

Rig-Veda I.1, Hymn to Agni, by the Seer Madhucchanda Vaiśvāmītra.

Sri Aurobindo has translated this opening hymn of the Rig-Veda several times over many years.

There exists also an unpublished translation of the first verse, to which Sri Aurobindo has added a detailed explanation of the main terms that occur therein.

"I seek with adoration the God-Will, divine priest of the sacrifice placed in front, sacrificer in the seasons, offerer of the oblation, who most ordains the ecstasy."

Agni (ag and aj) is the brilliant, the strong, the preeminent, he who moves, leads, drives, acts. He is the Flame, at once Heat and Light, Force and self-possessing Consciousness in the Force, Will with perfect revealing and intuitive knowledge in the will and its acts, - the Seer-Will of the one and infinite Divine Conscious-Existence at work in the universe.

The Rishi, seeker and finder of knowledge, adores and seeks this divine Seer-Will as the priest of the inner sacrifice by which man seeks the godhead. He is the priest in the three chief functions of that divine priesthood. He as divine Seer-Will is the **Purohit**, that power which is placed in front of our consciousness to act for the human being; replacing the fallible human will, this divine force as soon as it is kindled conducts the sacrifice; he leads it in its journey through the stages by which the sacrifice rises to the supramental divine consciousness; he is its vanguard and front-fighter in the battle of the divine with the undivine and the march of man to his goal (pura-eta, pra-neta) The Seer-Will is the **Ritwik**; he sacrifices in the order, the right seasons, the right periods, the twelve months, the hundred years of the sacrificial session: he knows the time, place, order by which the Swadha, the self-arranging self-movement of the divine Nature in man that is developing itself, progresses till it turns itself into the Swaha, the luminous self-force of the fulfilled divine Nature of the gods. This order of the sacrificial seasons is called *ritu* and represents the progressive movement of development of the hidden truth of things in man. The Seer-Will is also the **Hota**, the power that brings the divine powers into the physical consciousness of man by his flaming force in the revealed Word, manifests and forms them there and offers to them the whole activity of the being as a sacrifice of the lower human to the higher divine. The result of this progressive action is the divine delight or ecstasy, the Ananda of the infinite and divine Consciousness, brought into man, there established, held, expanding till it possesses the whole being and occupies all the energies. The Seer-Will is the godhead in us which is most powerful to establish, hold, order the action of the Delight in us. This delight is represented as the wealth of the divine existence by the words *rayis*, *rādhās*, *rā*, *ratna*, each of which has a different connotation. Rayis is simply the accumulation of the riches, the mass of the felicity: *rādhās* its riches as affecting the mental, emotional heart-consciousness, its vital and sensible abundance; *rā* is the bliss the higher joy of these riches, more than mental in its touch on man; *ratna* is its pure ecstasy of the Ananda. This last aspect, as it is the culmination of the Vedic *vedās*, the finding, conscious possession of the Divine, is rightly put here in front in the first rik of the Veda. The Seer-Will is the first means, the Ananda of the divine riches the ultimate aim and last achievement of the Vedic Yoga.

Version from Hymns to the Mystic Fire.

I adore the Flame, the vicar, the divine Ritwik of the Sacrifice, the summoner who most finds the ecstasy. (1)

The Flame adorable by the ancient sages is adorable too by the new. He brings here the Gods. (2)

By the Flame one enjoys a treasure that verily increases day by day, glorious, most full of hero-power. (3)

O Flame! the pilgrim-sacrifice on every side of which thou art with the environing being, that truly goes among the Gods. (4)

The Flame, the summoner, the Seer-Will, true and most full of richly varied listening, may he come a God with the Gods. (5)

O Flame! the happy good which thou shalt create for the giver is that Truth and verily thine, O Angiras! (6)

To thee, O Flame! we day by day, in the night and in the light, come, carrying by our thought the obeisance. (7)

To thee, who reignest over our pilgrim-sacrifices, luminous guardian of the Truth, increasing in thy own home. (8)

Therefore, be easy of access to us as a father unto his son, cling to us for our happy state. (9)

The following is the latest version from about 1940.

