

Part 1

Vedic Concept of Vac, the Divine Word.

The Vedic concept of the Divine Word is that it is hidden (*guhya-*, *ninya-*, *apīcya-*, RV). "It is in the eternal supreme Heaven where all the gods abide", *īco akṣare parame vyoman yasmin devā adhi viśve niṣeduh*, - says Dīrghatamas Aucathyaḥ in RV 1.164. 39. "The Truth is the foundation of Speech". *Satyam vācaḥ pratiṣṭhā*. (BrUp). The Word is a creative Power of the Divine Consciousness, by which all the Creation is being manifest (cp.: RV 10.125).

"In the system of the Mystics, which has partially survived in the schools of Indian Yoga, the Word is a power, the Word creates. For all creation is expression, everything exists already in the secret abode of the Infinite, *guhā hitam*, and has only to be brought out here in apparent form by the active consciousness.

Certain schools of Vedic thought even suppose the worlds to have been created by the goddess Word and sound as first etheric vibration to have preceded formation. In the Veda itself there are passages which treat the poetic measures of the sacred mantras,— *anṣṭubh*, *triṣṭubh*, *jagatī*, *gāyatrī*,— as symbolic of the rhythms in which the universal movement of things is cast.

By expression then we create and men are even said to create the gods in themselves by the mantra. Again, that which we have created in our consciousness by the Word, we can fix there by the Word to become part of ourselves and effective not only in our inner life but upon the outer physical world.

By expression we form, by affirmation we establish. As a power of expression the word is termed *gīḥ* or *vacas*; as a power of affirmation, *stoma*. In either aspect it is named *manma* or *mantra*, expression of thought in mind, and *brahman*, expression of the heart or the soul,—for this seems to have been the earlier sense of the word *brahman*, afterwards applied to the Supreme Soul or universal Being." (SV 270)

"Brahman in the Veda signifies ordinarily the Vedic Word or mantra in its profoundest aspect as the expression of the intuition arising out of the depths of the soul or being. It is a voice of the rhythm which has created the worlds

and creates perpetually. All world is expression or manifestation, creation by the Word.

Conscious Being luminously manifesting its contents in itself, of itself, *tmanā*, is the superconscient; holding its contents obscurely in itself it is the subconscious.

The higher, the self-luminous descends into the obscure, into the night, into darkness concealed in darkness, *tamas tamasā gūḍham*, where all is hidden in formless being owing to fragmentation of consciousness, *tucchyenābhvapihitam*. It arises again out of the Night by the Word to reconstitute in the conscient its vast unity, *tan mahinājāyataikam*. This vast Being, this all-containing and all-formulating consciousness is Brahman. It is the Soul that emerges out of the subconscious in Man and rises towards the superconscient. And the word of creative Power welling upward out of the soul is also brahman.

