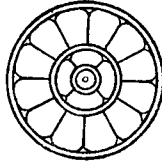


MOTHER INDIA

OCTOBER 1956

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:

A new light breaks upon the earth,

A new world is born.

The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

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Vol. VIII

No. 9

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

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NOTE

THE NEXT ISSUE OF "MOTHER INDIA" WILL BE A JOINT ONE OF
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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(Based on the Mother's Talks to the Children of the Ashram)

August 15, 1956

SRI AUROBINDO, in *The Life Divine*, has told us that there are certain signs of a progressive evolution. An evolution tends naturally towards a goal, and if it is a progressive evolution, we can further think that all is an expression of the Divine Grace and Will, but at the same time that all is not as it should be. Otherwise there would be no movement.

And here we face a problem. The question that I have been asked is: "Now that the Supermind has manifested on the earth, it should follow that the Divine Grace would be all-powerful. Is this correct?"

The Divine Grace has always been all-powerful. And yet, if we compare the world as it is to the world more or less ideal such as we can conceive of when we get out of our ignorant consciousness and which we enter in the consciousness called divine, we see that it is not always going on very well. How does this happen if the Grace is all-powerful?

It would seem that the vision of what ought to be precedes considerably the carrying out of it—and it is this that gives rise to the whole problem. One sees in advance or on high the realisation, perhaps not step by step but still that which will at last come about some day; and then when one sees it one says to oneself: "This conception is more divine than what is accomplished, so if the Grace is all-powerful it ought to get realised instantaneously."

I am in the mood to look at the problem as it seems to me a human mind would pose it to itself, a sort of approach in order to make me understand. What is it that we call an all-powerful Grace? I do not want to speak of the ideas of an ordinary mind for which the all-powerful Grace is that which at once accomplishes what this mind desires or what it sees to be good; I shall keep aside such an infantile case. But when we admit a deeper higher vision, a kind of inner perception of an ideal world where things that are very shocking to us disappear, then we are truly face to face with a problem which seems insoluble.

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This translates itself for very ordinary minds in an over-simple and too childish way: either the Divine Will is for us something inconceivable but almost monstrous if it admits things as they are, if it wishes for things to be as they are—or else the Grace is impotent.

I am warning you, in order to put you on your guard against the trap, that this is a great argument of the Adversary. He uses it to trouble the mind, to incite revolt. But it is very well set as a trap.

Now come those who tell you: "It is because you are in ignorance that you see like this; change your consciousness, get into rapport with the Divine Consciousness and you will see in another fashion." It is perfectly correct. I have always said and I repeat that if you come out of the ignorance and if you enter into union however little with the Divine Reality, you live an ecstatic life in which all is marvellous and sublime and in which the Grace manifests itself in everything. As a result you have resolved the problem for yourself, on condition that you are able to remain in such a state perpetually. That, of course, is far from easy.

Yet it is possible. But it pulls you out of the world, it stops you from sharing in the world's life, and, above all, if everything has to be changed in this manner, I think that an eternity would not suffice for all the elements of the world to be transformed.

And the problem still stays. No matter in what way, no matter what path you take, it stays for ever.

But there is a solution. Pay attention to it, we shall speak of it again some other time. I would wish you to make an effort, because that is healthy, because here is a conflict of the human consciousness which presents itself constantly, a conflict which serves as a base to all oppositions *vis-à-vis* concrete work, a conflict which makes people, even the most enlightened ones in this domain, confound always the spiritual life with an annihilation of the physical world so that for them it is the sole means of escape: "Let us escape the material reality and we shall escape the problem, for in order to get into a state where the problem ceases we must get out of life."

(After returning to the Ashram)

THE MOTHER : I have given a solution, I gave it twice during the class, without speaking.

PAVITRA : Has it something to do with the connection between the feast of the Assumption (in the Catholic Church) and the birthday of Sri Aurobindo—both of which fall on August 15?

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THE MOTHER : Yes. And Sri Aurobindo himself has said it also. The Assumption of the Virgin Mary is the divinisation of Matter. And that is the object of the final Avatar.

September 5, 1956

Somebody has asked me : What will be the effect of the Supermind upon the earth ? Probably one of the first effects will be to make us see earthly things in just the way I am going to tell you. Before the effects of the supramental manifestation become visible and tangible, perceptible to the whole world, thousands of years have perhaps to pass. But I suppose such a prospect is troublesome to the human consciousness, the sense of its short duration and the kind of impatience which this sense gives. There is also the question whether it will take long for the Supermind involved in material nature to emerge into the outer consciousness and have visible results. All depends on the state of consciousness in which one answers. Evidently for the human mind the period will be long enough. For another consciousness the process will be relatively rapid. And for still another, the thing is already done. Yes, already done, but in order to begin seeing it one must enter into a condition of consciousness different from the ordinary physical.

Sri Aurobindo has spoken of the true mental, the true vital and the true or subtle physical and he has said that they coexist with the ordinary mental, vital and physical being and that in certain conditions you can enter into contact with them. And then you start understanding the difference between what is truly there and the appearance of things.

Well, for a developed consciousness, the Supermind is already realised somewhere in the domain of the subtle physical, it is already existent and visible and concrete, already expressing itself in forms and in activities. When one gets into rapport with that consciousness and lives in its vision, one has a very strong impression that it would suffice for condensing, so to speak, this world and make it visible to all. What, therefore, is interesting is to develop this inner perception which would put you in touch with the supramental truth that is already manifested and that is veiled from you by only the lack of appropriate organs for entering into relation with it.

It could be that those who are conscious in their dreams would have dreams of a new kind which would connect them with the new world, for it is within reach of the subtle physical of all who have the corresponding organs in themselves. And inevitably there is a subtle influence of that physicality on external matter if one is ready to receive the impressions and admit them into one's consciousness.

THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XXI

THE SONS OF DARKNESS

WE have seen, not once but repeatedly, that it is impossible to read into the story of the Angirasas, Indra and Sarama, the cave of the Panis and the conquest of the Dawn, the Sun and the Cows an account of a political and military struggle between Aryan invaders and Dravidian cave-dwellers. It is a struggle between the seekers of Light and the powers of Darkness; the cows are the illuminations of the Sun and the Dawn, they cannot be physical cows; the wide fear-free field of the Cows won by Indra for the Aryans is the wide world of Swar, the world of the solar Illumination, the threefold luminous regions of Heaven. Therefore equally the Panis must be taken as powers of the cave of Darkness. It is quite true that the Panis are Dasyus or Dāsas; they are spoken of constantly by that name, they are described as the Dāsa Varna as opposed to the Arya Varna, and *varṇa*, colour, is the word used for caste or class in the Brahmanas and later writings, although it does not therefore follow that it has that sense in the Rig-veda. The Dasyus are the haters of the sacred word; they are those who give not to the gods the gift or the holy wine, who keep their wealth of cows and horses and other treasure for themselves and do not give them to the seers; they are those who do not the sacrifice. We may, if we like, suppose that there was a struggle between two different cults in India and that the Rishis took their images from the physical struggle between the human representatives of these cults and applied them to the spiritual conflict, just as they employed the other details of their physical life to symbolise the spiritual sacrifice, the spiritual wealth, the spiritual battle and journey. But it is perfectly certain that in the Rig-veda at least it is the spiritual conflict and victory, not the physical battle and plunder of which they are speaking.

It is either an uncritical or a disingenuous method to take isolated passages and give them a particular sense which will do well enough there only while

ignoring the numerous other passages in which that sense is patently inapplicable. We must take as a whole all the references in the Veda to the Panis, their wealth, their characteristics, the victory of the Gods, the seers and the Aryans over them and adopt uniformly that conclusion which arises from all the passages thus taken together. When we follow this method we find that in many of these passages the idea of the Panis as human beings is absolutely impossible and that they are powers either of physical or of spiritual darkness; in others that they cannot at all be powers of physical darkness, but may well be either human enemies of the god-seekers and sacrificers or else enemies of the spiritual Light; in yet others that they cannot be either human enemies or enemies of the physical Light, but are certainly the enemies of the spiritual Light, the Truth and the Thought. From these data there can be only one conclusion, that they are always and only enemies of the spiritual Light.

We may take as the master-clue to the general character of these Dasyus the Rik V. 14-4, "Agni born shone out slaying the Dasyus, the darkness by the Light, he found the Cows, the Waters, Swar," *agnir jāto arocata, ghnan dasyūn jyotiṣā tamaḥ, avindad gā apaḥ svaḥ*. There are two great divisions of the Dasyus, the Panis who intercept both the cows and the waters but are especially associated with the refusal of the cows, the Vritras who intercept the waters and the light, but are especially associated with the withholding of the waters; all Dasyus without exception stand in the way of the ascent to Swar and oppose the acquisition of the wealth by the Aryan seers. The refusal of the light is their opposition to the vision of Swar, *svardṛś*, and the vision of the sun, to the supreme vision of knowledge, *upamā ketuḥ* (V. 34-9); the refusal of the waters is their opposition to the abundant movement of Swar, *svarvatir apaḥ*, the movement or streamings of the Truth, *ṛtasya preṣā, ṛtasya dhārāḥ*; the opposition to the wealth-acquisition is their refusal of the abundant substance of Swar, *vasu, dhana, vāja, hiraṇya*, that great wealth which is found in the sun and in the waters, *apsu sūrye mahad dhanam* (VIII. 68-9). Still since the whole struggle is between the Light and the Darkness, the Truth and the Falsehood, the divine Maya and the undivine, all the Dasyus alike are here identified with the Darkness; and it is by the birth and shining of Agni that the Light is created with which he slays the Dasyus and the Darkness. The historical interpretation will not do at all here, though the naturalistic may pass if we isolate the passage and suppose the lighting of the sacrificial fire to be the cause of the daily sunrise; but we have to judge from a comparative study of the Veda and not on the strength of isolated passages.

