

# Vedic Mysticism



Dr. Shakuntala Gawde

Assistant Professor

Department of Sanskrit

University of Mumbai

[shakuntala.gawde@gmail.com](mailto:shakuntala.gawde@gmail.com)

[www.shakuntalagawde.com](http://www.shakuntalagawde.com)

# Vedas



- ❧ *Vedas*- vid -to know – knowledge (divine knowledge- *apaurusheya*)
- ❧ *Shruti*- *Shru*- to listen- that which is heard
- ❧ Revealed knowledge, experiential knowledge (*anubhuti*)
- ❧ *Rsis* – Seer – ऋषिः दर्शनात् । (*drashta*)
- ❧ *Kavi*- *Krantadarshi* and not *Karu*
- ❧ *Rsi* or *kavi*- able to see beyond the normal
- ❧ S. S. Dange- *Rsi* could be mute but *kavi* gives way to expressions of experiences

# Mystic vision of Rgveda



- ❧ Radhakrishnan- Rhythms of the Infinite heard by the soul
- ❧ Aurobindo- creation of an age anterior to our intellectual philosophies
- ❧ Mainkar- poets trying to touch our 'transcendental feeling'
- ❧ Dange- Autovertism / *atmavartitva* – expression of one's own self in relation to the divine activity



# Mystics of the *Rgveda*



- ❧ Grtsamada
- ❧ Vishvamitra
- ❧ Vamadeva
- ❧ Atri
- ❧ Bharadvaja
- ❧ Vasishtha
- ❧ Kanva and Angirasa
- ❧ Dirgatamas
- ❧ Vena

# Unity of seer and seen



- ❧ Yaskacharya – three types of hymns (*Nirukta* VII.1)
- ❧ *Pratyakshakrt* –verb is used in second person
- ❧ *Parokshakrt*- verb is used in third person
- ❧ *Adhyatmikyah*- verb is used in first person- description from the mouth of deity itself
- ❧ Seer and deity are one

# Vedic Mysticism



- ❧ Ritual Mysticism
- ❧ Philosophical Mysticism
  - ❧ Nature mysticism
  - ❧ Cosmological mysticism
  - ❧ Eschatological Mysticism
- ❧ Devotional Mysticism
- ❧ Mystic expressions
- ❧ Symbols used in Mysticism

# Ritual Mysticism

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# *Yajna*- means of communication



- ❧ *Yajna- Deva, Puja, Sangatikanam*
- ❧ Performed with definite purpose and skill
- ❧ Expressing a feeling of gratitude
- ❧ Propitiation, protection, attainment of material gains, strength, progress
- ❧ Connected with all material and moral ideas
- ❧ *Yajna* -means of communication with the god
- ❧ All ingredients of *Yajna* are divinized
- ❧ All are considered as equal by the principle of *bandhuta* in *Brahmana* period



# Purusha Sukta (RV X.90)



- ❧ Thousand headed, thousand eyed, thousand footed Purusha having enveloped the entire universe from all sides stood beyond
- ❧ Quarter of that Purusha is all creatures (पादः अस्य विश्वा भूतानि ।)
- ❧ Three quarters are immortal in the heaven (त्रिपाद् अस्य अमृतं दिवि ।)
- ❧ Gods performed *yajna* with this Purusha as its oblation, Vasanta became the ghee, Grishma became the fuel and Sharad was the Purodasha offering
- ❧ *Sarvahuta Yajna* (Everything is offered)
- ❧ Everything is born out of that Virat Purusha
- ❧ चन्द्रमा मनसो जातः चक्षोः सूर्यः अजायत ।
- ❧ Moon, Sun, animals, plants, seasons are created out of this cosmic *Purusha*

# Unity of microcosm and macrocosm



- ☞ Gods performed sacrifice
- ☞ *Virat Purusha* becomes offering of the *Yajna*
- ☞ Entire universe as the outcome of *Yajna*
- ☞ Cosmos is formed out of limbs of the *Purusha*
- ☞ Unity of micro and macro cosmos

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# Philosophical mysticism



Intellectual mysticism or Knowledge mysticism

Fine blend of intuition and intellect

Realisation of Self and Unifying vision

Quest for searching the creator

Understanding the underlying unity



# Nature mysticism



- ❧ Hymns on natural elements as divinities
- ❧ Fire, dawn, night, sun, moon, river, wind, rain, waters are deities
- ❧ Struck by their beauty and majesty
- ❧ Communication with natural forces
- ❧ Gratitude towards their activities
- ❧ They follow *Rta*- the cosmic law

# Indra- giver of light



- ❧ Indra –main deity of Rgveda.
- ❧ Indra is often praised as he killed Vrutasura
- ❧ Indra released *gavah* (go- cow /rays)
- ❧ Vrutra- Root *Vr* – to cover – cloud / darkness
- ❧ Indra is understood as Rain god or Sun god
- ❧ **Aurobindo** understands mystic symbolism behind this-
- ❧ Indra- giver of light , represents mind power released from the limits and obscurations of the nervous consciousness.
- ❧ Enlightened intelligence which fashions right or perfect forms of thought or of action not deformed by the nervous impulses not hampered by the falsehoods of sense.
- ❧ Activity of Pure Illumined Intelligence