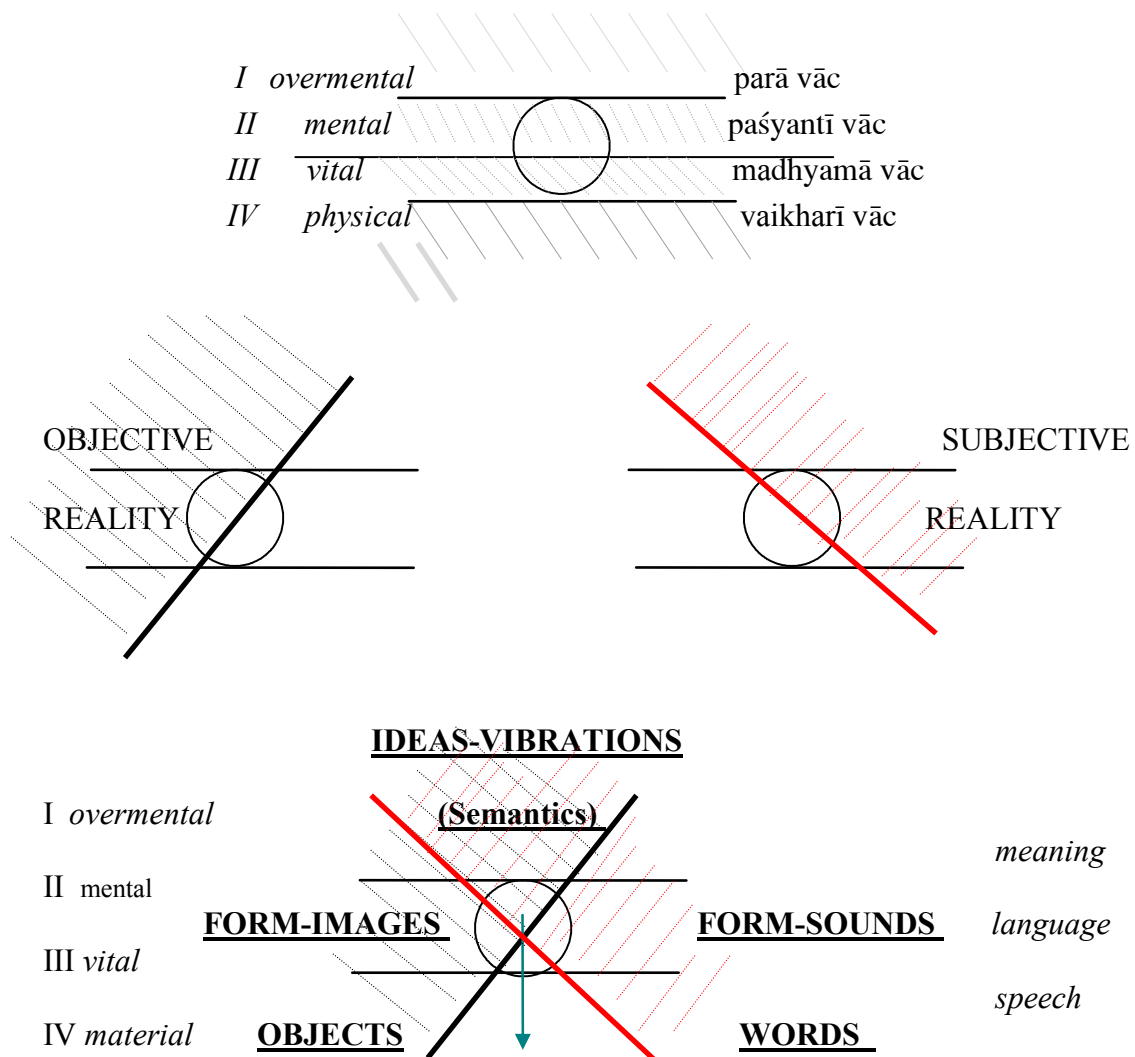
The Divine, the Deva, manifests itself as conscious Power of the soul, creates the worlds by the Word out of the waters of the subconscious, *apraketam salilam sarvam*,— the inconscient ocean that was this all, as it is plainly termed in the great Hymn of Creation. This power of the Deva is Brahma, the stress in the name falling more upon the conscious soul-power than upon the Word which expresses it. The manifestation of the different world-planes in the conscient human being culminates in the manifestation of the superconscient, the Truth and the Bliss, and this is the office of the supreme Word or Veda. Of this supreme word Brihaspati is the master, the stress in this name falling upon the potency of the Word rather than upon the thought of the general soul-power which is behind it. Brihaspati gives the Word of knowledge, the rhythm of expression of the superconscient, to the gods and especially to Indra, the lord of Mind, when they work in man as “Aryan” powers for the great consummation.” (SV 318)

Sri Aurobindo defines the four levels of Speech as physical, vital, mental and supramental, which in Indian grammatical tradition can be identified with vaikharī, madhyamā, paśyantī and parā vāc.

“Let us suppose a conscious use of the vibrations of sound which will produce corresponding forms or changes of form. ... Let us realise then that a vibration of sound on the material plane presupposes a corresponding vibration on the vital without which it could not have come into play; that, again, presupposes a corresponding originative vibration on the mental; the mental presupposes a corresponding originative vibration on the supramental at the very root of things. But a mental vibration implies thought and perception and a supramental vibration implies a supreme vision and

discernment. All vibrations of sound on that higher plane is, then, instinct with and expressive of this supreme discernment of a truth in things and is at the same time creative, instinct with a supreme power which casts into forms the truth discerned and eventually, descending from plane to plane, reproduces it in the physical form or object created in Matter by etheric sound. Thus we see that the theory of creation by the Word which is the absolute expression of the Truth, and the theory of the material creation by sound-vibration in the ether correspond and are two logical poles of the same idea. They both belong to the same ancient Vedic system.”

Here we shall give a scheme, which is to help us to imagine of how different levels of the Word relate with the objective reality (Sanskrit terms are from Bhartrihari):



There are two, which seem to be different, realities interconnected into one complex objective-subjective reality of the consciousness in its double status

of *cognition* (the perceptive reality or sense) and that of *power* (the objective reality or the object of sense).

On the highest level of consciousness, where the power and knowledge are one, there is no difference between the objective and subjective realities. The idea-force, the idea-vibration is one for the *word* and the *object*. The semantic of both is one and the same. So the semantic of the objective thing “book” and the semantic of the objective word “a book” must be the same.

It is on the level of formations (mental and vital planes), that we see the expressed and expressive elements split into their different shapes: the form of the *object* and the form of the *word*. Being still similar in their semantic they differ in their shapes: an *idea-form, as a thought-sound* (a word), is not the same as a *thought-image* (a form).

The circle in the centre (see the picture above) is a symbol of formation and formulation, which includes all possible interactions: (1) the oneness of meaning; (2) the difference in *form* (cp.: *nāma* and *rūpa* in Vedantic tradition), and (3) on the material plane the word and the object are absolutely separate things.

This scheme is meant to help us to approach the subject. It is only a scheme, and should be understood only as such.