The opposition between the Aryans and the Panis or Dasyus is brought out in another hymn (34) of the fifth Mandala and in III. 34, we have the expression *ārya varṇa*. We must remember that the Dasyus have been identified

with the Darkness; therefore the Aryans must be connected with the Light and we actually find that the light of the Sun is called in the Veda the Aryan Light in contradistinction evidently to the Dāsa Darkness. Vasishtha also speaks of the three Aryan peoples who are *jyotiragrāh*, led by the light, having the light in their front (VII. 33-7). The Aryan-Dasyu question can only be adequately treated by an exhaustive discussion in which all the relevant passages are scrutinised and the difficulties faced, but for my present purpose this is a sufficient starting-point. We must remember also that we have in the Veda the expressions *ṛtam jyotiḥ*, *hiranyam jyotiḥ*, the true light, the golden light, which give us an additional clue. Now these three epithets of the solar light, *ārya*, *ṛta*, *hiranya* are, I suggest, mutually illuminative and almost equivalent. The Sun is the Lord of Truth, therefore its light is the *ṛtam jyotiḥ*; this light of truth is that which the Aryan, god or mortal, possesses, and which constitutes his Arya-hood; again the epithet golden is constantly applied to the Sun and gold is in Veda probably the symbol of the substance of the truth, for its substance is the light which is the golden wealth found in Surya and in the waters of Swar, *apsu sūrye*,—therefore we have the epithet *hiranyam jyotiḥ*. This golden or shining light is the hue, *varṇa*, of the truth; it is also the hue of the thoughts full of that illumination won by the Aryan, the cows who are bright in colour, *śukra*, *śveta*, the colour of Light; while the Dasyu, being a power of darkness, is black in hue. I suggest that the brightness of the light of the truth, *jyotiḥ āryam* (X. 43-4), is the Arya *varṇa*, the hue of these Aryans who are *jyotiragrāh*; the darkness of the night of the ignorance is the hue of the Panis, the Dāsa *varṇa*. In this way *varṇa* would come to mean almost the nature or else all those of that particular nature, the colour being the symbol of the nature; and that this idea was a current notion among the ancient Aryans seems to me to be shown by the later use of different colours to distinguish the four castes, white, red, yellow and black.

The passage in V. 34, runs as follows. "He (Indra) desires not to ascend by the five and by the ten; he cleaves not to him who gives not the Soma even though he grow and increase; he overcomes him or else he slays in his impetuous movement; he gives to the god-seeker for his enjoyment the pen full of the Cows. Cleaver (of the foe) in the battle-shock, firm holder of the discus (or the wheel), averse from him who gives not the Soma but increaser of the Soma-giver, terrible is Indra and the tamer of all; Aryan, he brings into utter subjection the Dasa. He comes driving this enjoyment of the Pani, robbing him of it, and he apportions entirely to the giver for his enjoyment the wealth rich in hero-powers (lit. in men, *sūnaram vasu*, *vīrā* and *ṛ* being often used synonymously); that man who makes wroth the strength of Indra is held back

manifoldly in a difficult journeying, (*durge¹ cana dhriyate ā puru*). When Maghavan has known in the shining cows the Two who are rich in wealth and have all forces, he growing in knowledge makes a third his helper and rushing impetuously looses upward the multitude of the cows (*gavyam*) by the help of his fighters." And the last Rik of the Sukta speaks of the Aryan (god or man) arriving at the highest knowledge-vision (*upamām ketum aryah*), the waters in their meeting nourishing him and his housing a strong and brilliant force of battle, *kṣatram amavat tveṣam* (Riks 5-9).

From what we already know of these symbols we can easily grasp the inner sense of the hymn. Indra, the Divine Mind-Power takes their secret wealth from the powers of the Ignorance with whom he refuses to ally himself even when they are rich and prosper, he gives the imprisoned herds of the illumined Dawn to the man of the sacrifice who desires the godheads. He is himself the Aryan who brings the life of the ignorance into complete subjection to the higher life so that it yields up to it all the wealth it holds. The use of the words *ārya* and *arya* to signify the gods, not only in this but in other passages, tends to show in itself that the opposition of Arya and Dasyu is not at all a national or tribal or merely human distinction, but has a deeper significance. The fighters are certainly the seven Angirasas; for they and not the Maruts, which is Sayana's interpretation of *satvabhūh*, are Indra's helpers in the release of the Cows. But the three persons whom Indra finds or comes to know by entering among the bright cows, by possessing the trooping illuminations of the Thought, are more difficult to fix. In all probability it is these three by whom the seven rays of the Angirasa-knowledge are raised to ten so that they pass successfully through the ten months and release the sun and the cows, for it is after finding or knowing the two and getting help of the third that Indra releases the cows of the Panis. They may also be connected with the symbolism of the three Aryan peoples led by the light and the three luminous worlds of Swar; for the attainment of the supreme knowledge-vision, *upamā ketuh*, is the final result of their action and this supreme knowledge is that which has the vision of Swar and stands in its three luminous worlds, *rocanām*, as we find in III. 2-14, *svardṛśam ketum divo rocanasthām uṣarbudham*, "the knowledge-vision that sees Swar, that stands in the shining worlds, that awakes in the dawn."

In III. 34, Vishwamitra gives us the expression *ārya varṇa* and at the same time the key to its psychological significance. Three verses of the hymn

¹ The Rishis pray always to the gods to make their path to the highest bliss easy of going and thornless, *suga*, *durga* is the opposite of the easy going, it is the path beset by manifold (*puru*) dangers and sufferings and difficulties

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(8-10) run as follows: “(They hymn) the supremely desirable, the ever over-coming, the giver of strength who wins possession of Swar and the divine waters; the thinkers have joy in the wake of Indra who takes possession of the earth and the heaven. Indra wins possession of the Steeds, wins the Sun, wins the Cow of the many enjoyments; he wins the golden enjoyment, having slain the Dasyus he fosters (or protects) the Aryan *varṇa*; Indra wins the herbs and the days, the trees and the mid-world; he pierces Vala and impels forward the speaker of the words; so he becomes the tamer of those who set against him their will in works, (*abhikratūnam*).” We have here the symbolic elements of all the wealth won by Indra for the Aryan, and it includes the Sun, the days, the earth, the heavens, the middle world, the horses, the growths of earth, herbs and trees (*vanaspatīn* in the double sense lords of the forest and lords of enjoyment); and we have as against Vala and his Dasyus the Aryan *varṇa*.

But in the verses that precede (4-6) we have already the word *varṇa* as the hue of the Aryan thoughts, the thoughts that are true and full of light. “Indra, Swar-conquering, bringing to birth the days assailed and conquered by the desirers (the Angirasas) these armies (of the Dasyus); he made to shine for man the knowledge-vision of the days (*ketum ahnām*), he found the Light for the vast enjoyment;...he made conscious in knowledge these thoughts for his adorer, he carried forward (beyond the obstruction of the Dasyus) this bright *varṇa* of these (thoughts), *acetayad dhiya imā jaritre, pra imam varṇam atīrac chukram āsam*. They set in action (or, praise) many great and perfect works of the great Indra; by his strength he crushes, in his overwhelming energy, by his workings of knowledge (*māyābhūḥ*) the crooked Dasyus.”

We find here the Vedic phrase *ketum ahnām*, the knowledge-vision of the days, by which is meant the light of the Sun of Truth that leads to the vast beatitude; for the “days” are those produced through Indra’s conquest of Swar for man following as we know upon his destruction of the Pani armies with the help of the Angirasas and the ascent of the Sun and the shining Cows. It is for man and as powers of man that all this is done by the gods, not on their own account since they possess already;—for him that as the *Nṛ*, the divine Man or Purusha, Indra holds many strengths of that manhood, *nṛvad... naryā purūṇi*; him he awakes to the knowledge of these thoughts which are symbolised as the shining cows released from the Panis; and the shining hue of these thoughts *śukram varṇam āsām*, is evidently the same as that *śukra* or *śveta* Aryan hue which is mentioned in verse 9. Indra carries forward or increases the “colour” of these thoughts beyond the opposition of the Panis, *pra varṇam atīrac chukram*; in doing so he slays the Dasyus and protects or fosters and increases the Aryan “colour”, *hatvī dasyūn pra āryam varṇam āvat*. Moreover these Dasyus are the crooked ones, *vṛjṇān*, and are conquered by

Indra's works or forms of knowledge, his "maya"s by which, as we are elsewhere told, he overcomes the opposing "maya"s of the Dasyus, Vritra or Vala. The straight and the crooked are constantly synonymous in Veda with the truth and the falsehood. Therefore it is clear that these Pani Dasyus are crooked powers of the falsehood and ignorance who set their false knowledge, their false strength, will and works against the true knowledge, the true strength, will and works of the gods and the Aryans. The triumph of the Light is the triumph of the divine knowledge of the Truth against the darkness of this false or demoniac knowledge; that victory is the ascent of the Sun, the birth of the Days, the advent of the Dawn, the release of the herds of the shining Rays and their mounting to the world of Light.

