is for survival.

Kautilya the king-maker of the Mauryan empire had written the formula for conflict resolution in his famous book on statecraft — *Arthashastra*. There are four ways one can do it — *sāma*, *dāna*, *bheda*, *danda*. Start with love and equal treatment of the opponent — *sāma*. If that does not work, give them land or wealth — *dāna*. If that too does not work use cunning to divide them in their ranks and then take over — *bheda*. As a last resort use force — *danda*. Sun Tsu in his *Art of War* had also stressed on reconciliation first, recourse to cunning next and so on to avoid armed conflict. Modern techniques of Conflict Resolution (CR) follow the same dictum, such as Non-violent Communication (NVC) and Process Work (PW). These methods work once in a while. Peacekeepers are keeping up the good fight. Harmony is being worked out in international communities such as Auroville. Yet there are conflicts, sometimes escalating to war. Yet the biggest industry is the weapons industry.



The time for the harmony mantra to ring forth over hills and valleys is NOW. As a freedom fighter for equality Martin Luther King Jr had said, “I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked

places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.”¹ So let us sing it in schools and homes, in barracks and factories, along country borders and in refugee camps, during election campaigns and in the battlefield, when deciding to buy one more house, one more dress; when choosing to cycle or to drive. The Harmony mantra is a collective yajna that needs many voices to sing it together and many people to manifest its message. For *sāma* will not come through dialogue alone, but by immersing in it and living it every moment. Let us remember Krishna's advice:

Those whose minds are established in equality have conquered all here on earth.

¹ Martin Luther King Jr. (1963). “*I have a dream*” speech. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety>

The equal Supreme is faultless, therefore they live in the Supreme.

इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः ।
निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद् ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः ॥
Bhagavad Gita 5.19||

*ihaiva tair jitaḥ sargo yeṣhām sām̄ye sthitam manah
nirdoṣham hi samam brahma tasmād brahmaṇi te sthitāḥ*

LOPA MUKHERJEE



GOD-TOUCH

Beholding the higher Light
beyond the darkness
we came to the divine Sun in the Godhead,
to the higher Light of all.

RIG VEDA

Lights on the Way



The Master of Wisdom
cast down the stone defences
and called to the Herds of Light ...
and discovered the Dawn and the Sun
and the Light and the World of Light

RIG VEDA



A perfect path of the Truth has come into being
for our journey to the other shore
beyond the darkness.

RIG VEDA

Dear Sri Aurobindo's Action Readers,

Greetings from Sri Aurobindo's Action and **A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR, 2024** to you all!!

As the new dawn sheds her illuminating rays on us, we renew our resolve to the sole objective of Sri Aurobindo's Action given by the Mother which is India's Resurgence.

Sri Aurobindo set forth three steps for the Renaissance of India.

"The recovery of the old spiritual knowledge and experience in all its splendour, depth and fullness is its first, most essential work; the flowing of this spirituality into new forms of philosophy, literature, art, science and critical knowledge is the second; an original dealing with modern problems in the light of the Indian spirit and the endeavour to formulate a greater synthesis of a spiritualised society is the third and most difficult. Its success on these three lines will be the measure of its help to the future of humanity." (CWSA, 20: 15)

Through the journals of 2024 we endeavour to contribute to the first step of the Indian Renaissance by focussing on various aspects of Indian Spiritual Knowledge from ancient to modern, their

contribution to the evolution of India in their times and their further relevance to the present times in the light of Integral Yoga.

We request you to encourage us in our efforts by increasing the readership of the journal so that many more can become a part of this endeavour of understanding India's spiritual roots.

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Once again, wishing you all a great and glorious New Year,

Warm Regards,

Sri Aurobindo's Action Team.



**A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR
2024**

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