The hearing and sight, *śrotram* and *cakṣuḥ*, together with the speech and mind, *vāc* and *manah*, were considered by Upanishads as four pillars on which *brahma-catuṣpād*, “the Spirit on four legs”, stands firmly in the world (ChUp, BrhUp) as *prāṇa*, Life energy (see in detail the next chapter). It is with a help of these *nāma* and *rūpa*, *name* and *form*, that Brahman, the Creator, could enter into his creation (ShB). In the Vedas these *nāma* and *rūpa* are presented as *śruti* and *drṣṭi*, (cp.: *cit-tapas*, Consciousness-Power, in the Puranas).

“Everything begins with vibration or movement, the original *kśobha* or disturbance. If there is no movement of the conscious being, it can only know its own pure static existence. Without vibration or movement of being in consciousness there can be no act of knowledge and therefore sense; without vibration or movement of being in force there can be no object of sense. Movement of conscious being as knowledge becoming sensible of itself as movement of force, in other words the knowledge separating itself from its own working to watch that and take it into itself again by feeling, - this is the basis of universal Sanjnana. This is true both of our internal and external operations.”(196 Up)

Sri Aurobindo writes about Mantra: “A supreme, an absolute of itself, a reaching to an infinite and utmost, a last point of perfection of its own possibilities is that to which all action of Nature intuitively tends in its unconscious formations and when it has arrived to that point it has justified its existence to the spirit which has created it and fulfilled the secret creative will within it. Speech, the expressive Word, has such a summit or absolute, a perfection which is the touch of the infinite upon its finite possibilities and seal upon it of its Creator. ... the Mantra is the word that carries the godhead in it or the power of the godhead, can bring it into the consciousness and fix there it and its workings, awaken there the thrill of the infinite, the force of something absolute, perpetuate the miracle of the supreme utterance. This highest power of speech and especially of poetic speech is what we have to make here the object of our scrutiny, discover, ...”(Sri Aurobindo, Archives and Research, April 1979, v.3, No 1, p.19)

Sri Aurobindo in his “Savitri”, in “The Book of Birth and Quest”, Canto Three “The Call to the Quest” depicts an experience of the transcendental Speech. It is the Power of Savitri herself.

*“This word was seed of all the thing to be.
A hand from some Greatness opened her heart’s locked doors
And showed the work for which her strength was born.
As when the mantra sinks in Yoga’s ear,
Its message enters stirring the blind brain
And keeps in the dim ignorant cells its sound;
The hearer understands a form of words
And, musing on the index thought it holds,
He strives to read it with the labouring mind,
But finds bright hints, not the embodied truth: (Derrida’s view)
Then, falling silent in himself to know
He meets the deeper listening of his soul:
The Word repeats itself in rhythmic strains: (non Derrida’s view)
Thought, vision, feeling, sense, the body’s self
Are seized unalterably and he endures
An ecstasy and an immortal change;
He feels the Wideness and becomes a Power,
All knowledge rushes on him like a sea:
Transmuted by the white spiritual ray
He walks in naked heavens of joy and calm,
Sees the God-face and hears transcendent speech:
An equal greatness in her life was sown.” (S 375)*

On the Hymns of the Veda.

Sri Aurobindo writes in the Secret of the Veda about the hymns and their utility:

*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. Still, all these high gifts have deliberately been exercised within one unvarying framework and always with the same materials. For the art of expression was to the Rishis only a means, not an aim; their principal preoccupation was strenuously practical, almost utilitarian, in the highest sense of utility. The hymn was to the Rishi who composed it **a means of spiritual progress for himself and for others**. It rose out of his soul, it became a power of his mind, it was the vehicle of his self-expression in some important or even critical moment of his life's inner history. It helped **him to express the god in him, to destroy the devourer**, the expresser of evil; **it became a weapon in the hands of the Aryan striver after perfection**, it flashed forth like Indra's lightning against the Coverer on the slopes, the Wolf on the path, the Robber by the streams. (SV11)*

Let us have a look how these hymns were used for “spiritual progress” and how it was understood by Vedic tradition.

Vedic Concept of the Word: *jñāna-yajña-*, *brahma-yajña-* or *svādhyāya-*.

śreyān dravyamayād yajñāḥ jñāna-yajñāḥ paramtapa

sarvam karmākhilam pārtha jñāne parisamāpyate (BhG 4,33)

api ced asi pāpebhyaḥ sarvebhyaḥ pāpakṛttamaḥ

sarvam jñāna-plavenaiva vṛjīnam saṁtariṣyasi (BhG 4,36)

yathaidhānsi samiddho 'gnir bhasmasāt kurute 'rjuna

jñānāgniḥ sarva-karmāṇi bhasmasāt kurute tathā (BhG 4,37)

“The sacrifice by knowledge is greater than by any material means,

O Arjuna. For all actions end in knowledge-experience!

Even if you are the most sinful in the world,

By the boat of knowledge you can overcome the misfortune of sin.

Like a flaming fire burns to ashes all the fuel,

the fire of knowledge burns to ashes all the actions!”

This Sacrifice by Knowledge, *jñāna-yajña*, which Sri Krishna speaks so highly about, he calls also *svādhyāya-* (4,28): *svādhyāya-jñāna-yajñās ca*.