That the cows are the thoughts of the Truth we are told clearly enough in IX. III, a hymn to Soma. "By this brilliant light he, purifying himself, breaks through all hostile powers by his self-yoked horses, as if by the self-yoked horses of the Sun. He shines, a stream of the outpressed Soma, purifying himself, luminous, the brilliant One, when he encompasses all forms (of things) with the speakers of the Rik, with the seven-mouthed speakers of the Rik (the Angirasa powers). Thou, O Soma findest that wealth of the Panis; thou by the Mothers (the cows of the Panis, frequently so designated in other hymns) makest thyself bright in thy own home (Swar), by the thoughts of the Truth in thy home, *sam mātr̥bhiḥ marjayasi sva ā dame ṛtasya dhītibr dame*. As if the Sama (equal fulfilment, *samāne ūrve*, in the level wideness) of the higher world (*parāvataḥ*), is that (Swar) where the thoughts (of the Truth) take their delight. By those shining ones of the triple world (or triple elemental nature) he holds the wide manifestation (of knowledge), shining he holds the wide manifestation." We see that these cows of the Panis by whom Soma becomes clear and bright in his own home, the home of Agni and the other gods, which we know to be the vast Truth of Swar, *ṛtam bṛhat*, these shining cows who have in them the triple nature of the supreme world, *tridhātubhur aruṣibhur*, and by whom Soma holds the birth or wide manifestation of that Truth,¹ are the thoughts which realise the Truth. This Swar with its three shining worlds in whose wideness there is the equal fulfilment of the *tridhātu*, a phrase often used for the supreme triple principle forming the triune highest world, *tisraḥ parāvataḥ*, is elsewhere described as the wide and fear-free pasture in which the Cows range at will and take their delight (*raṇyanti*) and here too it is that region where

¹ *Vayaḥ*. cf VI. 21-2,3, where it is said that Indra who has the knowledge and who upholds our words and is by the words increased in the sacrifice, *indrām yo vidāno gīrvāhasam gīrbhur yajñavṛdham*, forms by the Sun into that which has manifestation of knowledge the darkness which had extended itself and in which there was no knowledge, *sa it tamo avayunam tatanvat sūryeṇa vāyunavac cakāra*.

the thoughts of the Truth take their delight, *yatra raṇanti dhītayaḥ*. And it is said in the next verse that the divine chariot of Soma follows, getting knowledge, the supreme direction and labours forward, having vision, by the rays, *pūrvam anu pradīsam yāti cekitat, sam raśmibhir yatate darśato ratho darvyo darśato rathaḥ*. This supreme direction is evidently that of the divine or vast Truth; these rays are evidently the rays of the Dawn or Sun of Truth; they are the cows concealed by the Panis, the illumined thoughts, *dhiyaḥ* of the bright hue, *ṛtasya dhītayaḥ*.

All the internal evidence of the Veda wherever this image of the Panis, the Cows, the Angirasas occur establishes invariably the same conclusion. The Panis are the withholders of the thoughts of the Truth, dwellers in the darkness without knowledge (*tamo avayunam*) which Indra and the Angirasas by the Word, by the Sun replace with Light to manifest in its stead the wideness of the Truth. It is not with physical weapons but with words that Indra fights the Panis (VI. 39-2), *paninr vacobhīr abhi yodhad indrah*. It will be enough to translate without comment the hymn in which this phrase occurs so as to show finally the nature of this symbolism. "Of this divine and rapturous seer (Soma), bearer of the sacrifice, this honeyed speaker with the illumined thought, O god, join to us, to the speaker of the word the impulses that are led by the cows of light (*iṣo goagrāḥ*). He it was who desired the shining ones (the cows, *usrāḥ*) all about the hill, truth-yoked, yoking his car with the thoughts of the Truth, *ṛtadhītubhīr ṛtayug yajānaḥ*; (then) Indra broke the unbroken hill-level of Vala, by the words he fought against the Panis. He it was (Soma) who as the Moon-Power (Indu) day and night and through the years made the lightless nights to shine out, and they held the vision of the days; he created the dawns pure in their birth. He it was, becoming luminous, who made full of light the lightless ones; he made the many (dawns) shine by the Truth, he went with horses yoked by the Truth, with the wheel that finds Swar, satisfying (with the wealth) the doer of works (VI. 39-1,2,3,4)." It is always the thought, the Truth, the word that is associated with the Cows of the Panis; by the words of Indra, the Divine Mind-Power, those who withhold the cows are conquered; that which was dark becomes light; the chariot drawn by the horses yoked by the Truth finds (by knowledge, *svarvidā nābhinā*) the luminous vastnesses of being and consciousness and delight now concealed from our vision. "By the *brahma* Indra pierces Vala, conceals the darkness, makes Swar visible (II. 24-3)", *ud gā ājad abhinad brahmaṇā valam agūhat tamo vyacaḥṣayat svaḥ*.

The whole Rig-veda is a triumph-chant of the powers of Light, and their ascent by the force and vision of the Truth to its possession in its source and seat where it is free from the attack of the falsehood. "By Truth the cows

THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

(illuminated thoughts) enter into the Truth; labouring towards the Truth the Truth one conquers; the aggressive force of the Truth seeks the cows of Light and goes breaking through (the enemy); for Truth the two wide ones (Heaven and Earth) become multitudinous and deep, for Truth the two supreme Mothers give their yield," *ṛtena gāva ṛtam ā viveśuḥ; ṛtam yemāna ṛtam id vanoti, ṛtasya śuśmas turayā u gavyuḥ; ṛtāya pṛthvī bahule gabhire, ṛtāya dhenū parama duhāte* (IV. 23-9, 10).

THE UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS OF ARJAVA
(J. A. CHADWICK)

(WITH SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS)

NOLI DELERE

SWIFTER than a shooting star
Fly my thoughts to you;
Liefier than a shipwrecked crew
My hopes would welcome sail of you
From afar.

Mirrors tarnish with long keeping,
Parchment scripts decay—
Yet there comes no single day
But some good-hap wishes stay
For your reaping.

Do not dream that Time can bury
Beneath ingratitude
Acts of kindness you have strewed
On former years;—O fain renewed,
That joyward ferry.

28-2-1934

WHEN THE SKY IS REAVED OF THE MOON

Now the moon has doffed her glory,
Wizened her light;
And a rune of star-writ story
Legions the night.
These orts and lustrous finders
Of yester guise
Show thought's intent that hinders
Oblivious skies

From the Dream's untimely ending,
From light's decay:
Love deems no loss from spending
Nor dims her ray
To hoard 'gainst equal scaling
In earthly mart;
Reward—and Dream's prevailing—
Of the unquenched heart.

15-3-1934 (*New Moon night*)

EASTER 1934

“Where are the pillared frontiers set
Of Pilate's Judgment Hall?”
Nor armed nor civil court has met
Beyond its wall.

“Lingers the Trial some few hours' span
By a Procurator's Leave?”
It waits, beyond the rule of man,
Far Kingdom's eve.

Courteous, that Mocked One overawed
A serf in the seat of power—
Dim heart with ruth and justice flawed
By Mammon's lower.

No answer but unflinching eyes
The friendless Vagrant gives—
But as each freedom-fighter dies
That Silence lives.

Sri Aurobindo's Comment:

(*Q. Would it be clear to the reader that reference was being made to those recently put to death under Fascism in Vienna, Berlin, etc.?*)

—How few the minutes quickened with your sight,
How dead the long years darkened by a lie;
O let them not be emptied of the might
Dropping with silver of hope from dream-lit Memory.

25-8-1934

Sri Aurobindo's Comment:

An exceedingly beautiful poem—especially the opening lines and the close, but the whole is fine.

MYTHOPOEIA

(DE SITTER'S UNIVERSE)

Images have mustered on the edge of Time;
Day has a sunward song and Night a moonlit rhyme:
Stars are a flight of arrows from the centaur's bow.

Mocking the massed impediment of world's-end cliff,
Mounting the last ionosphere, what hippogriff
Has found where winds of neverness and nowhere blow?

Argo with sail hoisted, leaving Now astern,
Gains the quiet reaches where Time's last beacons burn
And Space is one bright trophy, a blinding sunset fleece.

Perseus, whom winged sandals bear to the bourne of Space
Where Time has grown wave-weary; lit on Truth's prison-place,
Clove through the speech-made fetters, woke into timeless peace.

9-12-1934

Author's Note on line 2 in the second stanza: "Scientists distinguish above the storm-traversed lower atmosphere first the stratosphere (which balloons have reached), then the ozonosphere, and last the ionosphere; one may be grateful to them that this last name is rhythmically manageable."

Sri Aurobindo's Comment:

"It is a very fine poem—the three first stanzas seem to me especially original and powerful in their suggestion. But the whole is magnificent poetry with absolutely nothing ordinary anywhere."

FLYING SPARKS

1. IN the divine Consciousness Love is the Light-blossom of a blissful identity. In the phenomenal consciousness it is the magnet of a submerged identity.

*

2. The world is a mirror in which man sees himself.

*

3. Life is a laughter that rolls over the chasm between death and eternity.

*

4. Love is no bubbling jet of rose-water; it is a blazing fire that shoots its flame-shafts into the ruby deeps of the Infinite Blue.

*

5. Truth is the Light-rhythm of the Conscious-Force of the Divine.

*

6. Faith is the rose-blush of dawning knowledge.

*

7. Compassion is the star-smile of love beaming beneficently upon travailing mortality.

*

8. Generosity is the outflow of love in active sympathy.

*

9. Contentment is not stagnation in self-satisfaction, but a serene-smiling steadiness in self-advancement.

*

FLYING SPARKS

10. Eternity is caught in the rapturous moment of the Divine Love's immortalising kiss.

*

11. The hand of Fate writes but the history of the divine Will.

*

12. Man is great, not by what he has, but by what he is.

*

13. Not what you learn without, but what you learn within you, builds your destiny.

*

14. Reliance on the Divine is defiance of the devil.

*

15. When the devil preaches love of God, even the immortals quake with mortal fear.

*

16. The groans of outraged innocence are the knell of triumphant tyranny.

*

17. The clank of chains is music to the charmed captive, but hideous moan to the seeker of freedom.

*

18. Timidity nibbles at morsels while boldness revels in the feast of life.

*

19. Hunger not for the crumbs, but seek admission to the feast of the gods.

*

MOTHER INDIA

20. Divest yourself of everything, so that your Lover may invest you with His divine royalty.

*

21. Necessity often clothes the devil in angelic garb and presents him as a gentle guest.

*

22. Hero-worship is, in final truth, the worship of the eternal Hero in man.

*

23. Advise others on what you have already achieved and not on what you are attempting.

*

24. Habitual punctuality argues a disciplined physical being.

*

25. Think not of the past impurities of your life. Who ever looks back at the cesspools on his way after he has passed beyond them?