The Fire I pray, the divine vicar of the sacrifice and ordinarant of the rite, the Summoner (priest of the offering) who most founds the ecstasy. (1)

The Fire, desirable to the ancient seers, so even to the new, - may he come to us with the gods. (2) (iha not translated)

By the Fire one obtains a wealth that increases day by day, glorious and full of hero-powers. (3)

O Fire, the pilgrim sacrifice which thou encompassest on every side, reaches the gods. (4)

Fire, priest of the call, the seer-will rich in brilliant inspirations, may he come to us, a god with the gods. (5) (satya not translated)

O Fire, the happy good that thou wilt create for the giver, is that Truth of thee, O Angiras. (6)

To thee, O Fire, day by day, in the dawn and in the dark, we come bringing to thee by the thought our obeisance, (7)

To thee, who rulest the sacrifices of the Way, the shining Guardian of the Truth, growing in thy own home. (8)

O Fire, be easy of access to us like a father to his son; cleave to us for our weal. (9)

Text in Devanagari.

r̥ṣiḥ: madhucchandā vaiśvāmitraḥ; devatā: agniḥ; chandaḥ: gāyatrī.

अग्निम् ईळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवम् ऋत्विजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥ १-१-१
अग्निः पूर्वोभिर् ऋषिभिर् ईड्यो नूतनैर् उत । स देवाँ एह वक्षति ॥ १-१-२
अग्निना रयिम् अश्वत् पोषम् एव दिवे-दिवे । यशसं वीरवत्तमम् ॥ १-१-३
अग्ने यं यज्ञम् अध्वरं विश्वतः परिभूर् असि । स इद् देवेषु गच्छति ॥ १-१-४
अग्निर् होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश् चित्रश्रवस्तमः । देवो देवेभिर् आ गमत् ॥ १-१-५
यद् अङ्ग दाशुषे त्वम् अग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि । तवेत् तत् सत्यम् अङ्गिरः ॥ १-१-६
उप त्वाग्ने दिवे-दिवे दोषावस्तर धिया वयम् । नमो भरन्त एमसि ॥ १-१-७
राजन्तम् अध्वराणां गोपाम् ऋतस्य दीदिविम् । वर्धमानं स्वे दमे ॥ १-१-८
स नः पितेव सूनवे ऽग्ने सूपायनो भव । सचस्वा नः स्वस्तये ॥ १-१-९

Text in Transliteration.

agnīm īle puróhitaṃ yajñásya devám ṛtvíjam | hótāraṃ ratnadhātamaṃ |1|
agniḥ pūrvebhir ṛṣibhir īḍiyo nūtanair utá | sá devāṃ éhá vakṣati |2|
agnínā rayim aśnavat póṣam evá divé-dive | yaśásaṃ vīrāvattamaṃ |3|
ágne yáṃ yajñám adhvarám viśvátaḥ paribhūr ási | sá íd devéṣu gachati |4|
agnír hótā kavíkratuḥ satyás citráśravastamaḥ | devó devébhír ā gamat |5|
yád aṅgá dāśúṣe tuvám ágne bhadráṃ kariṣyasi | távét tát satyám aṅgiraḥ |6|
úpa tvāgne divé-dive dóṣāvastar dhiyā vayám | námo bháranta émasi |7|
rājantam adhvarāṅṅaṃ gopām ṛtásya dídivim | vārdhamānaṃ suvé dáme |8|
sá naḥ pitéva sūnáve ágne sūpāyanó bhava | sácasvā naḥ suastáye |9|

Text, Translations and Vocabulary.

अग्निम् ईले पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवम् ऋत्विजम् । होतारं रत्नधातमम् ॥ १-१-१

agnīm īle puróhitaṃ yajñásya devám ṛtvíjam | hótāraṃ ratnadhātamam |1|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

I adore the Flame, the vicar, the divine Ritwik of the Sacrifice, the summoner who most founds the ecstasy. (1)

The Fire I pray, the divine vicar of the sacrifice and ordinant of the rite, the Summoner (priest of the offering) who most founds the ecstasy. (1)

Sri Aurobindo's earlier interpretive rendering:

"I seek with adoration (īle) the God-Will (agním), divine priest of the sacrifice (yajñásya devám) placed in front (puróhitaṃ), sacrificer in the seasons (ṛtvíjam), offerer of the oblation (hótāraṃ), who most ordains the ecstasy (ratnadhātamam)."