Let us examine the term *svādhyāya-* and how it was used in the Vedic and Vedantic tradition. *Svādhyāya-* literally means self-learning or reading for oneself: *sva-adhyāya-*. It is a kind of recitation which one does for oneself as a means of spiritual quest, searching after the spiritual knowledge-realisation. It was of a sacrificial and meditative nature, different from the *pada-pāṭha-* and *krama-pāṭha-* recitations which were meant to preserve the Vedic text as such. In order to understand how *svadhyaya* works we should take a brief look into the general idea of Vedic sacrifice, its concept and functions.

Thus at the end of nearly every passage they utter the formula: *ya evam veda*, “the one who knows thus”..., he verily gets the fruit of the sacrifice. It was no longer pure ritual that was absolutely important for the performance of sacrifice, but the text as such (*vāc*) and the understanding of its significance (*artha-*).

Later on, and especially in the medieval period of Indian history, reading a text even without understanding, was considered to be sufficient and as such was supposed to bring a sacrificial gift. This gradation from the so called pure ritualism via symbolism to the textual ritualism covers all possible approaches to the text in general.

Let us now have a look into the general structure and principles of the Vedic ritual. The Aitareya Brahmana 25.7 (AitBr) depicts the structure of the Vedic ritual, agni-hotra, as consisting of three priests: *hotar*, *adhvaryu* and *udgatar*, reciting texts from Rik, Yajur and Sama Vedas, corresponding to the three regions: earth, air, and heaven, respectively. The fourth priest is *brahman*, who is silent during the performance, observing all the actions as well as listening to all the words uttered by the other three priests. His function is to be a witness of all that is happening and in case of any imperfection in action or in speech he has to correct it in his mind (*prāyaścitta-*).

When the performance of the sacrifice is over, and the *dakṣiṇa-*, the money and wealth is distributed among the priests, half of it is given to the three priests: *hotar*, *adhvaryu* and *udgatar*, and the other half to *brahman* alone.

So the one who does practically nothing - says AitBr in dispute - gets the same dakshina as the other three who recited and performed all the sacrifice. Why is it so?

The AitBr 25, 8-9 text then explains that the first three priests represent Vāc, Speech, belonging to the Earth, (of which, according to other Vedic texts, Agni is the essence (cp: ChUp etc.), while *brahman* represents Manas, Mind, belonging to the Heaven, of which Surya is the essence. And by this Speech and Mind, earth and heaven, they create the space in between: Prana, Life-Energy, belonging to Antariksha, the middle world, of which Vayu is the essence. Therefore, says the text, this Vayu Pavamana is the Yajna.

This general scheme of the ritual is very important for us if we want to better understand its symbolism. Agni, the lower pole, and Surya, the upper pole, create the energetic field in between which is Vayu, or the Yajna.

The same ritualistic structure is also maintained in Svadhyaya, where the reader of the text, which he knows perfectly by heart, utters it, so to say, in mechanical way, while the other part of his: manas, mind, is observing the flow of the words and thus, being detached from the active formulation of the text, becomes simply a witness of the text - like the *brahman* priest. When these conditions of the sacrificial act are maintained the reader himself becomes an altar, or to be more precise, his life-energy Prana. In this way he unites and becomes one with all the levels: heaven (mind), earth (word) and space in-between (breath).

In Taittiriya Aranyaka 1.1.1,2 (TaitAr) Rishi exclaims:

*āpam āpām apah sarvāḥ asmād asmād ito 'mutaḥ
agnir vāyuś ca sūryaś ca saha sañcaskara-rddhiyā*

“I have gathered all nourishing powers of Consciousness, from here, from there and from beyond;

Agni and Vayu and Surya! I have combined for the Growth!”

This union of all the levels of existence from below and from above is the key to the concept of sacrifice. It is to be done for the Universal and the Individual Growth, the condition of which is a simultaneous and united existence with Agni, Vayu and Surya.

tasmāt svādhyāyo 'dhyetavyo yam kratum adhīte

tena tenāsyēṣṭam bhavaty agner vāyor ādityasya sāyujyam gacchati

“Therefore Svadhyaya should be learned, for whatever he reads about any action, by that (reading) he fulfills the desired, (and) moves towards union with Agni, Vayu and Aditya.”

There is an interesting comment of Sayana to these verses:

trividho hi yāgaḥ kāyiko vāciko mānasaśceti, tatrādhyetur vācikasya niṣpattau nāstyeva vivādaḥ,

yady adhyetārtham api jānāti tadādhyayanakāle tadanusamdhānān mānaso 'pi niṣpadyate, kāyikaś cennāsti māstu nāma.., yasya tvadhikāraḥ kāyikam apyasau karotv-itarasya tu vācikenaiiva tatphalam labhyate, tasmād ayam adhyetāgnyādīnām sāyujyam gacchati

“The Sacrifice is of three kinds: by bodily action, by word and by mind. There is no discussion how it is done by the word, (for it is understood). But when the reader knows also the meaning (of the words) then in the moment of reading them, the mental kind of sacrifice is following automatically, and even if there is not bodily action occurring in the performance, it does not matter at all, .. only the one, who by prescription was to perform the bodily part of the sacrifice should do it, otherwise any other one gains the same fruit of the sacrifice by reciting the text of it. Thus the reader moves towards the union with Agni, Vayu and Aditya.”

