

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION-POSSIBLE HISTORICITY OF THE VEDAS

It is well beyond dispute that Vedas are the first ever written books of mankind. As a matter of fact, one cannot really say how ancient they are, though many Europeans try to fix a chronology for the Vedas, and they all are unrealistic. This brings one to a point that it remains better not to try to be very ambitious in finding out how ancient the Vedas are, or trying to fix some kind of a chronology. What is not known for certain, is that is not known for certain, let it be so.

For everything that is of Bharat, the Vedas are the root. Similarly for everything what is in Bharat the desideratum is Moksha. Here one could say that all that is of Bharat is just between two points: Vedas and Moksha.

The Vedas and all ensued texts are essentially knowledge texts. The Vedic people had a distinct method of knowing. They had similar distinct method of preserving knowledge and preserving knowledge undiluted.

Bharat has this distinct tradition of Shruti and Smriti. Bharat also has this distinction of creating a synthetic language and naming it as 'Refined': and that is the language of Sanskrit. The Sanskrit language was so created with a complete grammar and ability to preserving knowledge in minimum words with minimum loss of content. It was after the establishing of the language of Sanskrit fully that Acharyas started writing down the already existing Shruti Smriti pattern of knowledge in text forms. The Vedas also thus got compiled and composed much later by Maharishi Vyasa and his team, and from then on, he became known as Veda Vyasa.

The case of Yoga is still stimulating. Yoga must have pre-existed the Vedas, because other than through Yogaj there is no way to gather and compose these Vedic knowledges into Suktas. In all probability, Yoga must have been the very first step towards finding new knowledge. But it was much later that Maharishi Patanjali compiled the Yogic knowledge into his text of Yogasutra.

In short, what we have now as Vedas are the composed version of Shruti Smriti tradition in text form, composed and compiled by Maharishi Vyasa and his unknown team of scholars.

Talking about the Vedas, it is through Vedas we get to know the ancient knowledge that the Bharatiya scholars obtained. It is said that everything starts with Vedas and ends with Vedas. Yet we understand that whatever knowledge we have about the Vedas are very inadequate and at times incorrect, often inappropriate and many times wrong. There are many reasons to these, first of all, the Vedic knowledge is not instantly available, and they have an enigma about them: as they can keep carrying different meanings or implications from time to time and context to context.

Further, due to the colonization of our Nation, we have been pushed far away from the treasure of knowledge that prevailed and still prevails on this land once that is during the Vedic Era. It is true that time plays its role but we must focus and bring all our attention to this precious knowledge held in the Vedas. Also, we must really be proud of Bharat as a spiritual land based on a knowledge tradition that we do inherit now. We neither had to struggle, nor had to go through some genocide etc. to inherit this holy land and its Sanskriti. No matter how much some disagree or deny it but it is already inherited in us in an inescapable manner. Thus, spirituality comes to us effortlessly and spontaneously. We are blessed with the science of Yoga, Tantra, Yantra and Mantra etc. which are found in the Vedas.

We may consider ourselves independent now, but are we really independent? Though we may have been free from the British rule but the effect of colonization as well as Islamisation still remains. There was a time when Dharma was of importance but now, we know a country's progress merely through its GDP. We didn't realize that we have become materialistic. Thus, we have to keep all four supreme values of the Purusharthas in mind that of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha and not just Artha. No matter what happens in the future but the essence of Bharat that is Vedas can never be forgotten ever. Thus, there is an immense need for awareness for one's past. There is a reason why old is considered as Gold.

While studying the Vedas there are two things that can happen. Firstly, there can be an interpretation of the Veda. And secondly there is the essence of the Veda. There can be

endless interpretations of the Vedas but the essence of the Veda is essentially only one. Here interpretations remain at the surface level whereas the real essence of it is in the inner level which very few can reach.

Studying about the Vedas one cannot ignore the River Saraswati as we see most of the Vedic rituals were carried around this river which once flourished. Though nonexistent now, it still holds a great importance for our study because this is the River which most of the Rishis are talking about. Also talking about the other seven rivers it is again shown as a journey to the one destination. That is seven rivers finally merging into one ocean.

The essence of Vedas lies mostly in its knowledge tradition, transcendental aspirations and spiritual teachings. That is its purpose or what it wants to convey. Its main teachings lie in the message and not the messenger. So, one should not waste much time in its historicity. Because the exact time of its origin one cannot know for certain. But a speculation that during the time of River Saraswati, the Vedic knowledge tradition must have begun can hold some good ground. Our main focus here should be on the spiritual teachings of the Vedas which is its heart, its essence. And that is what we have to understand from it.