Vocabulary:

īḍ, 1 cl. 2. A. īṭṭe, (2. sg. pres. īḍiṣe, Ved. īḷiṣe, pf. īḍe; Ved. īle &c.) to implore, request, ask for (with two acc.) to praise RV. AV. VS. R. BhP. &c.;

purohita, (puro-) mfn. placed foremost or in front, charged, commissioned, appointed; m. one holding a charge or commission, an agent (esp.) a family priest, a domestic chaplain RV. &c.;

ṛtvij, (ṛtu-ij) mfn. (fr. yaj), sacrificing at the proper time, sacrificing regularly;

अग्निः पूर्वोभिर् ऋषिभिर् ईड्यो नूतनैर् उत । स देवाः एह वक्षति ॥ १-१-२

agnīḥ pūrvebhir ṛṣibhir īḍyo nūtanair utá | sá devāḥ éhá vakṣati |2|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

The Flame adorable by the ancient sages is adorable too by the new. He brings here the Gods. (2)

The Fire, desirable to the ancient seers, so even to the new, - may he come to us with the gods. (2) (iha not translated)

Vocabulary:

pūrva, mf(ā)n. (connected with purā, puras, pra, and declined like a pron. when implying relative position whether in place or time, but not necessarily in abl. loc. sg. m. n. and nom. pl. m.); being before or in front, fore, first RV. &c.; eastern, to the east (abl.); former, prior, preceding, previous to, earlier; ancient, old, customary, traditional RV. &c.;

m. an ancestor, forefather (pl. the ancients, ancestors) R. &c.;

īḍya, mfn. to be invoked or implored, to be praised or glorified, praiseworthy, laudable RV. AV.;

nūтана, mf(ā)n. (fr. 1. nu, or nū), belonging to "now" or the present day, new, novel, recent, modern, young, fresh (opp. to pūrva, purāṇa &c.) RV. &c.;

vah, 1 cl. 1. P. A. vahati, -te; Subj. vakṣat, -ati; to carry, transport, convey (with instr. of vehicle) RV. &c.; to lead, conduct (esp. offerings to the gods, said of Agni) ib.; to bear along (water, said of rivers) ib. to draw (a car), guide (horses &c.) ib.;

ā-vah, to bring;

iha, ind. (fr. pronom. base 3. i), in this place, here; to this place, in this world;

अग्निना॑ रयि॑म् अ॒श्वत् पो॑षम् ए॒व दि॒वे-दि॒वे । य॒शसं॑ वी॒रव॑त्त॒मम् ॥ १-१-३

agnínā rayím aśnavat pōṣam evá divé-dive | yaśásam vīrāvattamam |3|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

By the Flame one enjoys a treasure that verily increases day by day, glorious, most full of hero-power. (3)

By the Fire one obtains a wealth that increases day by day, glorious and full of hero-powers. (3)

Vocabulary:

rayi, m. or (rarely) f. (fr. rā; the following forms occur in the Veda, rayis, -yim, -yibhis, -yīṅām; rayyā, -yyai, -yyām; cf. 2. rai), *property, goods, possessions, treasure, wealth (often personified) RV. AV. VS. Br. SrS.; ChUp. stuff, materials PrasnUp.;*

aśnavat, 1 classical A. aśnute; Vedic forms are: aśnoti &c. Subj. aśnavat &c.; *to reach, come to, arrive at, get, gain, obtain RV. &c.; to enjoy MBh. xii,12136;*

yaśás, n. *beautiful appearance, beauty, splendour, worth RV. AV. VS. SBr. GrSrS.; honour, glory, fame, renown AV. &c.;* an object of honour, a person of respectability SBr.;

mfn. *beautiful, splendid, worthy, excellent RV. AV.;*

अग्ने॑ यं य॒ज्ञम् अ॒ध्वरं॑ वि॒श्वतः॑ परि॒भूर् अ॒सि । स इ॒द् दे॒वेषु॑ गच्छति ॥ १-१-४