*

26. Beware of over-polite manners. It is sometimes the sleekest body that hides the deadliest fang.

*

27. Epigrams are candies that yield their sweetness more to those who suck them well than to those who gulp them down.

*

28. Indecision denotes division in the being and is the greatest hindrance to success.

*

29. The bleak wind of asceticism withers the blossoms of the human heart.

*

FLYING SPARKS

30. Your faculties are flowers which you must offer whole and blooming to the Master of your being.

*

31. Love even the most vicious of men, for love has the power to heal, to reclaim and redeem, while the breath of hatred only withers and blights. The hidden divinity even in the vilest of creatures responds as surely to the touch of love as frost-bitten grass responds to the warm kiss of the morning sun.

*

32. Oil your light with love, it will illumine the world.

*

33. Revenge is the reactive response of weakness rebounding to its rock of offence.

*

34. Turn not your face away from the stars because they do not shine with the splendour of the moon.

*

35. Our very efforts to hide our sores expose them to the public eye.

RISHABHCHAND

NEW ROADS

BOOK VI

THE CONVOCATION OF THE GODS

EARTH shook the heavens with her new demand
And heaven responded with a call to might.
The eye of the Sun looked down from her own sphere
Upon a vast theogony of heaven
Which challenged now the order of the stars.
Bright gods were gathered from high worlds of Light
And vital worlds from which Life-forces flow—
Together they came as a king-star in the night
Draws to itself a galaxy of worlds
Out of the Void of Time and Consciousness.
Four mighty Lords of Truth presided there
On that celestial Dais of the Dawn:
First Soma whose Wine is concealed in matter itself,
Lord of earth's ecstasies, Wine of the Waters of Life,
Intimate and nearest to earth's own atmosphere.
Then Agni, seven-tongued Flame-Power of the gods,
Force divine, instinct with Knowledge and Will,
Without whom no flame can burn on the altar of the soul.
The mighty Indra, Hero with the shining steeds
Found high in the heaven of our mentality
Who manifests as the Puissant, Mind divine.
Then Surya, Master of the Truth Supreme,
The Sun, Creator, Father of the herds of Light,
Fosterer, Enlightener, bringing the Dawn divine.
Then imaged there behind that great acclaim
Was the august Silence of a Mighty Power,
The ineffable Presence of the Great Unknown.

The first of the powers stood forth before that might.
His words rang out across the dawn-lit skies
And echoed in the worlds of Time below.

NEW ROADS

“I Soma, Lord of the ecstasies of the earth
And of the Waters flowing in its deeps,
Am called upon to speak before my peers
And though a million years have passed away
Like grain poured out upon the threshing floor,
I am one power before this mighty host
To represent the essence of the earth,
The Wine of Matter, dormant in its depths
Which life, the mortal cup of my desire,
Fosters in heaven as earth’s Beatitude.
Aditi, She, the Mother of the Worlds,
Guides there the burden of my consciousness—
Through divers forms of manifested life
The vibrant urge thrills vein and fruit and vine;
In leaf and flower—in woman as the rose—
In man the sturdy oak, the lofty pine;
In fish, in fern, in blossom, branch and bird
Aspire the golden energies of Life
Towards some ultimate within its ken—
Some end in view, immediate or remote:
A flash of sunlight or a great ideal;
A passing cloud, a moment held in play
By the rising splendour of the herds of dawn;
Or dragon-flies against an opulent moon;
Or lotus pools that mirror the silent skies
Like meditative moments of the soul
That lift earth’s ecstasies to the Divine;
All are modes and forms of Her Delight—
Even though burdened with mortal ignorance,
Though heavy in matter, concealed in the lap of Night
She presses out the essence of the Wine
To offer its Delight to the Supreme.
So with due deference to other gods
I speak to validate my honoured place
And to record it on the leaves of Time.”
He paused, and there reviewed the august array.
It seemed a mountain carved from Consciousness
Which leaned from unimaginable heights above
To one small focus of the universe.
A concentrated purpose and design

MOTHER INDIA

Was stamped upon each godly countenance
With that sure brightness of the Great Alone.
Each came, a divine division of the One,
Clearly decreed, as if from Time itself,
Upon the golden background of the Hour.
To look upon those figures so divine
Was to be lost in an Eternity—
To measure, gaze for gaze, those immortal eyes,
Was one experience made with the Supreme
Upon the Peaks of superconscient Bliss.
Each face was haloed by cloud or moon or sun
According to hierarchical ascent.
Like Beauty's arras, infinite in design,
The clouds formed one vast iridescent base
To hold the burden of the moons of Trance
Gathered into a mystic ecstasy—
Each status of those planes of Consciousness
Reflected Peace and Purity and Light
Upon the finite worlds of Space and Time
From the infinite Brilliances beyond the Sun
As if to form an Intermediate Zone:
A resting Place—a heaven to man on earth—
To urge the valiant Traveller on his way,
To scale those Peaks reflected in its pools,
Those Suns of Truth, those Godheads of Delight,
Beyond the summits of the human mind.
All was a vast array of Consciousness
Divided from Itself, Itself the Whole—
Born to express a Multiplicity
Like stars that reach beyond the human night
To form a vision of Infinity
Within the deeper moments of the soul.
In accents strong and ringing clear with Truth
His voice continued to command their ears.

“We are arranged on this Olympian height
To here proclaim our place and circumstance
Within the future pattern of the worlds
Which now move by a greater Force divine
Than was allowed by Cosmic Consciousness:

NEW ROADS

The Supramental from the Peaks of Gold!
The Mother of the worlds has taken birth
And founded in Herself this Power divine
And so it is in Matter, in Myself
Like unto a seed of Light which first found Mind
The fertile soil in which to manifest—
Thus do I find within myself this Light,
This Seed of Wonder from the Heights of God.
I say a seed, for yet I know it not
Beyond the knowledge that in me is born
A new exalted consciousness of Truth
Which never in all Time has taken birth
Within the limits of my common clay;
And yet I know its roots are still to delve
Deep into the very heart of earth
As too its branches will aspire to heaven
And blossom beyond the boundaries of the mind.
As yet I feel within my limits grow
A Power of Peace for future fields of Light
Which blooms as conscious from the heights above
As from the hidden depths within my being.
One thing, my Lords, you may demand of me:
What can I contribute to the Supreme,
What unique circumstance has taken birth
In Time, in Matter, in the atoms of all life
Which never before has moved within my deeps?
Descents of Consciousness have come before.
In ages past the Light has entered Mind
And Mind has made a vision, an ideal
To raise the earth on swift aspiring wings
To these pure regions of our blest abode.
So too the heart of humanity aspired
To lift the earth and man to heights above,
To make through love a holocaust of life
Upon the altars of Divinity.
But Matter never was so gently stirred—
Heavy with birth and her own ignorance
She was not moved to higher states of bliss
But rather mocked the glory of the stars.
She did not care for promise of release

MOTHER INDIA

From the joy of sense and life's own intimacy—
All she had felt as certain and secure,
Content to lie with sensuality
Than venture into fields of the Unknown.
Content to linger in yet unconquered worlds
She found within the substance of herself
Enough to compel her curiosity
Drawn from the pregnant limits of her soil.
But already she begins to sense the change
And thrills to find that Matter has a mind
Which rules the nuclear atoms in their play
And promises to join with higher laws
Beyond the finite boundaries of her sphere.
She knows herself to be now not so prone
Upon the valley of unconscious earth,
But Lord and master of her noble heights—
The new prospective lover of the skies
Emboldened by the Kiss of the Supreme.”

NORMAN DOWSETT

IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT ?

SOME CRITICISMS AND SUGGESTIONS

3

JUST as we have presented with all the force possible the complex body of so-called independent evidence from times posterior to Chandragupta Maurya's, we must now try with the utmost cogency to show up that evidence as not the clear-cut thing it claims to be. Our immediate task is not necessarily to find a new interpretation of data. It would really be enough to exhibit the current interpretation as considerably open to doubt, thus proving it the result of an anterior conviction that Chandragupta Maurya is Sandrocottus and permitting ourselves an alternative and less leaky theory. But, of course, if we could do more and demonstrate the impossibility of this or that feature of the current interpretation, the alternative theory would acquire greater importance. As Asoka's Rock Edicts are not only the most familiar but the most impressive evidence cited, we shall make them our starting-point, treat them at some length and see whether very rock can reduce to rubble.

Before we directly test them, let us deal with the supposed non-Greek synchronism and its alleged agreement with the Greek one which is read into Asoka's words. What value is to be attached to the former in isolation from the latter? Can it bring on its own any strength? Strength has been sought through either the date 544 B.C. or the date 483 B.C. for Buddha's death (or Nirvana, as it is often termed) from Ceylonese traditions and the 218 years said to have passed between that event and the coronation of Priyadarsin—Priyadarsin taken rather fancifully to be Chandragupta in the one case and quite legitimately Asoka in the other.