Svadhyaya is called in the texts brahma-yajña. It is distinguished from other kinds of sacrifice. TaitAr 2.10 says that there are five great sacrifices - to gods, to ancestors, to spirits, to men and to Brahman (*pañca vā ete mahāyajñāḥ deva-yajñāḥ pitṛ-yajñāḥ bhūta-yajño manuṣya-yajño brahma-yajña iti*). And it continues - “when one puts into the fire only fuel, it is already a **deva-yajña**; when one offers to the ancestors only water, exclaiming Svadha, it is already a **pitṛ-yajña**; when one makes even a little offering from his food to the spirits, then it is already a **bhūtayajña**; when one gives food to brahmanas, then it is already a **manuṣya-yajña**; but when one reads for oneself even one verse from Rigveda, Yajurveda or Samaveda, then the **brahma-yajña** is performed.”

Svadhya is depicted in the myth of TaitAr 2.9 as a sacrificial act done by Rishis, who by desiring *yajña*- received it from Brahma Svayambhu. And by performing it they made gods again sinless (*apahata-pāpmāṇaḥ*), who thus went back to heaven (*svargam lokam āyan*) and the Rishis themselves joined the abode of Brahman (*brahmaṇaḥ sāyujyam ṛṣayo 'gacchan*).

In order to explain better why the Svadhya has such power, the TaitAr 2.11 quotes the texts from Rig Veda:

*ṛco akṣare parame vyoman yasmin devā adhi viśve niṣedur
yas tan na veda kim ṛcā kariṣyati ya it tad vidus ta ime samāsata iti*

“The sacred verses are in the highest heaven, where all gods abide.

He, who does not know that, what is he going to do with that sacred Speech? Those, indeed, who know that, they are perfectly united!”

Later the text says: *yāvatīr vai devatāḥ tāḥ sarvā vedavidī brāhmaṇe vasanti*, “All gods as they are, live in the brahman, who knows Vedas!” (TaitAr 2.15.1). Sayana comments that they live in man, brahman, because of him reciting and understanding the Vedic mantras, (*pāṭhato 'rthataśca*). And since the mantras exist in the Speech of the reader and in the Mind of the knower, (*mantrāḥ sarve 'dhyetur vāci veditur manasi ca vartante*), all gods therefore also live in him, procreated, or more precisely, given a life-space by those mantras (*ekaikasmin mantra ekaiko devaḥ pratipādyate*).

Here we find, I think, the final explanation of the *svādhyāya*-. It is to give a space in ones own consciousness for the forces, which have to come through the process of sounding the text connected with them, and by observing its meaning silently, giving it a possibility to be fully expressed, in terms of the experience.

Sri Aurobindo on Sanskrit.

The scientific way of dealing with a subject today (not only in the field of linguistics) is to approach it in the most objective way, as something purely independent, existing by itself and as it is.

“... the true method of Science – says Sri Aurobindo, - is to go back to the origins, the embryology, the elements and more obscure processes of things. From the obvious only the obvious and superficial results. The profundities of things, their real truth, can best be discovered by penetration into the hidden things that the surface of phenomena conceals, into that past development of which the finished forms present only secret and dispersed indications or into the possibilities from which the actualities we see are only a narrow selection. A similar method applied to the earlier forms of human speech can alone give us a real Science of Language.”

*“Law and process must have governed the origins and developments of language. Given the necessary clue and sufficient data, they must be discoverable. **It seems to me that in the Sanskrit language the clue can be found, the data lie ready for investigation.**” (SV47)*

Sri Aurobindo gives us a key to studying language from a different point of view. He started it in his work “The Origins of Aryan Speech”. Although he did not complete it, he has given us the principles and direction for farther studies:

“... we can find an equal regularity, an equal reign of fixed process on the psychological side, in the determining of the relation of particular sense to particular sound.”

The four first simple vowels a, i, u, ṛ of Sanskrit language: *“indicate the idea of being, existence...”*

(1) A in its short form indicates being in its simplicity without any farther idea of modification or quality, mere or initial being, creative of space;

(2) i an intense state of existence, being narrowed, forceful and insistent, tending to a goal, seeking to occupy space;

(3) u a wide, extended but not diffused state of existence, being medial and firmly occupant of space;

(4) ṛ a vibrant state of existence, pulsing in space, being active about a point, within a limit.”¹

Similarly the simple sound a was seen by the Vedantic and Tantric traditions as an everlasting sound-basis for all the other sounds, which were considered to be only modifications upon it. These modifications formed an “Alphabet”, not in an abstract way as it happened with Western alphabets, which unconsciously adopted it from Chaldean occult tradition of the Middle East

¹ Sri Aurobindo, Archives and Research, December 1978, v.2, No 2, pp. 155-156

already unknown to them, but as a system of logical modulations of consciously articulated modes of the Meaning of One.