“Our journey starts with a ‘mythical’ river that makes its appearance in the Rig Veda, the most ancient Indian text—‘her’ appearance, rather, since the Sarasvatī was also a goddess, a mother, and soon came to embody sacred speech, the Word. Multi-layered, as I said. Later texts, including the Mahābhārata, described the Sarasvatī as a ‘disappearing’ river, until she became ‘invisible’, meeting Gangā and Yamunā at their confluence; by then, she was the goddess, as we know her today.” (1)

Sometimes the problem that can occur during the understanding of the interpretations of the Vedas is that one may happen to give more importance to the messenger than the message. The same case which happens with the Religions these days people may give more importance to the religion itself than its teachings. Thus, one has to be really careful and not deviate from its main purpose of study. Of course, the knowledge which we are trying to enter is very difficult to penetrate. So this problem is simply one of the problems in trying to reach the essence or what they call as the soma rus. This reminds me of a picture where the

treasure lies among snakes. So to reach that some point one has to go to many snakes, of course snake here means obstacles. This is how the entire Veda has been written in symbols so one should never make a mistake to accept it at its face value.

One cannot separate Rishikas and Rishis from the Vedas, thus the Vedas we know today we know through these Rishis and Rishikas. Rishikas, Rishis, and yogins were yogis, having the ability of Yogaja. This is the main difference in our understanding of the Vedas and their writings of the Vedas. They have something which we lack that is Yogaj. But it can be attained; the whole science again lies in the Vedas. We can not do it on our own. We do need the instruction of a Guru for it. And it basically starts with the intention of what you want to do with that knowledge. That is the bhava or attitude of that knowledge. Therefore, it is not revealed to all. It is true the words of the Veda are apaursheya, the seers are called seers because they have experienced these words. They are the drashta. They are mere instruments of a higher reality. During present time we cannot find seers we have to invoke the seer in us through *Tapas*.

“The Rishis of the Upanishads followed another method. They sought to recover the lost or waning knowledge by meditation and spiritual experience and they used the text of the ancient mantras as a prop or an authority for their own intuitions and perceptions; or else the Vedic Word was a seed of thought and vision by which they recovered old truths in new forms.”(2)

We see that Sri Aurobindo’s approach to the Veda is of a Psychological nature. He considers it to be of the nature of spiritual and psychological. And obviously not of a primitive nature as misunderstood by the Western scholars. What we call Bharat today at that time was the Saraswati Valley Civilization. We see in the Vedas when they talk about the defeated ten kings. But when they sit to create the hymns they do consider their involvement as well. Therefore there is no divergence but only assimilation. Same is the case when we had so many kings ruling in Bharat yet the sense of Bharat remained. So is the case even now when we have so many states yet the Bharat is still there. What prevails is Unity. That is the whole point we see in one of the hymns of Rig Veda. United we stand we are one, one in thought.

“The hymns possess indeed a finished metrical form, a constant subtlety and skill in their technique, great variations of style and poetical personality; they are not the work of rude, barbarous and primitive craftsmen, but the living breath of a supreme and conscious art forming its creations in the puissant but well-governed movement of a self-observing inspiration.”(3)

To understand Sri Aurobindo’s ideas on the Veda firstly we will have to understand his ideas given in his book ‘The Textual study of the Human Cycle’ from that we can get an idea that why the Vedas might seem primitive to the materialists and how naturally it comes to us differently. Where he explains how a human goes through different cycles in a society. Starting from typical, conventional, individualistic and finally coming to spiritualistic. But for the West they had to go through the materialistic aspects to reach the last stage. But for Bharat it was already implanted in us, it comes to us without much effort therefore Vedas are of immense value to us because it is a treasure not of a materialistic kind but beyond all realms of materialistic happiness. They are eternal, leading towards the ecstasy of the supreme bliss.

“If we look at the beginnings of Indian society, the far-off Vedic age which we no longer understand, for we have lost that mentality, we see that everything is symbolic. The religious institution of sacrifice governs the whole society and all its hours and moments, and the ritual of the sacrifice is at every turn and in every detail, as even a cursory study of the Brahmanas and Upanishads ought to show us, mystically symbolic. The theory that there was nothing in the sacrifice except a propitiation of Nature-gods for the gaining of worldly prosperity and of Paradise, is a misunderstanding by a later humanity which had already become profoundly affected by an intellectual and practical bent of mind, practical even in its religion and even in its own mysticism and symbolism, and therefore could no longer enter into the ancient spirit. Not only the actual religious worship but also the social institutions of the time were penetrated through and through with the symbolic spirit. Take the hymn of the Rig Veda which is supposed to be a marriage hymn for the union of a human couple and was certainly used as such in the later Vedic ages. Yet the whole sense of the hymn turns about the successive marriages of Surya, daughter of the Sun, with different gods and the human marriage is quite a subordinate matter overshadowed and governed entirely by the divine and mystic figure and is spoken of in the terms of that figure. Mark, however, that the divine

marriage here is not, as it would be in later ancient poetry, a decorative image or poetical ornamentation used to set off and embellish the human union; on the contrary, the human is an inferior figure and image of the divine. The distinction marks off the entire contrast between that more ancient mentality and our modern regard upon things. This symbolism influenced for a long time Indian ideas of marriage and is even now conventionally remembered though no longer understood or effective.” (4)