Dr. E.J.Thomas has pointed out that the Sarvastivadins make Asoka flourish one century after the death of Buddha and that such a tradition may be traced even in the Ceylonese chronicles.¹ According to this date the death falls in the fourth century before Christ and Thomas quotes a Japanese scholar as placing the event in 386 B.C. Asoka here is again shown to be existing in the

¹ *B.C.Law*, Volume II, 18-22.

earlier half of the third century; but an element of further uncertainty is introduced about Buddha. Already we had two dates at a distance of 61 years: now we have a third at a distance of 158 years from the first and of 97 from the second. Considering these differences Raychaudhuri remarks: "The date of Asoka has sometimes been determined on the basis of Buddhist tradition regarding the *Nirvāna* and the interval of 218 years between that memorable event and the coronation of the Maurya monarch. But as the date of *Nirvāna* or Buddha's death is itself uncertain, and the correctness of an interval of 218 years between that event and Asoka's coronation is also doubted, we cannot solve the problem of Asoka's date in this way." Then Raychaudhuri adds in effect that the really important clues to the riddle are furnished from the side of Greece and he proceeds to discuss when exactly Magas of Cyrene died.¹

How necessary it is to seek from the alleged Greek synchronism whatever strength is possible to draw for dating Asoka as generally done rather than according to the Puranas may be further seen from the Chinese traveller Hiuen-Tsang's mention of four different traditions concerning the epoch of Buddha's death: (1) about the end of the third century B.C., (2) about the middle of the sixth century B.C., (3) about the middle of the seventh century B.C. and (4) about the middle of the ninth century B.C.² And Hiuen-Tsang estimated the interval between Buddha's death and Asoka's reign to be only one hundred years.³ Fa-Hien, a still earlier Chinese traveller, reports a tradition of Buddha's having died three hundred years before the reign of King P'ing of the Chow dynasty in China. Dr. H.A. Giles, Fa-Hien's latest translator, gives King P'ing's reign-period as 770-719 B.C.,⁴ so that Buddha's death would be in the eleventh century before Christ, as Fa-Hien's previous translator James Legge noted in commenting on the text.⁵ Another clue from Fa-Hien is that Kanishka became king of all India exactly four hundred years after the death of Buddha. Many modern scholars put Kanishka round about 78 A.D.: if they believe Fa-Hien, they should place Buddha's death round about 322 B.C., in the time of Sandrocottus and Alexander the Great instead of in the eighth year of Ajatashatru's reign, on which all documents agree. The Kashmiri historian Kalhana, writing in mediaeval India, relates that the departure of Buddha occurred one hundred and fifty years before Kanishka:⁶ if he is to be believed, our historians should consider Buddha to have passed away round

¹ Appendix on p. 92 in *The Age of Imperial Unity*.

² Footnote on p. 114 of *The Age of Imperial Unity*.

³ Beal, *Buddhist Records*, Vol. I, pp. lv-lviii, lxxii-lxxvi.

⁴ *The Travels of Fa-hsien*, p. 10 (Edition 1923).

⁵ Footnote 5 on p. 28 of *A Record of Buddhistic Kingdoms by Fa-Hien* (Edition 1886).

⁶ *Rajatarangini*, I. 172.

about 172 B.C. But Kalhana himself places Kanishka 2442 years previous to the date of his own book, with the result that for him Buddha's demise occurred in 1444 B.C. Quite recently Dr. D.S.Triveda claimed to have proved 1793 B.C. the real date¹—a figure not far removed from 1807 B.C. at which Pandit Kota Venkatachalam² arrives by calculating from the Puranic chronology as well as from other ancient records and the mathematician V. Thiruvengkatacharya³ does by checking with an ephemeris all the astronomical particulars collected in 1773 A.D. by Bishop Bigaudet in his life of Gautama. There are a host of other dates from various quarters for Buddha's Nirvana. According to Dr. E.J.Eitel's *Sanskrit-Chinese Dictionary*⁴ and Beal's *Catena of Chinese Scriptures*,⁵ the Nirvana took place in 946 or 943 B.C. Dr. Weber, in his *History of Indian Literature*, observed: "Among the Northern Buddhists fourteen different accounts are found, ranging from 2422 B.C. to 546 B.C."⁶ Kielhorn suggested an epoch of the Nirvana falling in 638 B. C., "with which", notes Dr. D. C. Sircar,⁷ "the astronomical details of the date of an inscription (*List of Northern Inscriptions*, No. 575) work out satisfactorily." Our historians favour the date suggested by the "dotted record" of Canton not because it can by itself be their mainstay but because they believe that from the Greek synchronism they can fix the date of Asoka's coronation with a tolerable degree of certainty and the Canton-year fairly agrees with their computation and complicates matters for them less than any other. Thus the chronology of the Ceylonese traditions has no definitive value in itself. It acquires value by happening to coincide more or less with the claimed testimony from Rock Edict XIII. If we can undermine this testimony the Ceylonese chronology will be of little avail.

In fairness to our historians we may repeat that, though with their absolute faith in the Greek synchronism they are impressed by whatever seems to approximate to its result, many are not exactly unaware of the scanty worth of the Ceylonese chronology. Thus, instead of drawing direct support from the *Dīpavamsa* and the *Mahāvamsa* which make the Ceylonese king Devanampiya Tissa a contemporary of Asoka, Dewan Bahadur S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar

¹ *Bharatiya Vidya*, Vol. VIII, pp. 220-38. The name of Dr. Triveda and that of Dr. D.R. Mankad should be included in the list of Indian scholars we gave in a footnote in our first article to indicate the extent of dissent from the generally accepted identification of Sandrocottus.

² *The Age of Buddha*, pp. 3-34.

³ His Paper is quoted on pp. 52-7 of *Ibid.*

⁴ P. 139 (Hongkong, 1888)

⁵ P. 116 (Note)

⁶ P. 287

⁷ Footnote on p. 114 of *The Age of Imperial Umyt.*

puts the position the other way round: "The contemporaneity of Devānampiya Tissa and Asoka gives us a fixed point in Ceylonese chronology."¹

From an impersonal standpoint the small value of the Ceylonese chronology should be inferred from the very fact that it comes nowhere near the date derivable from the Puranas: the dating of Indian history by foreign monks cannot weigh against indigenous evidence. And not only do the Puranas hang in the opposite scale. All traditions of Indian chronologists, whether taken to be agreeing or not with the Puranic time-picture, are massed against it as against making Chandragupta Maurya a contemporary of Alexander the Great.² Such an opposition should discredit it if it cannot be bolstered up by extraneous means. Hence we should say that the rest of the case for Asoka's contemporaneity with Antiochus II and the other Greek kings may bear out this chronology rather than that it can give in its own rights any confirmation to it in the teeth of all indigenous testimony.

We may now turn to Greek topics and make a direct test of Rock Edict XIII. At the very outset we may be told: "Is it not futile to attempt any test when we know that Yona or Yavana is the general term for all Greeks and when Asoka clearly speaks of neighbouring Yona rajas?" Well, this question is based on a complete topsyturvy of all Indian tradition.

Modern historians admit that the word Yavana was used in mediaeval Indian literature as a synonym of *mlechchha* and indicated any foreigner: the Muslim rulers of India were often called Yavana, but sometimes also Saka or even Yavana-Saka in mediaeval inscriptions.³ Certainly the Bactrian Greeks were known at one time as Yavanas, but so have been and are to the present day the Persians, Afghans and other races to the north-west of India. The claim of modern historians is that in ancient times and as late as the second century A.D. the word Yavana meant to the Indians nobody except the Greeks. But how is this claim to be substantiated?

Yavanas are mentioned in many places in ancient Indian literature. Is there any indication that the Greeks are meant? The *Manusamhita*⁴ groups the Yavanas, Kambojas, Sakas, Khasas, Paradas, Daradas and some others as peoples on India's borders and it calls them degraded Aryan Kshatriyas who neglected the Vedic rites and customs. Dr. E. A. Schwanbeck is particular to mark that these Yavanas are very ancient and cannot be the Greeks.⁵ Patan-

¹ In an article in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 237.

² *Vide* section I of our essay.

³ *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 101; also footnote 2.

⁴ X, 43-45.

⁵ *Megasthenis Indica*, p. 18.

jali in his *Mahabhashya*¹ speaks of the Yavanas as Sudras who were not impure but pure, which, so far as the social status is concerned, is practically the same as their being degraded Kshatriyas. The Ramayana² and the Mahabharata³ name them also and the latter calls them excommunicated Kshatriyas⁴ and tells us in addition of black Yavanas and white Yavanas who fought against Krishna.⁵ In this poem occurs even the form "Yauna" which is the one in the inscriptions of the Persian kings Darius and Xerxes, and where it occurs we have the Yaunas, Kambojas and Gandharas listed in the same order as in Asoka's Rock Edict V.⁶ The Vishnu Purana describes the Yavanas as living to the west of India, the Sakas to the north-west, the Kiratas to the east and the four castes in the middle, during the time of the Mahabharata War.⁷ The Matsya Purana refers to the Yavanas, Sakas and others as heterodox Aryan tribes living on India's frontiers. It is stated in the *Harivamsa* as well as in the Vishnu Purana⁸ and the Padma Purana⁹ that the Yavanas, the Sakas and other tribes were driven by King Sagara, a descendant of Ikshvaku, beyond the borders of India in the most remote antiquity and penalised in different ways. Panini whom many modern historians place in the fifth century B.C.¹⁰ has already the Sanscritised form Yavana in his *Ashtadhyayi*.¹¹ So even following these historians we may be certain that the word Yavana was known in India before Alexander's invasion.

It cannot be taken to designate merely the Macedonian garrisons left by Alexander, much less the Bactrian Greeks who are said to have ruled over a part of India later. The presumption, therefore, is that the original Yavanas were not Greeks at all. And this presumption is strengthened by the fact that, though the bulk of them were to the immediate west and north-west of India, we hear of them as not being absent during the Mahabharata War in even the north, east and south, just as we hear of the eastern tribe Kiratas being present also in the west and north-west: the king of Pragjyotisha to India's east had many Yavana armies under him,¹² and the Yavanas had actually in the south a city of

¹ *The Indian Antiquary*, 1875, 244.