Thus the sound a represented the basic utterance, pronounced without any special articulation. Psychologically it could be seen as an underlying substance of speech, from which all other sounds were derived with the help of articulation. When modified by the instruments of articulation this pure sound, symbolised by "a", signifying "existence as it is", could come to carry other meanings, as for instance: "intense state of existence" (sound i) or "extended state of existence" (sound u) or "vibrant state of existence" (sound ṛ) and so on. Psychologically one could perceive this process as an attempt to articulate a specific sense-meaning through the given apparatus of articulation.

If the apparatus were different (non-human) than the sounds would also differ. In other words, specific sounds are only representatives of a specific articulation, or better of a living and conscious attempt to articulate a certain meaning. We are tempted to say that it is not really the sounds which are important, but the conscious effort to articulate a particular meaning. And because it corresponds with the human vocal apparatus - which is fixed, the significance of the sound-values must also be fixed, and can therefore be systematised and studied².

Sanskrit is the only language which has preserved its own original and complete system of etymons, simple sound-ideas, roots. Therefore it does not require any other language to explain its derivations, for all the evidence is contained in its own basic system, and refers to it alone. This system is based on the interrelation of meaning with sound.

"The Rishis' use of language was governed by this ancient psychology of the Word. When in English we use the word "wolf" or "cow", we mean by it simply the animal designated; we are not conscious of any reason why we should use that particular sound for the idea except the immemorial custom of the language; and we cannot use it for any other sense or purpose except by an artificial device of style. But for the Vedic Rishi vṛka meant the tearer and, therefore among other applications of the sense, a wolf; dhenu meant the fosterer, nourisher, and therefore a cow. But the original and general predominates, the derived and particular is secondary." (SV51-52).

Here the difference between the etymological and contextual or conventional meaning has to be mentioned. The word vṛka- is derived from the root vṛj , or as some propose from vraśc , to tear, to break asunder, which is a member

² The infinite variability of individual vocal apparatuses, and all that they express of the infinite variability of individual consciousness, and of states of consciousness at the instant of utterance is a proof that we get meaning not only through the means of language, but through the means of articulation also. This is that which makes the human voice the most expressive of all the means of expression of consciousness.

of a simple वृ-root family. So to really grasp the etymological meaning of the root वृ- one has to become aware of the significance of simple u and र, and moreover about their significance in all other roots. That is what we mean when we speak about the system of etymons, which can be clearly perceived only in its completeness. It requires a perfect transparency of the mind. As Sri Aurobindo writes in his article “Philological Method of the Veda”:

“The Vedic Sanskrit ... abounds in a variety of forms and inflexions; it is fluid and vague, yet richly subtle in its use of cases and tenses. And on its psychological side it has not yet crystallized, is not entirely hardened into the rigid forms of intellectual precision. The word for the Vedic Rishi is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative, formative. It is not yet a conventional symbol for an idea, but itself the parent and former of ideas. It carries within it the memory of its roots, is still conscient of its own history.”
(SV51)

In Indian grammatical tradition the alphabet is called varṇa-mālā-, a garland of colours, figures or qualities, or sometimes akṣara-mālā-, a garland of syllables, where akṣara- means unalterable or imperishable - something, so to say, basic. So the alphabet is a garland of basics, which are the simplest elements or colours of a Speech with which an Artist may paint on a sheet of Reality.

To start with, we may assume that this varnamala could be the basic etymological system itself - which could be proved only if the meanings of the corresponding roots (in sound quality) are found to be changing systematically. Thus we presuppose that all akṣaras were originally basic roots, some of which are still available in Sanskrit and some of which have disappeared, leaving only members of their families to remind us about their past existence, or we could say, about their hidden existence, for these sound-values are in fact imperishable³.

Here we should point out that in our studies we have to ignore, for the time being, the whole range of scientific achievements in the field of Linguistics, such as, for instance, the distinction between phoneme and morpheme, between phonemic, phonetic or phonic aspects of speech etc. We have a reason to do so, for in the Vedic language words were functioning differently, pointing to the significance of the etymon and the system of etymons rather than to the outer application, and thus each word “... had a general character or quality (guṇa), which was capable of a great number of applications and therefore of a great number of possible significances. And

this guṇa and its results it shared with many kindred sounds. At first, therefore, word-clans, word-families started life on the communal system with a common stock of possible and realised significances and a common right to all of them; their individuality lay rather in shades of expression of the same ideas than in any exclusive right to the expression of a single idea. ...The principle of partition was at first fluid, then increased in rigidity, until word-families and finally single words were able to start life on their own account.... For in the first state of language the word is as living or even a more living force than idea; sound determines sense. In its last state the position have been reversed: the idea becomes all-important, the sound secondary.” (ibid. p.49).