ágne yám yajñám adhvarám viśvátaḥ paribhūr ási | sá íd devéṣu gachati |4|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

O Flame! the pilgrim-sacrifice on every side of which thou art with the environing being, that truly goes among the Gods. (4)

O Fire, the pilgrim sacrifice which thou encompassest on every side, reaches the gods. (4)

Comments:

Sri Aurobindo does not agree with Sayanas rendering of this often occurring term, which the dictionary has adapted:

"*Adhvara yajña*, **the sacrifice that travels** or is a travel to the home of the godheads ... Sayana takes adhvará yajñá, the unhurt sacrifice; but "unhurt" can never have come to be used as a synonym of sacrifice. *Adhvara* is "**travelling**", "**moving**", connected with *adhvan*, a path or journey from the lost root adh, to move, extend, be wide, compact, etc. We see the connection between the two words *adhvan* and *adhvara* in *adhva*, air, sky and *adhvara* with the same sense. The passages in the Veda are numerous in which the *adhvara* or *adhvara yajña* is connected with the idea of **travelling, journeying, advancing on the path ...** *Adhvara*, the word for sacrifice, is really an adjective and the full phrase is *adhvara yajña*, **sacrificial action travelling on the path**, *the sacrifice that is of the nature of a progression or journey*. Agni, the Will, is the leader of the sacrifice.

...this great **march of the sacrifice** which is the progress of man from the physical to the superconscient.

Vocabulary:

id, ind. Ved. (probably the neut. form of the pronom. base i see 3. i; a particle of affirmation) *even, just, only, indeed, assuredly;*

paribhū, mfn. *surrounding, enclosing, containing, pervading, guiding, governing RV. AV. TS. TBr. IsUp.;*

adhvará, mfn. (dhvr), *not injuring AV. TS.;* (as) m. *a sacrifice (especially the Soma sacrifice);*

(am) n. *sky or air L.*

अग्निर् होता कविक्रतुः सत्यश् चित्रश्रवस्तमः । देवो देवेभिर् आ गमत् ॥ १-१-५

agnír hótā kavíkratuḥ satyáś citráśravastamaḥ | devó devébhīr ā gamat |5|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

The Flame, the summoner, the Seer-Will, true and most full of richly varied listening, may he come a God with the Gods. (5)

Fire, priest of the call, the seer-will rich in brilliant inspirations, may he come to us, a god with the gods. (5) (satya not translated)

Comments:

Here are Sri Aurobindo's explanations of *kratu* and *śravas*, two very important and often occurring terms:

Kratu means in Sanskrit **work or action** and especially work in the sense of the sacrifice; but it means also **power or strength** (the Greek *kratos*) **effective of action. Psychologically this power effective of action is the will.** The word may also mean mind or intellect and Sayana admits thought or knowledge as a possible sense for *kratu*.

śravas means **literally hearing** and from this primary significance is derived its secondary sense, "fame". But, **psychologically**, the idea of hearing leads up in Sanskrit to another sense which we find in *śravaṇa*, *śruti*, *śruta*,—**revealed knowledge, the knowledge which comes by inspiration.**

Vocabulary:

citra, mf(ā)n. *conspicuous, excellent, distinguished RV.; bright, clear, bright-coloured RV.; variegated, spotted, speckled (with instr. or in comp.) Nal. iv, 8 R. Mricch. VarBrS.; various, different, manifold Mn. ix,248 Yajn. i,287 MBh. &c.;*

(am) ind. *so as to be bright RV. i,71,1; in different ways R. i, 9,14;*

ā-gam, P. -gacchati, (Ved. cl. 1. P. gamati, Subj. -gamat) *to come, make one's appearance, come near from (abl.) or to (acc. or loc.), arrive at, attain, reach RV. AV. &c.;*