So there are various approaches through which we look at the Vedas or the symbols in the Vedas. That is physical, mental and transcendental. What the west could touch was only physical, that too, they couldn't go beyond that. How we look at it shall peripherically be purely mental. That is simply Sri Aurobindo's views on it. But how Sri Aurobindo looks at it will be transcendental because he had the experiences first and then he went to the Vedas to reconfirm them. So his experience will be on a deeper level.

Studying the Vedas from a psychological perspective we can say that our mind is always in search for certitude of truth. Even when we try to study all these various subjects about humans or our existence our mind is never satisfied with these theories. For us to experience the truth we need a concrete form of it and just by reading it we are not going to reach anywhere. As it is said half knowledge is dangerous. Therefore one really has to experience it to know.

The journey here starts with the mind as the different levels of mind given by Sri Aurobindo, higher mind, illumined mind, intuitive mind, over mind and lastly supermind. So the journey here is about reaching our full potential of our mind to supermind. When it is fully conscious in its all aspects which he also calls as the supraconscious state of mind.

“Thought, for the most part, no longer seems to originate individually in the body or the person but manifests itself from above....All inner individual sight or intelligence of things is now a revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of revelation or illumination of what is seen or comprehended, but the source of revelation is in one's separate self and in universal knowledge.” (5)

Looking at the Kosha theory as Annamaya kosha, Pranamaya Kosha, Manamaya Kosha, Vijnanamaya Kosha, Anandamaya Kosha. Our aim is at the fifth one which is the subtle self, non-physical and which can only be experienced and not describable. It is the indescribable subtle self the soul which is going to provide the certitude of truth for us. In the Vedas the same thing has been said. It is this soul which is going to liberate us from our slumbers and not any materialistic thing.

“In order for the higher levels of consciousness to truly manifest in Matter, it is essential that Matter be able to take on and hold new forces and energies. Unless we can go beyond the limitations of gross matter, no real and meaningful evolution of consciousness can truly take place. The transformative potential of human being is founded on an innate capability to transcend the limits of the material plane.” (6)

To understand or know the Vedas firstly one really needs to have a transcendental inclination. Otherwise the work will seem only mental workings which shall get us nowhere. To unlock the Vedas we need one key that is really a guidance of a proper guru without which we shall only find ourselves moving in circles or from confusions to confusions. One reason I speculate why these Rishikas and Rishis would have given or what we have as the Vedas in a symbolic form because it is in a shruti form. But there can also be other element to it that is this knowledge is directly perceived. Thus it is their perception or the experience which can only be known through experience, on Yogaj it seems symbolic to us because without transcendental inclination or the ability to Yogaj we may not understand it. Thus, we need a key to decode it with the help of a guru's guidance.

Even with the idea of nature worship in the hymns what we get is, the same nature what is present outside, it is the same nature what we are made of. If we have to understand this in a simple manner, it is like worshiping the same Narayana which is found in us and in others. The same idea when we say ‘Namaste’ that is bowing down to the Narayana in you. So what is nature here, it is the same Narayana. This is a very simple and general understanding of it. Of course the hymns have more profound psychological understandings of the nature worships.

It will not be surprising if we come up with the problem of the interpretation of the Vedas. Just as there are innumerable possibilities with the Veda so lays the problem of the interpretation of the Vedas. Main problem as we see why the European scholars saw it as a ritualistic manual and even now when the academy scholars study them. So all one can do is analyses it intellectually but that will not help in unrevealing the secret. The secret may be revealed yet it shall remain a secret. With the help of the symbols one may be able to know what the symbols means. And what revelations they are talking about. But only simply knowing the revelations intellectually will not reveal the secret. That I see as the beauty of the Veda is how beautifully it is protected. The problem of the interpretation of the Veda is actually the beauty of the Veda.

Our focus mainly will be on the psychological interpretation done by Maharshi Aurobindo. As we know each symbol in the Vedas has a psychic function. For example Indra means the senses, Agni being the inner fire and like. Thus, we shall be relating with the symbols inwards and not outwards. Even the battle between the two forces is mainly the battle between the two energies within us that is good and evil.