# Agni



- ❧ Sacrificial fire is seen in personified form
- ❧ Butter backed, flame-haired, tawny haired, tawny beard
- ❧ Sharp or burning jaws, golden teeth
- ❧ Compared to many animals
- ❧ Calf when born and roaring bull when grows (*RV X.8.1*)
- ❧ Looks like god-carrying horse (*RV III.27.14*)
- ❧ Divine bird (*RV I.164.52*)
- ❧ स नः पितेव सूनवेऽग्ने सूपायनो भव । (*RV I.1*)  
(be accessible to us like a father to his son)
- ❧ अग्निं मन्ये पितरमग्निमापिमग्निं भ्रातरं सदमित्सखायम् । (*RV X.8.3*)





# Agni- illumined will



## ❧ Aurobindo- Illumined will

- ❧ Power of conscious being- will- effective behind the working of mind and body
- ❧ Forbids inertia , actualises thought or aspiration
- ❧ Will is the first necessity, the chief actualising force

# *Ushas* (dawn)

- ❧ *Ushas Sukta*
- ❧ Beautiful young damsel
- ❧ Like a dancer she comes  
(RV I.92.4)
- ❧ Clothed with light, she  
appears in the east  
(RV.I.124.3)
- ❧ Ancient as well as new



# Ushas- divine dawn



- ❧ Aurobindo- divine dawn
- ❧ Medium of the awakening
- ❧ First step of realisation
  
- ❧ **Citramagha-** giver of various gifts
- ❧ Giver of Supreme boons i.e. *ananda*, blessings of the divine existence
- ❧ she is new to the soul that receives her
- ❧ By her increasing illumination the whole nature of man is clarified, through her he arrives at the truth, through her he enjoys the beautitude



# Sun god



❧ *Surya Sukta* I.115

❧ चित्रं देवानामुदगादनीकं चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः ।

❧ Beautiful face of gods

❧ Eye of the Mitra, Varuna and Agni

❧ आप्रा द्यावापृथिवी अन्तरिक्षं सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्थुषश्च ।

❧ Sun has filled the heaven, earth and mid-region

❧ Surya is the soul of the moving and unmoving

❧ Sayana calls Surya as Paramtaman who is the inner controller of all

❧ **Aurobindo-** creator /revealer

❧ Supreme God manifesting human consciousness, His truth takes us into illumination of all form of things, all figures of the universal consciousness within and without us



# Aurobindo on Nature deities



- ❧ Seers of Vedic hymns delighted with the sights of nature
- ❧ Observance of things of nature with much intensity and love
- ❧ Wonders of dawn, sunrise, rain etc
- ❧ Nature was living presence with which they hold communion, some glorious aspects of nature became the windows of heaven
- ❧ The moon, the stars, the sea, the sky, the dawn and night were regarded as divine

# Cosmological Mysticism



☞ *Nasadiya Sukta (RV X.129)*

नासादसीन्नो सदासीत्तदानीम्...

What was existent before creation ? *Sat* or *asat*

Darkness was enveloped by darkness

अम्भः आसीद्गहनं गभीरम् ।

There was deep unfathomable water

*Abhu* arose in that water

Hymn starts with the riddle and ends with the riddle



# Riddle remains a riddle



- ❧ Who knows it truly? Who can say it out ? From whom this manifold creation is born ?
- ❧ Even gods are created then who knows from whom it sprang ?
- ❧ That god is the supervisor of this is in the highest heaven or may be even he does not know from whom this varied creation arose, and whether he created it or not.

# Eschatological Mysticism



- ❧ Yama as the king of other world
- ❧ Dogs of Yama- Shyama and Shabala
- ❧ They ask the dead to rejoice in the other world in company of Yama and *Pitrs*
- ❧ Paths of the dead- Devayana and Pitryana
- ❧ Rebirth-
- ❧ “ Be united with the Pitrs, with Yama and with the fulfilment of your wishes in the highest heaven; discarding iniquity, return to your abode and unite yourself to a luminous body”.

# Golden Egg



- ❧ *Hiranyagarbha Sukta (RV X.121)*
- ❧ हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे भूतस्य जातः पतिरेकः आसीत् ।
- ❧ स दाधार पृथिवीं द्यामुतेमां **कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥**
- ❧ Hiranyagarbha or Prajapati created everything
- ❧ Supreme ruler of the universe is eulogized
- ❧ Supporter of earth and heaven
- ❧ Giver of life and strength
- ❧ River, oceans, quarters belong to Him
- ❧ **कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम- ka- what and ka - Prajapati**