यद् अङ्ग दाशुषे त्वम् अग्ने भद्रं करिष्यसि । तवेत् तत् सत्यम् अङ्गिरः ॥ १-१-६

yád aṅgá dāśuṣe tuvám āgne bhadrám kariṣyāsi | távét tát satyám aṅgīrah |6|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

O Flame! the happy good which thou shalt create for the giver is that Truth and verily thine, O Angiras! (6)

O Fire, the happy good that thou wilt create for the giver, is that Truth of thee, O Angiras. (6)

Vocabulary:

aṅgá, 1 ind. a particle implying attention, assent or desire, and sometimes impatience, it may be rendered by *well indeed, true, please, rather quick;*

dāśvas, (p. pf. fr. 1. dāś), *honouring or serving the gods, devout, pious RV. AV. VS.;*

bhadra, mf(ā)n. *blessed, auspicious, fortunate, prosperous, happy RV. &c.;* good, gracious, friendly, kind ib.; *excellent, fair, beautiful, lovely, pleasant, dear ib.;*

उप॑ त्वाग्ने॑ दि॒वे-दि॒वे दो॑षावस्त्र् धि॒या वय॑म् । नमो॑ भर॒न्त ए॑मसि ॥ १-१-७

úpa tvāgne divé-dive dóṣāvastar dhiyā vayám | námo bháranta émasi |7|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

To thee, O Flame! we day by day, in the night and in the light, come, carrying by our thought the obeisance. (7)

To thee, O Fire, day by day, in the dawn and in the dark, we come bringing to thee by the thought our obeisance, (7)

Vocabulary:

doṣa, 1 m. evening, darkness;

dóṣāvastṛ, m. illuminer of the dark (Agni) RV.;

e, 4 (ā-i) P. -eti, to come near or towards, go near, approach RV. AV. SBr. &c.; to submit, fall to one's share ChUp. v,14,1; (1. pl. -īmahe) to hasten near RV. vii,39,2; to request VS. iv,5;

राज॑न्तम् अध्व॑राणां गो॒पाम् ऋ॒तस्य॑ दी॒दिवि॑म् । वर्ध॑मानं॒ स्वे द॑मे ॥ १-१-८

rājantam adhvarāṅṅaṃ gopām ṛtasya dīdivim | vārdhamānaṃ suvé dáme |8|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

To thee, who reignest over our pilgrim-sacrifices, luminous guardian of the Truth, increasing in thy own home. (8)

To thee, who rulest the sacrifices of the Way, the shining Guardian of the Truth, growing in thy own home. (8)

Vocabulary:

dīdivi, mfn. shining, bright RV. I.1.8;

dāma, m. (or n.) house, home (Lat. domus) RV. AV.;

स नः॑ पि॒तेव॑ सू॒नवे॑ ऽग्ने॑ सू॒पाय॑नो भव । सच॑स्वा नः स्व॒स्तये॑ ॥ १-१-९

sá naḥ pitéva sūnave ágne sūpāyanó bhava | sácasvā naḥ suastáye |9|

Sri Aurobindo's Translations:

Therefore, be easy of access to us as a father unto his son, cling to us for our happy state. (9)

O Fire, be easy of access to us like a father to his son; cleave to us for our weal. (9)

Vocabulary:

sūnu, 2 m. a son, child, offspring RV. &c.;

sūpāyana (su-upa-ayana, root i), mf(ā)n. easily accessible RV.;

sac, 1 (connected with 2. sajj, sañj, sakh, cf. sap) cl. 1 A. sacate; to be associated or united with, have do, be familiar, associate one's self with, (instr.) RV. AV. be possessed of, enjoy (instr. or acc.) ib. to take part or participate; suffer, endure (instr.) RV. to belong to, be attached or devoted to, serve, follow, seek, pursue, favour, assist (acc.) RV. AV. VS.; to be connected with (instr. Pat. on Pan. 1-4,51; to fall to the lot of (acc.) SBr.; to be together RV. AV.;