All its interpretation we have to understand the text we are dealing with is the most ancient. Thus, it is likely to mean different things to different people according to their temperament, age and era the same object may be a stone to some and diamond to some. All depends on how relevant it is to them. Thus, if a person has no transcendental inclination, then that person may never understand its true value. It will remain a mere text for speculation. The secret shall be revealed only to those who are prepared for it.

Vedas are the most ancient texts available to mankind. The European scholars have purposely made it look as if it is just few decades old. But one can know the truth by understanding the celestial positions mentioned in the text, on the one hand and on the other we know it was during the time of River Saraswati that most of the rituals took place on the banks of the River Saraswati which one can clearly depict from the hymns.

“The Rig Veda is the oldest book in Sanskrit or any Indo-European language. Its date is debatable. Many great Yogis and scholars, who have understood the astronomical references

in the hymns, date the Rig Veda as before 4000 B.C., perhaps as early as 12,000 B.C..Modern western scholars tend to date it round 1500 B.C, though recent archeological finds in India now appear to require a much earlier date.” (7)

It is important to know the meanings of these symbols. The aim for the Vedas is deeper it has an aim for higher aspirations. The meanings are not to be taken at its face value but have a psychological function to perform.

This is what Sri Aurobindo had to say about his work on ‘The Secret of the Veda’:

“The publication of the Secret of the Veda as it is does not enter into my intention. It was published in a great hurry and at a time when I had not studied the Rig Veda as a whole as well as I have since done. Whole chapters will have to be rewritten or written otherwise and a considerable labour gone through; moreover it was never finished and considerable additions in order to make it complete are indispensable.” (8)

So the interpretation made by Sri Aurobindo in the book ‘The Secret of the Veda’ is of selected hymns from the Rig Veda, which is considered as the most important Veda among all the four vedas.

“Among the Vedas, Rigveda occupies a prominent place. Rigveda consists of 10 Books or Mandalas and 1017 hymns or Suktas. Total number of Verses in RigVeda is 10,580. Even the words and letters of the Rigveda is 1,53,826 and the number of letters is 4,32,000. Some of the great names of the poets who have received the mantras include Vasishtha, Vishwamitra, Vamadeva, Bharadwaja, Atri, Madhuchhandas. Six of the Mandalas or books are given each to the hymns of a single Rishi or family of Rishis. The second Mandala is devoted chiefly to the Suktas of the Rishi Gritsamada, the third and the seventh similarly to the great names of Vishwamitra and Vasishtha, respectively, the fourth to Vamadeva, the sixth to Bharadwaja. The fifth is occupied by the hymns of the house of Atri. In each of these Mandalas the sutras addressed to Agni are first collected together, followed by those of which Indra is the deity, the invocations of other Gods, Brihaspati, Surya, the Ribhus, Usha, etc., close the Mandalas. The whole book, the ninth, is given to a single God and Soma. The first, eight and tenth Mandalas are collections of Sutras by various Rishis, but the hymns of each seer are

ordinarily placed together in the order of their deities, Agni leading, Indra following, the other Gods succeeding.”(9)

As a matter of fact, Bhartiya scholars are in great difficulties, fundamentally from colonial implantation of education. Any student who wants to study Bharatiya knowledge tradition has to struggle and fight against the following aspects.

1. Categories of concepts and terminologies when translating Sanskrit terms into non Bharatiya terminologies, one naturally uses an existing non Bharatiya terminology it stands for a Sanskrit term. It often results in alienating the Bharatiya concept and at times destroying the very concept itself. We can see for example the most common translation of Swarga as heaven, Dharma as Religion, deity as God and so on and so forth.
2. English education system polluted Bharatiya concepts and created brilliant confusions and chaos in our minds. We know that Swarga is Devaloka, but we also think like Europeans that one can go to swarga after death.
3. Many European Scholars made translations of Bharatiya texts. Many of them very enthusiastic, but were mostly not competent to comprehend Bharatiya concepts from absence of Bharatiya cultural moorings. Such scholars made inadvertent mistakes and our generations started taking them for real. Some others deliberately made mistakes and those also came to stay with us.
4. Our source books became copy and paste of many European mistakes and they became authentic with us. Wrongs were done, mistakes got multiplied and repeated.