² I. 54, 22; IV. 43, 12

³ II. 32, 17.

⁴ Anushasana Parva, Verses 2, 103; 2, 104

⁵ XII

⁶ XII. 207, 43.

⁷ Amsa II, Ch. 2.

⁸ 4,3,42-49.

⁹ Svarga-khanda, Ch. 15.

¹⁰ *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 102.

¹¹ II. 2-84.

¹² Sabha Parva, Ch. 51. 13,14.

their own called Yavanapura.¹ Originally the name they bore seems to have been of an Indian tribe which went out of the fold and became foreignised, as it were. Afterwards this foreignness appears to have broadened the meaning of the term and made it applicable to all foreigners and particularly those who hailed from a western-north-western direction.

When we turn to the Buddhist writings we are led to the same conclusion. And we are led to it with an even greater precision because there we find the Bactrian Greeks and the Indo-Greeks already known as Yavanas and yet we have indications of Yavanas who could never have been these foreigners or semi-foreigners. Thus, on the one hand, among the countries and cities listed in the *Mahāvamsa*² we read of the Yonanagara Alasanda—*i.e.*, the city of the Yavanas, Alexandria, which Geiger³ has identified as the city of such a name founded by Alexander the Great near Kabul. This reference is in accord with the one in the *Mūṇḍapañho* where King Milinda (Milindra of Kshemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā* and Menadra of the Shinkot inscription and the coins), the Indo-Greek Menander, is said to have been born at Kalsigrama in the Doab of Alasanda and had his capital at Sakaia (Sialkot).⁴ But, on the other hand, we are taken to a period before any Alasanda was heard of. The *Assalāyana Sutta*⁵ represents the Yonas with the Kambojas as typical peoples of the north-west frontier territory, with no suggestion whatever of their having been aliens from abroad. The *Majjhima Nikāya*⁶ mentions a Yona state along with Kamboja as flourishing in the time of Buddha. The *Chullamdesa*⁷ lists Yona as one of the sixteen "countries" of India shortly before Buddha's birth.

Indigenous tradition unanimously demands rejection of the view still held by some historians⁸ that the Yonas, at their earliest as a distinct people, were only the inhabitants of the district round Alexandria near Kabul where the Greek followers of the Macedonian conqueror might have remained a conspicuous element in the population. It appears impossible to attribute this tradition to either a universal ignorance or a universal wrong-headedness.

Many Indian historians admit the existence of the Yavanas along the west-north-west of India before the Macedonian invasion. But, instead of crediting the Indian account of them, they postulate with Bhandarkar and

¹ *Iabha Parva*, Ch. 31

² XXIX, verse 30f.

³ Translation of the *Mahāvamsa*, p. 194.

⁴ Trenckner's Edition, pp. 3, 14, 82, 83.

⁵ Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, p. 94

⁶ II, 149.

The Age of Imperial Unity, p. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 102-03

IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT?

Jayaswal a pre-Alexandrine Greek colony established between the rivers Kophen (Kubha or Kabul) and Indus during the Achaemenian rule in Persia. The postulation looks unreasonable in the extreme because it is fantastic to think that old Indian writers—in spite of knowing full well that the Greeks, even if settled in India before Alexander's time, could never have taken part in the Mahabharata War which long preceded the Achaemenian period—were irresponsible enough to put them into this War and invite from all readers the charge of uttering an absolute and patent falsehood. Are there any considerations genuinely compelling us to accept the theory and brand those ancient writers as utterly irresponsible?

Three considerations have been submitted. First is the fact stated by Asoka in Rock Edict XIII that the Yavana territory was the sole territory where the Brahmanas and Sramanas had no place: if the typical Indian culture was absent, it must be because the territory had Greek culture. Here is sheer dog-tism: the Indian accounts explain sufficiently the absence of the Brahmanas and Sramanas: they had no place where the Vedic rites and customs were rudely disregarded. The Mahabharata unequivocally says that the Yavanas, Sakas, Kambojas and some other Kshattriya tribes "have become Vrishalals from seeing no Brahmanas."¹

Second is the fact that some coins resembling those of the earliest type of Athens, the "owl" type, have been collected from the north-western frontiers of India. The argument is inherently indecisive, for there is no single inevitable way in which such coins could have come. Rapson² says they may have been carried to India in the course of commerce. Bhandarkar³ replies that all foreign coins which came into circulation for the first time as a result of commercial intercourse were countermarked, as, for instance, the somewhat similar Greek coins picked up in Southern Arabia Felix and the silver Persian sigloi known to have been current in the Punjab. But the "owls" of Athens dug up from the frontier region of India bear no trace of countermarking, and Bhandarkar's inference is that they were native to some outlying district of India which was peopled by the Greeks a little after the date assigned to the original "owls" of Athens: as that date is 594-560 B.C., the Greek colony, according to Bhandarkar, may have been established in India about 550 B.C. The obvious answer to Bhandarkar is that the coins, if they were not part of a trade-transaction, may have been the private property of an individual or of individuals. To believe that the Greeks came through Persia at a time when Cyrus the Great had not

¹ Muir's *Sanskrit Texts*, 2nd Ed. I p. 482.

² *Indian Coins*, p 3, Section 9.

³ *The Carmichael Lectures*, 1921, p. 28-9.

even had conquering contacts with Lydia and, that they came in such masses as could give the name Yavana to a whole province and could figure as a small yet powerful nation in ancient Indian literature and that this name became current in India for the Greeks even though the Persians themselves are known to have called the Greeks Yaunas not before the reign of Darius the Great nearly thirty years later—to believe all this is merely to indulge a pet fancy at all costs. It means forgetting the usual historical approach to coins, which is always cautious: unless a general probability emerges from other evidence or from lack of contrary evidence we cannot jump to conclusions of this kind. Thus, to give a small illustration, Firishta's tradition that the Sassanian ruler Ardaser I Babagan (226-241 A.D.) advanced from Persia as far as Sirhind beyond the Sutlej in the eastern Punjab is not regarded as conclusive on the strength of a coin of his discovered in the Jhelum district.¹

But a pet fancy is not easily discouraged. Bhandarkar² argues: "If it is not admitted that the Greeks had a settlement near India before Alexander, how is it possible, I ask, to unravel the enigma about the coins of Sophytes? Sophytes, you know, ruled over a province somewhere in the Western Punjab when Alexander invaded India, and as he acknowledged speedy submission to the Macedonian emperor, he was re-instated in his kingdom. Now, we have found some coins which bear his head on the obverse and a cock and his name in Greek character on the reverse. When could he have struck these coins? This is the most puzzling question to answer. Did he strike them after the death of Alexander but before the Punjab was subjugated by Chandragupta? Then it is very strange that we do not see the bust of Alexander instead of his. For up to B.C. 306, i.e., till the extinction of the old royal line of Macedonia, we find that all the generals of Alexander retain the name and bust of Alexander on their coins, and if Sophytes was no better and perhaps even worse in point of political power than these generals, does it not look the height of presumption for him to have his own name and bust on the coins instead of those of Alexander who was doubtless his overlord? And if it is the height of presumption to have his name and bust on coins, if they are supposed to be struck after the death of Alexander, would it not be sheer folly on his part if he issued them when Alexander was actually alive and in the Punjab? I am afraid, the only way to get over this difficulty is to suppose that Sophytes struck his coins before Alexander invaded India and before he lost his independence. Now, if Sophytes was an Indian by extraction, how is it possible to account for the presence of a bust and the employment of the Greek character before the

¹ *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 152.

² *The Carmichael Lectures*, pp. 29-31

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Macedonian conquest of the Punjab? The only explanation that is plausible is that he was a Greek prince in India before the advent of Alexander. I know Sophytes is not considered to be a Greek name. It has been taken to be identical with the Sanskrit Saubhuti.¹ But there is nothing strange in a Greek taking a Hindu name immediately before the Maurya period, if another Greek, shortly after, i.e., in Asoka's time, adopts a Persian name, viz., Tushaspha.”

Not all numismatists² associate the Sophytes of the coins with the ruler named by Alexander's historians. But, even if we associate them, here too the problem raised is not really a serious one. The coins of Sophytes differed from those of Alexander's Macedonian generals precisely because he was not a true Greek and not just a general of Alexander. As an Indian and as a re-instated king in his own domain he could exercise a privilege not easily open to them: he could use his own bust provided he employed Greek characters for his name as a sign that he was part of Alexander's empire. Whether he was better or worse or equal in political power is a false issue. Hence whether he struck his coins during Alexander's life-time or soon after is a matter of little moment, though the probability is that he did it when Alexander had died or at least departed from India, leaving only his governors behind: what is important is that there is no reason to suppose he did it before Alexander's invasion.

The comparison with Tushaspha is irrelevant in any case and for us much more. Tushaspha has been called a Yavana in an inscription and so a possibility arises for assigning to him Greek nationality. Sophytes has not been called Yavana anywhere. Secondly, we consider it an open question whether Yavana always means Greek: so we cannot be impressed by the straight assumption of Tushaspha's Greek nationality simply because he has been termed a Yavana. The analogy from him has no force at all for us. And if the name Sophytes has been shown to be not a Greek one but the Greek equivalent of Saubhuti it cannot help weighing against his being a Greek. We might as well say that the other kings mentioned by Alexander's historians—Omphis, Sisicottus, Porus and Sophytes's own neighbour Phegelas—were Greeks taking the Hindu names of Āmbhi, Sasigupta, Paurava and Bhagalā. All of them are thought to have had Indian names because they were Indians.