# Vagambhruniya Sukta



- ❧ Vak Ambhruni- Seer and deity (RV X.125)
- ❧ Praises herself as identified with great divinity
- ❧ I am Rudra, Adityas etc. all gods. I support Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Agni, Ashvina, Pushan, Bhaga
- ❧ अहं राष्ट्री संगमनी वसूनाम् ...
- ❧ I'm the queen and I'm the gatherer of riches
- ❧ चिकितुषी - omniscient
- ❧ भूरिस्थात्रां भूर्यावेशयन्तीम् -omnipresent (I have entered the heaven and earth)
- ❧ मया सो अन्नमति यो विपश्यति यो प्राणिति - omnipotent (all the actions are controlled by me)

# All-pervasive reality



- ॐ यं कामये तंतमुग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम् ।
- ॐ I make whomsoever I like a fierce, a priest, a sage or a wise priest
- ॐ I myself move forward like the wind in all realms. Beyond the heaven, beyond this earth, I have pervaded the whole universe
- ॐ All pervasive speech and everything as the form of speech

# Knowledge of Gopa



- ❧ *Dirghatamas - Asyavamiya Sukta I.164.46*
- ❧ एकं सद् विप्राः बहुधा वदन्ति ।
- ❧ Revelation of Monism in polytheistic and henotheistic tendencies
- ❧ अपश्यं गोपामनिपद्यमानमा च परा च पथिभिश्चरन्तम् ।
- ❧ I have seen that *Gopa* which doesn't fall down, traverse the path up and down



# Devotional Mysticism



- ❧ Emotional mysticism
- ❧ Personal relation with deity
- ❧ Surrender to the God
- ❧ Communion with the God

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# Vasishta- a mystic



- ❧ Vaisistha's mystic experiences- *RV VII.86 , 88*
- ❧ Cosmic majesty and the activity of Varuṇa
- ❧ He would also serve Varuṇa like a slave or dāsa (सृजा वत्सां न दाम्नो वसिष्ठाम् ।)
- ❧ Vasiṣṭha was like a tethered calf ever longing to be united with the mother cow
- ❧ He calls Varuna as his Father as well as friend
- ❧ He is guilty about the sins performed unknowingly and also afraid because Varuna might punish Him
- ❧ Vasishtha is also aware of the compassionate nature of Varuna

# Mystic raptures



- ❧ Vasishtha came within the direct sight of Varuna
- ❧ Vasiṣṭha looked upon the face of Agni as the face of Varuṇa
- ❧ Agni was the means of transportation or transformation to the realm of Varuna
- ❧ Varuṇa has shown special grace to Vasiṣṭha
- ❧ Vasiṣṭha was privileged to share some mystic experiences in the company of Varuṇa
- ❧ Vasiṣṭha wants to be innermost of the Varuna
- ❧ Frequent visitor to the palace of Varuna having thousand doors



# Mystic Experiences

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# Vena – a mystic



- ❧ Gives account of his mystical experiences in AV II.1
- ❧ वेनस्तत् पश्यत् परमं गुहा यद् यत्र विश्वं भवत्येकरूपम् ।
- ❧ He saw a cave where the whole universe in one
- ❧ His three feet are hidden in the cave, one who knows this becomes father of father
- ❧ I have known heaven and earth, known the truth which resides in all realms, nourishes all beings
- ❧ I have seen there gods moving
- ❧ Seems to be description of *moksha*

# Highest abode



- ❧ *Vishnu Sukta RV I.154* (seen by Dirghatamas)
- ❧ Vishnu's three strides encompass everything
- ❧ All -pervasive god
- ❧ Mystic description of three strides
- ❧ First two strides are visible
- ❧ विष्णोः पदे परमे मध्वः ऊत्सः | fountain of honey in the Highest stride
- ❧ नरा यत्र देवयवः मदन्ति | where God devoted people rejoice
- ❧ यत्र गावो भूरिशृङ्गा अयासः | where exist many horned cows



# Vamadeva- a mystic



- ❧ Vamadeva has the Self-realization in the womb of the mother
  - ❧ I have known gods in the womb itself (RV IV.27.1)
  - ❧ I am encircled by iron rods but I will fly like a hawk
  - ❧ I have won over the sorrows of womb with the knowledge
- 
- ❧ Womb- symbolic of *Samsara*

# Symbols used in Mysticism

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# Allegory of birds



- ❧ Dirghatamas (*RV I.164.22*)
- ❧ Metaphor of two birds
- ❧ यस्मिन्वृक्षे मध्वदः सुपर्णा निविशन्ते सुव्रते चाधि विश्वे ।
- ❧ तस्येदाहुः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वग्रे तन्नोन्नशद्यः पितरं न वेद ॥
- ❧ Sayanacharya- Individual bird and Sun bird
- ❧ Sun is cosmic tree, the rays of the sun are branches
- ❧ Rays enter the individual souls which enjoy the life essence of the sun fruit
- ❧ Symbolic of Pramatan and Jivatman



# Metaphor of lute



œ Metaphor of Lute *Ait. A. III.2.5*

œ अथ खल्वियं दैवी वीणा भवति तदनुकृतिरसौ मानुषी वीणा भवति ।

œ Metaphor on human body as divine lute



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