The Vedas and such texts were those that got severely mutilated. All kinds of ‘scholars’ gave all kinds of interpretations and meanings as they thought; and no wonder, as the Europeans are great speculative philosophers. Some even got chronologies fixed. All such things made it very difficult for any true student to look for elements of truths in Bharatiya knowledge tradition.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

To make a run through of studies I studied few thinkers and let me start with Vedacharya David Frawley. The experience of **Vedacharya David Frawley** while reading Sri Aurobindo's book 'The Secret of the Veda', runs as follows:

"In February of 1971, as I first began reading his *Secret of the Vedas*, I was drawn into the Vedic mind in a state of heightened awareness. I experienced what I would call a "descent of the Vedic Dawn", a vision of a series of dawns representing not only my own spiritual aspiration as a soul, but also that of all humanity and all souls in the universe in a spiraling crescendo. I could feel the power of the Vedic Dawn, the original pristine light of creation, and the vista of ever unfolding planes of consciousness upward into the Infinite and Eternal. I feel like I had returned to the spiritual origins of humanity and entered into the heart of creation. This Vedic experience was like crossing a great time barrier, learning to understand the humanity of a previous world-age long before our present materialistic civilization. From that point onward the focus of my studies remained the *Rigveda* and its teachings, as an experiential way of understanding the cosmic reality and its deeper spirit and self. Yet I found myself in this vast new Vedic world almost alone, both as a new adventure and a great challenge!" (10)

Surely enough, Sri Aurobindo's mechanisms of 'extention', 'involution', 'supramind' etc. spontaneously affects David Frawley that at once puts him in the frame of transcendentality. Trying to explain this shall only be trivial.

According to **Kireet Joshi**, the work done by Sri Aurobindo is stated as:

"The task that Sri Aurobindo undertook was to restore the primary intention of the Veda, and in this task he welcomed each of the ancient and modern systems of interpretation and found in each of them an indispensable assistance. He found that Yaska and Sayana supplied the ritualistic framework of outward symbols and the large store of traditional significances and explanations. In the Upanishads, he found various clues to the psychological and philosophical ideas of the Vedic Rishis, and he underlined their method of spiritual experience and intuition. In European scholarship, he appreciated the critical method of comparative research, which when perfected, would be found capable of increasing

immensely the materials available and, therefore, eventually, of giving a scientific certainty and firm intellectual basis. From Swami Dayananda, he received the clue to the linguistic secrets of the Rishis and the idea of the One Being with the Devas, expressing in numerous names and forms the many-sidedness of His unity.” (11)

Sri Aurobindo himself is an excellent blend of European method of philosophising and Bhartiya experiential method of Darsana. We find him speaking Bhartiya Darsana through European categories of concepts brilliantly.

“According to the psychological theory, which Sri Aurobindo has presented in his *The Secret of the Veda* and *Hymns to the Mystic Fire*, Veda recognises an Unknowable, Timeless, Unnameable behind and above all things, and not seizable by the studious pursuits of the mind.” (12)

This indeed points out the apparent enigmatic nature of the Vedas. The Vedas, the Suktas there in, are compressed units of experiential knowledge of the Rishikas and Rishis. Perhaps their reading shall take yet another experiential endeavour.

“More than foundational work has been accomplished and any researcher, who wants to undertake any further task, will find ample aid in Sri Aurobindo’s *The Secret of the Veda* and *the Mystic Fire*.” (13)

Let us see their expressions as a key provider by Shri Aurobindo as a first effort in unlocking the secret of the Vedas.

“It is in that context that Sri Aurobindo undertook a program of research involving the discovery of new knowledge in the light of which a new synthesis relevant to the needs of today and tomorrow can be created. The secret of that synthesis, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, is the manifestation of Spirit in Matter, leading to an unprecedented perfection and even a mutation of the human species. Sri Aurobindo’s discovery of the Supermind and its possibility of full operation in physical life may be regarded as the most significant gift of renascent India to humanity’s effort to overcome its crises.”(14)

We find an unfolding of these thoughts in a fuller sense as he discusses his philosophy of the Integral Yoga.

“As we read Sri Aurobindo’s work on the Veda, we feel convinced that the latter is a book of knowledge and that it is not, contrary to the view of many modern interpreters, confused in thought or primitive in its substance, a medley of heterogenous or barbarous elements, but is a composition having overarching unity, in spite of being the compilation of contributions of hundreds of *Rishis*, old and new. We find that the Veda is self- conscious in its purpose and purport, even though that is veiled, sometimes thickly and sometimes transparently. The Veda, we find finally, never loses sight, even for a single moment, of its aim to arrive at the loftiest realisations of consciousness as also their applications to human problems and perfectibility.