To return to the coin-problem. We may ask in addition: “If Sophytes belonged to a pre-Alexandrine Greek colony, why have we no Greek coins of that colony between his time and 550 B.C. when it is conjectured to have

¹ Rapson, *Ancient India*, pp. 152-3; *Catalogue of the Coins in the Indian Museum*, Calcutta, Vol. I, p. 7.

² *The Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Vol. VII, pp. 23-26 (1945).

been established? Again, if he was a Greek, how did Alexander's historians miss saying so?"

The second query becomes extra pertinent in view of the last of the three considerations submitted on behalf of a Greek colony—namely, that Alexander's army found in the locality between the Kophen and the Indus a people, the "Nysaioi" (Nyseans), who seemed to have traditions associated with Dionysus the Greek Wine-God. Bhandarkar thinks it his trump-card that the Greek historians talk of a Greek colony. For, he tells us: "If the Greeks really established a colony in a border province of India, it is inconceivable that such a thing which would be of supreme interest to a Greek should be ignored by any historian of Alexander's time."¹ But in that case would it not be of supreme interest to a Greek to identify Sophytes as a fellow-Greek? One may argue that those whom Alexander's army took to be Greeks were mistakenly thought so, but not that a king whom it never considered a Greek was erroneously believed by it to be an Indian. Only if there was no possibility of seeing a Greek in him would the Macedonians omit to do so. Their general tendency is well touched off by Bhandarkar himself when in reference to religious notions he says: "The Greeks were notorious for identifying foreign deities with their own so long as there were any characteristics in common."² Their tendency, therefore, would make us wary face to face with their seeing Greece in any form in a foreign land; but if such a tendency could leave us not the shadow of a hint about anything Greek in Sophytes the Indianness of that king must be absolute indeed.

The numismatic argument proves a reed in every way. Can the third and final consideration create a prop? Can we credit the Dionysus-story? To jump—from the fact that the Nyseans were hailed by the Macedonian army as worshippers of the Greek Wine-God—to the conclusion that somebody whom the Greeks named Dionysus had travelled from Greece towards India is not only partiality for Greek origins: it is also illogical according to certain aspects of what happened when Alexander's army marched towards India. In the words of the historian J. B. Bury: "It is perhaps not far from Jelalabad that the army came to a city which was called Nysa. The name immediately awakened in the minds of all the Greeks the memory of their god Dionysus. For Mount Nysa was the mythical place where he had been nursed by nymphs when he was born from the thigh of Zeus. The mountain was commonly supposed to be in Thrace; but an old hymn placed it 'near the streams of the Nile', it had no place on the traveller's chart. But here was an actual Nysa;

¹ *The Carmichael Lectures*, p. 31.

² *Ibid*, p. 34.

and close to the town was a hill whose name resembled 'Meros', the Greek for 'thigh', and whose slopes were covered with the god's own ivy."¹ As Pandit Venkatachalam has pointed out, if Dionysus was born at Nysa and if Mount Meru symbolised the thigh of Zeus from which he took birth, Dionysus must have proceeded from India westwards. The Greek legend here actually appears to contradict the postulate about a pre-Alexandrine Greek colony and to suggest that if the Nyseans were the Yavanas of Asoka they were the stock from which derived the ancestors of the Ionians. If our historians are right in seeing a common origin of the Greeks and the Nyseans, are they not looking from the wrong end of the telescope?

No doubt, as both Bhandarkar and Jayaswal record, Arrian in his narration of Alexander's campaign lets the Nyseans talk to the Macedonian conqueror like descendents of the companions of Dionysus. But even Bhandarkar admits that the deputies of Nysa who waited upon Alexander told him that their city was founded by Dionysus as he was returning to the shores of Greece after conquering the Indian nation.² The passage of the founder of Nysa is from India to the West. Is there any reason to hold that there ever was originally a passage to the East? Or that the wanderer was a Greek named Dionysus? Arrian, a little later in his story of Alexander's invasion, has a remark which Bhandarkar and Jayaswal have missed—a remark apropos Megasthenes's tale about Heracles: "Eratosthenes also disbelieves the similar tale of the wanderings of Dionysus. Let me leave the stories undecided as far as I am concerned."³ He does not seem to credit whole-heartedly the talk he puts into the mouth of the Nyseans about their connection with Dionysus. We may grant that at the start of his *Indika* he calls the Nyseans Indo-Greeks and we may add his further statement that of the expedition said to have been led by Dionysus into India "the city of Nysa is no mean monument"; but with the other statement before us we may incline to aver that perhaps as a historian he in certain places was only transmitting, without necessarily sharing, an impression handed down by certain Macedonian reporters who, as Rapson observes, understood the Nyseans to be telling them that they were descendants of a Western people "The Greeks always experienced", comments Rapson, "a keen joy of recognition, when they could connect foreign things with the figures of their own legends and they were delighted with the suggestion."⁴ What we may conjecture is that the Nyseans and the Macedonians felt some sort of affinity

¹ *History of Greece*, Ch XVIII, p 801 (Edition 1916)

² *The Carmichael Lectures*, p. 32

³ BK V Ch 2

⁴ *Cambridge History of India*, Vol. I, pp 353-4

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which the latter were inclined to consider Greek in origin rather than Indian. But there is no reason for us to share their inclination in the face of signs to the contrary from the Indian side.

Strabo, commenting on the legends quoted by Megasthenes to the effect that Dionysus marched to India at the head of an army "from the regions lying to the west" and became there "the founder of large cities"¹, is openly sarcastic about the interpretation given by Megasthenes and considers his grounds most shaky and looks with scepticism on also Megasthenes's association of Heracles with India.² Apropos Strabo, Dr. Schwanbeck writes: "The Macedonians, when they came into India, in accordance with the invariable practice of the Greeks, considered the gods of the country to be the same as their own. Siva they were led to identify with Bacchus on their observing the unbridled license and somewhat Bacchic fashion of his worship, and because they traced some slight resemblance between the attributes of the two deities, and between the names belonging to the mythic conception of each. Nor was anything easier, after Euripides had originated the fiction that Dionysus had roamed over the East, than to suppose that the god of luxuriant fecundity had made his way to India, a country so remarkable for its fertility. To confirm this opinion they made use of a slight and accidental agreement in names. Thus Mount Meru seemed an indication of the god who sprang from the thigh of Zeus. They thought the Kydrakae (Oxydrakai) the offspring of Dionysus because the vine grew in their country, and they saw that their kings displayed great pomp in their processions. On equally slight grounds they identified Krishna, another god, whom they saw worshipped, with Heracles; and whenever, as among the Sibae, they saw the skins of wild beasts, or clubs, or the like, they assumed, that Heracles had at some time or other dwelt there."³ Bhandarkar himself, although in one place insistent that the Nyseans' Dionysus "is a real Hellenic deity and not any Hindu god in Hellenic garb", has made the remark we have already cited about the Greeks' notoriety for identifying foreign deities with their own so long as there were any characteristics in common and he has put the self-undermining query: "Do we not know that Megasthenes e. g., calls Krishna or rather Balarama of Mathura Heracles and Siva of the hills Dionysus?"⁴

We must not forget that not only Strabo but the majority of Greek writers discredit the interpretation of Megasthenes⁵. On Heracles, Megasthenes himself

¹ McCrindle's *Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, pp. 36-8.

² XV. I. 6-8. McCrindle, *Ibid.*, pp. 109-11.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 111-12, footnote.

⁴ *The Carmichael Lectures*, p. 35.

⁵ McCrindle, p. 110.

reports the very opposite of what he does about Dionysus: he says that the Indians "assert that Heracles was born among them."¹ As against his legend about Dionysus we must not overlook the contrary legend which is part of what is summarised by Bury: the same in effect is also reported by Diodorus Siculus: "Now, some, as I have already said, supposing that there were three individuals of this name, who lived in different ages, assign to each appropriate achievements. They say, then, that the most ancient of them was Indos.... This same Dionysus they also call Katopogon, since it is a custom among the Indians to nourish their beards with great care to the very end of their life. Dionysus, then, at the head of an army marched to every part of the world, and taught mankind the planting of the vine, and how to crush grapes in the winepress, whence he was called Lenaios.... It is further said that the place is pointed out in India even to this day where the god had been, and that cities are called by his name in the vernacular dialects, and that many other important evidences still exist of his having been born in India..."²

Our historians set too much store by only one side of the story. While the Greeks themselves are divided, no evidence from strictly Indian sources points towards the Greek origin of the people met by Alexander.

Even the side of the story which our historians underline has one feature which should disconcert them. Sir H. T. Holdich who thinks the Kamdesh Kaffirs the present-day descendants of the Nyseans³ reminds us that the Macedonians found the latter to be of such antiquity that they could really give no account of their advent into that particular locality, the present Suwât country.⁴ The Macedonians' sense of the Nyseans' antiquity is expressed in their connecting them with Dionysus. Arrian himself repeats in his *Indika* what Megasthenes had given out as an Indian statement: "From the time of Dionysus to Sandrocottus the Indians counted 153 kings and a period of 6042 years."⁵ If we accept the Nyseans as Indo-Greeks on Arrian's authority we have no reason to reject the inference to which he inevitably leads that they could never have been a Greek colony established during Achaemenian rule. Six milleniums in the borderland between India and Persia are enough to make any people as good as indigenus and to make us speak, like Vincent Smith, of only "a fancied connection with Dionysus and the sacred mountain Nysa of Greek legend."⁶

¹ *McCrindle*, p. 39.

² III. 63. *McCrindle*, pp. 36-7, footnote.

³ *Geographical Journal*, Jan., 1876.

⁴ *The Indian Borderland*, pp. 270, 342.