So, words in Vedic Sanskrit, far from simply symbolising objects and the relationships between them, as they mainly seem to do in modern languages, derived from their own system of seed-ideas, and revealed quality, power and state of existence within their own system of Meaning. In the very source they were not to⁴ imitate or project outer reality, as words are supposed to do, by modern linguists, but to reveal the inner reality of the Word, and thus to create a new outer reality. Here we have to distinguish between phonemes and sounds as representatives of their original vibration. A phoneme is only a short-cut to the original sound, made by the mind for its own use and mastery over the word. But this short-cut retains some quality of the original vibration which lies behind the phoneme. It is inherent in a particular psychological characteristic or state of a speaker, to sound the vibration or articulate a particular meaning by this vibration. (See Appendix)

⁴ This is just a description of how sounds were originally used by an evolving humanity. The vast majority, who used words in this way, must have been as unaware of the psychological process they were involved in as most of us are today in using language.

The Appendix

of some important quotations from the RV on the Word.

Secret (speech): guhya-, guhā, gūḍha-, apīcya-, pratīcya-, niṅya-,

Speech: uktha-, śāstra-, stoma-, gir, vāk, vāṇi-, brahman, mantra-, nāman
(apīcyam nāma, gūḍham nāma, etc);

1) Dirghatamas Aucathyaḥ RV 1.164.

ऋचो अक्षरं परमे व्योमन् यस्मिन्देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः

यस्तन्न वेदु किमुचा करिष्यति य इत्तद्विदुस्त इमे समासते । ३९

गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी ।

अष्टापदी नवपदी बभ्रुवृषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन् ४१

तस्याः समुद्रा अधि वि क्षरन्ति तेन जीवन्ति प्रदिशश्चतस्रः ।

ततः क्षरत्यक्षरं तद्विश्वमुप जीवति ४२

चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः ।

गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति तुरीयं वाचो मनुष्या वदन्ति ४५

इन्द्रं मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।

एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ४६

2) Hymn to Vac RV 10.125

अहं रुद्रेभिर्वसुभिश्चराम्यहमादित्यैरुत विश्वदेवैः ।

अहं मित्रावरुणोभा बिभर्म्यहमिन्द्राग्नी अहमश्विनोभा १

अहं सोममाहनसं बिभर्म्यहं त्वष्टारमुत पूषणं भगम् ।

अहं दधामि द्रविणं हविष्मते सुप्राव्येऽ यजमानाय सुन्वते २

अहं राष्ट्री सङ्गमनी वसूनां चिकितुषी प्रथमा यज्ञियानाम् ।

तां मा देवा व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा भूरिस्थात्रां भूर्यावेशयन्तीम् ३

मया सो अन्नमत्ति यो विपश्यति यः प्राणिति य ईं शृणोत्युम् ।

अमन्तवो मां त उप क्षियन्ति श्रुधि श्रुत श्रद्धिवं तै वदामि ४

अहमेव स्वयमिदं वदामि जुष्टं देवेभिरुत मानुषेभिः ।

यं कामये तंतमुग्रं कृणोमि तं ब्रह्माणं तमृषिं तं सुमेधाम् ५

अहं रुद्राय धनुरा तनोमि ब्रह्मद्विषे शरवे हन्त्वा उ ।

अहं जनाय समदं कृणोम्यहं द्यावापृथिवी आ विवेश	६
अहं सुवे पितरमस्य मूर्धन् मम योनिरप्स्वश्रुन्तः समुद्रे ।	
ततो वि तिष्ठे भुवनानु विश्वोतामूं द्यां वर्ष्मणोप स्पृशामि	७
अहमेव वात इव प्र वाम्यारम्भमाणा भुवनानि विश्वा ।	
पुरो दिवा पर एना पृथिव्यैतावती महिना सं बभूव	८

3) Virūpa Āṅgīrasa RV 8. 75.6:

तस्मै नूनमभिद्यवे वाचा विरूप नित्यया । वृष्णे चोदस्व सुष्टुतिम्

4) IV. 3.16 Vāmadevo Gautamaḥ/ Agniḥ :

एता विश्वा विदुषे तुभ्यं वेधो नीथान्यग्ने निण्या वचांसि ।

निवचना कवये काव्यान्यशंसिषं मतिभिर्विप्र उक्थैः

१६

5) II 35.11, Gr̥tsamada Bhārgavaḥ Shaunakaḥ/ Apāṁnapāt :

तदस्यानीकमुत चारु नामापीच्यं वर्धते नसुरपाम् ।

6) VIII 41.5, Nābhākaḥ Kāṇvaḥ/ Varuṇaḥ:

यो धर्ता भुवनानां य उस्त्राणामपीच्या ३ वेदु नामानि गुह्या ।

स कविः काव्या पुरु रूपं द्यौरिव पुष्यति नभन्तामन्यके समे

५

7) VIII 11.5, Vatsaḥ Kāṇvaḥ/ Agniḥ :

मर्ता अमर्त्यस्य ते भूरि नाम मनामहे । विप्रासो जातवेदसः

५

8) IX.75.2, Kaviḥ Bhārgavaḥ/ Somaḥ :

ऋतस्य जिह्वा पवते मधु प्रियं वा पतिर्धिया अस्या अदाभ्यः ।

दधाति पुत्रः पित्रोरपीच्यं १ नाम तृतीयमधि रोचने दिवः

२

9) Pataṅga Prājāpatya 10.177:

पतङ्गमसुरस्य मायया हृदा पश्यन्ति मनसा विपश्चितः ।

समुद्रे अन्तः कवयो वि चक्षते मरीचीनां पदमिच्छन्ति वेधसः

१

पतङ्गो वाचं मनसा बिभर्ति तां गन्धर्वोऽवदुर्भै अन्तः ।

तां द्योतमानां स्वर्यं मनीषामृतस्य पदे कवयो नि पान्ति

२

अपश्यं गोपामनिपद्यमानमा च परा च पृथिभिश्चरन्तम् ।

स सध्रीचीः स विषूचीर्वसान् आ वरीवर्ति भुवनेष्वन्तः ३

Commentary of Sayana on RV10.177:

पतङ्गो वाचं मनसा स्वकीयेन प्राणिनां वाचं विभर्ति धारयति अन्तर्यामिरूपेण वाचं प्रेरयतीत्यर्थः । तामादित्यप्रेरितां वाचं गर्भे अन्तः शरीरस्य मध्ये गन्धर्वनामको वायुरवदुच्चारितां द्योतमानां प्रकाशमानां स्वयं स्वर्गस्य हेतुभूतां मनीषां मनस ईशित्रीमाह्लादकरीमित्यर्थः । तादृशीं वाचं कवयः शास्त्राभिज्ञा ऋतस्य पदे सत्यस्य परब्रह्मणः स्थाने निपान्ति नितरां पालयन्ति ।

10) Nemaḥ Bhārgavaḥ, RV 8.100.11:

यद्वाग्वदन्त्यविचेतनानि राष्ट्री देवानां निषसाद मन्द्रा ।
 चतस्र ऊर्जं दुदुहे पयांसि क्व स्विदस्याः परमं जगाम १०
 देवीं वाचमजनयन्त देवास्तां विश्वरूपाः पशवो वदन्ति ।
 सा नो मन्द्रेषमूर्जं दुहाना धेनुर्वागस्मानुप सुष्टुतैतु ११

11) RV 10.71. Bṛhaspatiḥ Āngirasah/ Jñānam/:

बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं यत् प्रैरत नामधेयं दधानाः ।
 यदेषां श्रेष्ठं यदरिप्रमासीत् प्रेणा तदेषां निहितं गुहाविः १
 सुमिव तितउना पुनन्तो यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचमक्रत ।
 अत्रा सखायः सख्यानि जानते भद्रैषां लक्ष्मीर्निहिताधि वाचि २
 यज्ञेन वाचः पदुवीयमायन् तामन्वविन्दुन्नुषिषु प्रविष्टाम् ।
 तामाभृत्या व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा तां सप्त रेभा अभि सं नवन्ते ३
 उत त्वः पश्यन् न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः शृण्वन् न शृणोत्येनाम् ।
 उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं १ वि सस्त्रे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ४
 उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नैनं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु ।
 अधेन्वा चरति माययैष वाचं शुश्रुवां अफलामपुष्पाम् ५
 यस्तित्याज सचिविदुं सखायं न तस्य वाच्यपि भागो अस्ति ।
 यदीं शृणोत्यलकं शृणोति नहि प्रवेद सुकृतस्य पन्थाम् ६
 अक्षण्वन्तः कर्णवन्तः सखायो मनोज्वेष्वसमा बभूवुः ।
 आदघ्नास उपकक्षास उ त्वे हदा इव स्नात्वा उ त्वे ददृश्रे ७

हदा तष्टेषु मनसो ज्वेषु यद् ब्राह्मणाः संयजन्ते सखायः ।

अम्नाह त्वं वि जहुर्वेद्याभिरोहब्रह्माणो वि चरन्त्यु त्वे ८

इमे ये नार्वाँ न परश्चरन्ति न ब्राह्मणासो न सुतेकरासः ।	
त एते वाचमभिपद्य पापया सिरीस्तन्त्रं तन्वते अप्रजज्ञयः	९
सर्वे नन्दन्ति यशसागतेन सभासाहेन सख्या सखायः ।	
क्लिब्षस्पृत् पितुषणिर्ह्येषामरं हितो भवति वाजिनाय	१०
ऋचां त्वः पोषमास्ते पुपुष्वान् गायत्रं त्वो गायति शक्वरीषु ।	
ब्रह्मा त्वो वदति जातविद्यां यज्ञस्य मात्रां वि मिमीत उ त्वः	११

12) T.Ar. 2.15.1:

यावतीर्वे देवतास्ताः सर्वा वेदविदि ब्राह्मणे वसन्ति ॥

13) T.Ar. 2.15.1:

तस्मात्स्वाध्यायो ऽध्यैतव्यो यं यं क्रतुमधीते तेन तेनास्येष्टं
भवत्यग्नेर्वायोरदित्यस्य सायुज्यं गच्छति ॥

14) RV 1.164.35 :

ब्रह्मायं वाचः परमं व्योम ॥ ३५