The most important discovery of the Veda was that of a plane of consciousness where activities and manifestations are only of the Truth and the Right (*satyam, ritam*). *Rishis* called that consciousness “*Rita-Chit*”, “Truth-consciousness”. The Vedic *Rishis* had found out methods by which the human mind can find an entry into that consciousness and can then be liberated from the human limitations.”(15)

“Sri Aurobindo has discovered, through the internal evidence of the Veda itself, what each cosmic power and being (Godhead) stands for. The names of the Godheads are keywords, and if the inner meanings of these keywords are known, it becomes easier to understand the secret of the Veda. For example, according to Sri Aurobindo, *Agni* stands for the Illumined Will, *Indra* for Illumined Intelligence that can bestow Divine Light, *Savitri* is the Creator and Increaser, *Usha* the spiritual Dawn, *Bhaga* the Supreme Enjoyer, *Vayu* the Master of the Life Energies, *Brihaspati* the Power of the Soul, *Ashwins* the Lords of Bliss, *Vishnu* the All-Pervading Godhead and *Soma* the Lord of Delight and Immortality. These and other keywords and their inner meanings become very useful to all those who want to practice Yoga and get verified the truths of the Vedic knowledge.” (16)

Kireet Joshi makes an excellent effort to decode or decipher the Vedic symbolic concepts which are seen throughout the vedas. Our fundamental difficulty here is that such deciphering

is time bound, space bound and context bound. We have to bow down to the point that it is totally impossible to gather an interpretation which may come handy in more than one situation.

Sri Aurobindo was very quick in reaching this, and yet he kept trying to look at the Vedas to constantly find unfolding of many implications. It is impossible to find meanings but it is always possible to find implications in abundance given contexts. Another mention of Kireet Joshi is to be taken very seriously: He says that the Vedas are knowledge texts; but I would add that it is a knowledge tradition, which is the Vedopanishadic knowledge tradition that becomes the very foundation of Bhartiya Sanskriti, that gave birth to great souls from Shankaracharya to Shivaji Maharaj in modern times.

Ramaranjan Mukherji says that:

“Sri Aurobindo is the first philosopher to locate this great hiatus existing the approach of the Sanglita and that of the Upanishads; he is the first interpreter of the Vedic literature to pronounce judgement that the Vedas are to be interpreted in a different way.”(17)

Though this is partially correct, it does not mean that people like Badarayana and many others were not aware of this. In fact, Bharatiya knowledge tradition already knew that the Vedas have various implications by way of interpretations. Europeans have never understood this, they looked for simple one to one correspondence and such people ever misunderstood Bhartiya texts.

For **A.B.Purani**,

“Sri Aurobindo’s interpretation can be called “*Psychological*”. This psychological interpretation would assert that: 1.This gap between the Vedic and the philosophical culture is of our own making. (2) In ancient times there were mysteries in almost all civilisations- Greek, Egyptian, etc; a similar school of mysticism is possible in India. (3) The acceptance of the modern view-point would leave large portions of the Upanishads (which are Vedic) unexplained. (4) The origin of the Puranas would be even more difficult to account for on the basis of modern theories. (5) The Veda couches the secret doctrine of the Vedic mysteries. Thus, there are two meanings to every Rik-open and secret. (6) The incoherence of the Vedic

text would disappear if this interpretation is accepted.” (18)

“Sri Aurobindo has propounded a new interpretation based upon a theory that accepts the existence of mystic school in Vedic & pre-vedic times as we find in the case of Egypt & Greece. I need not go into the details of the psychological or symbolic interpretation here as Sri Aurobindo has developed it in his “Secret of the Veda”, & “Hymns to the Mystic Fire”-in which he has written a “Foreward” putting forth the salient points of thesis following it up with the translation of almost all the hymns to Agni in the Rig Veda, My friend late Sri Kapali Shastri has, for the benefit of Sanskrit scholars, written “Siddhajana” commentary on the first Ashtaka in Sanskrit, elucidating & illustrating Sri Aurobindo’s line of interpretation of the Veda.

Briefly put, Sri Aurobindo believes that the Vedic hymns represent a religion with a double face-one for the ordinary man wedded to outer ceremonial and ritual and the other for the initiate. All the details of the ritual carry this double sense.” (19)

“Sri Aurobindo thus analyses the Vedic literature from the standpoint of spirituality, and traces in the Hymns of the Vedas the expression of an urge of humanity to move from lower and lower levels to higher and higher levels, and ultimately to reach steadily the plane of enlightenment, where absolute Truth shines in its own splendour. In conformity to this basic proposition Sri Aurobindo traces in the different deities to whom supplications are offered in Vedic literature the different aspects of the same Truth, because, as he says, the sustenance of truth is to be sought in continued exercise of arriving at the truth itself, and the evolution of man becomes complete only when the Absolute Truth, - the supramental light descends from above and pulls the man out of the mire of egoistic and egotistic feelings.”(20)

“Sri Aurobindo, thus puts forward a different explanation of the Vedic mantras, and asserts that each hymn is an invocation to the eternal Truth, - a call given to it to descend on earth and to place once again the man on lofty pedestal from which he had dropped down. Sri Aurobindo puts emphasis on this hidden meaning of the Vedas, and says that, the secret words referred to as ‘*ninya vacamsi*’, which were spoken for purification of soul and awakening of spiritual knowledge play a crucial expressions is an essentiality for proper understanding of the meaning of the Vedas, because the Vedic Truths clothe themselves in

the apparently ritualistic meaning which is an external one, and once the deeper truth contained in the Vedas get revealed, the entire Vedic literature is sure to appear as a continuous flow of knowledge, competent to take the man from lower and lower realities to higher and higher ones.” (21)

Sri Aurobindo uses European categories and concepts as it becomes convenient to him. Indeed, his fundamental training in European philosophy and European ways of living must have had great influence on him. His notions like “the mystic fire” etc. are typical and simple examples. A.B.Purani is found following the same pattern of European influence, categories and concepts. The so called ‘psychological’ version is just another phenomenon.

When it comes to **R.L.Kashyap**, about Sri Aurobindo’s work he says that:

“The *Rg Veda* is the earliest book which deals with the topics of work, enjoyment and progress from a ‘cosmo-psychological’ angle. What we have presented here is based on the insights of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Kapali Sastry. The recognition of psychological powers behind deities like Agni and Varuna is credited to Sri Aurobindo. The idea of invoking the spirit all the time, as part of a spiritual attitude towards life is mentioned in the *Upanisad*, and by medieval saints such as Sri Madhvacharya, and others. Sri Aurobindo’s great contribution is to show us that by invoking the great *mantras* of the *Vedas* we can still develop the powers of intuition, inspiration, will within us.” (22)

Here again, we find ‘empirical meaning search’ in Sri Aurobindo’s approach to the Vedas. A search for mystical powers, or shall I call it authority-shakti- is seen in such enquiries. This is a classical instance of European Philosophy overlapping or crossing roads with Bhartiya Darshana. One could even look at Sri Aurobindo’s expression of ‘mystic fire’, ‘supermind’, ‘involution’ and the like. Serious efforts to some forms of de-construction may be called for to really get some grip of conceptual positions.

Chandra Prakash Khetan says that Sri Aurobindo’s work:

“In spite of the extensive work that was done by Sri Aurobindo on the Veda- he altogether translated over 4,500 verses out of a total of 10,580 verses in the Rig Veda-he felt that if the object were to establish his interpretation on a scholastic basis beyond all possibility of

reasonable objection, then a much more detailed and considerable work would be necessary-more than what he then planned for *The Secret of the Veda* or was eventually, altogether, able to do. However, based on his spiritual experience, Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Veda, reported in *The Secret of the Veda, Hymns to the Mystic Fire, Sri Aurobindo Archives and Research and other writings*, rests on as solid a ground as any other, and has for those who have enough experience of their own to enable them to have an unshakeable faith in Sri Aurobindo and his findings based on his deep and vast spiritual experience and knowledge, a finality impervious to any assault of scholastic doubts and questionings. It is only with a view to satisfy the cultured intelligence of today that Sri Aurobindo supports his psychological interpretation of the Veda by both philological and historical considerations throughout *The Secret of the Veda*- his major work on the Vedic interpretation.” (23)

Can it really be the case that we can term any Vedic studies as “interpretations”? The concept of interpreting is increasingly becoming enigmatic when it comes to the Vedas.

We have the Europeans making philosophies out of such things in the name of Hermeneutics: and they confidently make theories of interpretations to Rest in Peace. To what extent such things shall make any sense remains an open question. Hans-Georg Gadamer is the one who over stretches the theory of hermeneutics. Gadamer considers philosophy as “*interpretative*” under the influence of Marx who in his ‘Thesis on Feuerbach’ says that “Philosophers hitherto had been trying to interpret the world; the point, however, is to change it”. Marx went about changing the world as he considered philosophers are only interpreting. Gadamer takes this serious and goes about creating theories of interpretation!

Instead of using the concept of interpreting the Vedas, one may resort to using the concept of finding implications to the Vedic Sutras. In reality, one can only look for implications as one can really not even think of the totally reductionistic possibilities of interpretations.

With such amazing dynamism of even unfolding uncountable implications from every sukta, it shall only be freshly reductionistic to look for any interpretations.

Vladimir Latsenko says that:

“Sri Aurobindo reconsidered the usual *yogic* practices, oriented towards Liberation alone- which came in the post-*Vedic* period when the transformation of earthly life and physical body was considered impossible- and turned towards the *Vedic* view of transformative practice: invoking the higher powers by the means of aspiration in the heart and surrendering to them for the transformation. He introduces the ancient *Vedic* methods of a Descent of a Higher Consciousness and Power into our mental, vital and even subtle physical and physical bodies for transformation.” (24)

Latsenko sees only Aurobindo and not the Vedopanishadic knowledge tradition in totality. Sri Aurobindo’s Yoga, the integral Yoga, is indeed post Vedic, but Yoga per say has to be pre-vedic, given yogaj as the only method for experiential Darshana of Bharat.

For **T.V.Kapali Satry**,

“In the world-journey our life is a battle-field of the devas and asuras; the Gods are the powers of Truth, Light and Immortality and the asuras, the powers of the opposing Darkness. These are Vrtra, Vala, the Panis, the Dasyus and their kings. We have to call in the aid of the Gods to destroy these powers of Darkness who cover the Light. We have to invoke the Gods in the inner sacrifice by the Voice potent with the power of the mantra. To them offering of whatever is ours is made; receiving all that is given by them in return, we shall be enabled and competent to ascend the path of the goal.

This, in essence, is the central thought of the Veda in its esoteric sense, presented here for the benefit of those who choose to follow the line of interpretation of mantras systematized by Sri Aurobindo.”(25)

We see Kapali Shastri going for more of ritualism than philosophy even in Aurobindo. Perhaps shastri is more fascinated in the so called mysticism that Aurobindo himself speaks of.

Arun Chatterjee says,

“Sri Aurobindo has been very precise and consistent in his writings with regard to the definitions of various terms. In most cases his concepts and definitions are compatible with those of traditional Hinduism, but in a few cases he presents unique concepts based on his personal experience.

Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy places great importance on the role of an individual in the evolution of consciousness, and in this context the concept of psychic being is a valuable contribution to philosophy and spiritual practice. The emergence of psychic being is an essential step of the yogic path laid out by Sri Aurobindo, and usually it is followed by the realization of jivatman and Atman. The experience of jivatman leads to the attainment of cosmic consciousness, which reveals the unity of all beings in the universe.” (26)

And in **Dr.N.N.Londhe**,

“In his The Secret of the Vedas, The Essays on the Gita and the writings on the Upanishads, he opened up new and epoch-making ways of studying the ancient Indian texts.” (27)

While going through the scholarly works of many scholars, I see them falling into two categories of scholarships in to most natural manner. Most scholars are synthetic minds, and are generally peripheral with the Vedas, maybe, as “professional” scholars.

Only very few are seen as analytic minds, and what is common to all of them is that there can’t be a search for an interpretation of the Vedas. What is unique to the Vedas is the dynamism within, as ever changing and ever becoming given different space and time.

Sri Aurobindo had known this clearly and the only question that may remain shall be, did he realise this before writing the secret of the Vedas or during the course of writing the book. In my personal view, Sri Aurobindo must have found the intensity of dynamism with the Vedas as he went on writing this book, though he might have had glimpses of it even earlier.

Nonetheless Aurobindo soon realizes the purity in any attempt to interpreting the Vedas, but how many of his commentators do understand this realization of Sri Aurobindo shall remain unknown and unknowable only.

Satya Prakash Singh says,

“Thus conceived, Sri Aurobindo’s line of Vedic interpretation leads us closest to the mind of the seer. The significance of this statement can be understood by a review of the earlier attempts in this statement can be understood by a review of the earlier attempts in this direction which mostly are entangled in the symbolic stuff which they have taken to be the real meaning and have missed the real content. The Veda, after all, is a book of spiritual knowledge rather than a manual of sacrifice or an account of bewildered primitive gaze over the changing phenomena of nature. Sacrifice is an important ingredient in its composition no doubt, but on no account does sacrifice hold the pivotal position in it. Similarly nature is there in the Veda no doubt, but by no means is the latter an account of phenomena of nature. The crux of the Veda is rather the deep spiritual experience of the seer. Its recapturing, therefore, needs spiritual penetration as well as keen historical and psychological insight which Sri Aurobindo could afford very well. Consequently he, unlike others, instead of being entangled in the symbolic content and making feeble guesses, dived deep into the heart of the scripture unhindered and brought out certain gems of experiences and ideas which came to constitute the foundation of his philosophical edifice. The testimony of his spiritual experience and the remarkable architectonics of his system hold out the promise of still more knowledge lying undiscovered in that ancient repository. His was a pioneering work in this field which needs to be perfected by the future scholarship.” (28)

Sacrifices, rituals, and much rhetoric all, could be looked at as very symbolic. There is always a surface level and a deep, and also a deeper level as transcendental with the Vedas. One could easily say as they say ‘beauty lies in the eyes of the beholder’; all implications concerning Vedas shall depend on how one perceives them, comprehends them and internalizes them.

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