⁵ IX. *McCrindle*, p. 203.

⁶ *Early History of India*, p. 55.

What is more, the Nyseans not only fail to provide us with a pre-Alexandrian Greek colony: they also tend to prove that Asoka's Yonas cannot be placed in Alexander's time. For, in the strict sense, the people of Nysa were not Yonas. Their Greek appellation "Nysaioi" has no resemblance to the word "Yona" or "Yavana". Why did the Greeks not call these people by a name which can be equated with the designation used by Asoka? Their historians enumerate a lot of India's north-western tribes encountered by the Macedonian army and we can equate the Greek appellations with the Indian. Thus we have the Abastanoi (*Ambashtas*), Aparytai (*Āpṛitas*), Aspasioi (*Asvāyanas*), Assakenoi (*Asvakāyanas*), Astananoi (*Hāstināyanas*), Glauganikai (*Glachukayānakas*), Kathaioi (*Kathas*), Malloi (*Māllavas*), Ossadioi (*Vasātis*), Oxydrakai (*Kshudrakas*), Parikanoi (*Prakanavāyanas*), Saudrai (*Saudras*), Siboi (*Śibis* or *Śivis*), Xathri (*Kshatṛiyyas*) and some more.¹ The people of Gandhara too are known to these historians. But there is no trace of any name corresponding to Yonas or, for that matter, Kambojas. If we accept the third century B.C for Asoka, it is most puzzling that so soon after Alexander the Yonas should be mentioned by him and that the Macedonian conqueror should come across nobody named after that community. If there was a Greek colony between the rivers Kabul and Indus, the Ionian name of it could never have been ignored and converted into Nysaioi. On the hypothesis of such a colony we have every right to expect something like Iaonoi from "Iaon", the Greek original of the Persian Yauna. Also for the Kambojas we may expect something like Kambysioi, since the word Kamboja is akin to the name of the Persian king who was the son of Cyrus the Great and whom the Greeks called Kambyases. But perhaps the Kambojas, being more associated with Kashmir, were out of the path of the Macedonians; we can account for their absence.² How are we to account for the utter silence of the Greek historians about Asoka's Yonas who should have been directly in Alexander's path?

Two excuses might be essayed. First, the Nyseans were the Yonas but did not call themselves by that name: only others called them so. But surely the Macedonians met the others too and would have heard of Yonas from them. Secondly, just as the Macedonians do not mention Yonas, the Indians know nothing of Nyseans: if all the tribes in the region traversed by Alexander are known to India except the Nyseans and all there are known to the Mace-

¹ Raychaudhuri, *The Political History of India*, pp. 163-175, Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, pp. 37-9.

² Does Arrian have them in mind in his *Indika* when he speaks of Kambistholi, the last two syllables representing the Sanscrit "sthala" = "place", "district"?

donians except the Yonas, then the Nyseans and the Yonas must be one and the same. The argument is a big "if" which has no basis in fact. For, all the tribes there are not known to the Macedonians. The Mahabharata, for instance, assigns to the north-west the Agreyas (III. 254), Kekayas (III. 120), Madras (II. 52), Trigartas (II. 52), Udumbaras (II. 52). Panini catalogues the Damani (V. 3, 116), Karushas (IV. 1, 178), Madhumantas (IV. 2, 133), Salwas (IV. 1, 173), Vrikas (V. 3, 115). Out of those listed by the Greeks we do not know who the Agalassoï and Massanoï are,¹ nor are we sure about the Agsinoï,² the Malli (not to be confused with the Malloï)³ and the people of "the kingdom of Oxykanos".⁴

Besides, why are we trying to identify only the Nyseans with the Yonas? Just as much as they, the Oxydrakai (or Kydrakai or Hydrakai) were considered by the Greeks the descendants of Dionysus, the Oxydrakai who lived not, as did the Nyseans, to the east of Jalalbad but along the south-western bank of the Ravi (Sanskrit "Iravati", Greek "Hydraotes"), at least 250 miles away as the crow flies. Except for their name which cannot be fancied as Greek, they have an equal right to be identified with the Yonas. But in their case no ignorance covers us, for we have recognised them as the Kshudrakas. The whole argument from reciprocal ignorance in the case of the Nyseans is thus shown up as specious.

Further, the question of reciprocal ignorance need not be raised at all, for it is not a fact that the Nyseans are unidentifiable. The Markandeya Purana in its table of north-western tribes, after naming the Gandharas, Kambojas and Yavanas, mentions several more among whom are the Madrakas, Paradas, Tusharas and some known to the Greeks such as the Sudras and the Mushikas ("the kingdom of Mousicanos") and in the midst of them we have the Nichas⁵. The resemblance between Nicha and Nysa is unmistakable. If the Kathaioi are the Kathas, the Nysaioi can be the Nichas. The parity between the Greek "s" and the Sanskrit "ch" is a commonplace: it is because they can be the same that we think of "Chandragupta" when we hear of "Sandrocottus" and that Jayaswal can suggest "Muchukarna" as the equivalent of "Mousicanos".⁶ The second argument, therefore, is nullified or at least neutralised.

Perhaps the Nichas of the Markandeya Purana are the same as the Nichyas

¹ Raychaudhuri, *The Political History of Ancient India*, pp. 171, 173.

² Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*. Part I. pp. 72-3.

³ V. Smith, *An Early History of India*, p. 104, footnote 1.

⁴ Raychaudhuri, *Op. cit.* p. 174

⁵ Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, p. 102.

⁶ *Hindu Polity*, part II, p. 75.

of whom Dr. Pusalker¹—in detailing the Aryan settlements in India during the period of the later Samhitas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and Sutras—speaks of as tribes of the Punjab and Sind. If so, we can be even more sure than on the authority of the Markandeya Purana that they are older than the Achaemenian empire and their very antiquity no less than their nationality spoils the picture of a Greek colony.

Let us, however, suppose that the Nichas or Nichyas are inadmissible. Let us suppose also that there is an exact complimentary ignorance on the Greek side and on ours. Even then, our ignorance would not be something uniquely attached to this particular Greek mention of an Indian tribe. It would be one instance of a wider ignorance, for Greek historians or geographers in their accounts of India have mentioned several tribes which have nothing to do with Alexander's invasion but whose names cannot be identified with any found in Indian literature: *e.g.* Pliny, who is known to have based himself on Alexander's contemporary Megasthenes, speaks of the Galmudroesi, Preti, Calixae, Sasuri and Orxulae dwelling beyond "a very large island in the Ganges".² Thus our ignorance about the Nysaioi could be purely accidental, such as might happen in any connection and be therefore devoid of special significance. We may go still further. We can afford to overlook the wider ignorance and say that even without it the probability created for the argument in general would be more than matched by the improbability that arises when we examine in detail the situation of ignorance on the two sides. If the Greeks employed an unusual label, we cannot be blamed for failing to read behind it, whereas, if the Nyseans were Yonas, they must have been well-known as such and nothing can explain the failure of the Greeks to recognise the identity of the two or, on recognising it, their failure to flaunt it as proof positive of an Ionian migration to India. With their penchant for reading signs of Greece everywhere, much play would have been made with a current word so strongly reminiscent for them of a part of their own country. So in any case the question must be allowed to stand: How could the Greek historians be silent about Asoka's Yonas?

Only one answer seems plausible: "There were no Yonas in Alexander's day. The Nyseans or the Oxydrakai or both may be closely allied to them but cannot be identified with them. The descendants of the Yonas may have fused with the Nyseans and the Oxydrakai or any other tribe, but somehow the typical name had lapsed." If we leave out Asoka's inscriptions as well as writ-

¹ In his article in *The Vedic Age*, p. 257.

² *Natural History*, VI. 21.8. McCrindle, *Op. cit.*, p. 132.

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ings about Asoka since they are the subject under debate, and if we leave out all epigraphy which depends for its chronology on the issue or the debate as well as what specifically relates to the Bactrian Greeks who came after the time of Antiochus II and his contemporaries or else to other foreigners who came still later, we shall find that all our texts use the name Yavanas in connection with ages traditionally regarded as more ancient than the last quarter of the fourth century B.C. which saw Alexander's invasion. So the lapsing of the name Yona in his day is perfectly in keeping with our data. And perfectly pertinent too would be the question: Could it be that Asoka with his Yonas belonged to the same farther past? If the Greek historians had mentioned the Yonas, the mention would not necessarily have implied that Asoka was a contemporary of Alexander's successors, for the Yonas might have continued from one age to another. But the fact that Alexander never met the Yonas as such, even though he may have met their descendants in the body of other tribes, tends to convince us that Asoka who includes the Yonas within his kingdom must have preceded Alexander. So the very presence of his Yonas tilts the balance against the Yona rajas being post-Alexandrine Greek kings.

One may argue: "Is it not a suspicious circumstance that the word 'Yavana' or 'Yona' is not found in our literature earlier than India's contact with the Greeks through the Persians during the reign of Darius and Xerxes whose empire contained Yauna provinces on its west and Sindhu ones on its east, the latter comprising a portion of the Punjab to the east of the Sindhu?" The answer should be very plain: "What is called a suspicious circumstance is conjured up from an unproved statement. And, instead of being given any proof, we are pelted again and again with assertions to the effect that one book or another of ancient India could not have been written before a certain time because the word 'Yavana' occurs in it. Those portions of the Mahabharata which contain profuse reference to the Yavanas are forthwith declared to be post-Achaemenian interpolations. The *Manusamhita* is also suspected of interpolations on the same grounds. But Yaska who must have preceded Panini, because Panini refers to his work, and who is placed by R.K. Mookerji in about 700 B.C.¹ and by other scholars even earlier, cites in his *Nirukta*² a sloka of Manu as a legal authority. If we do not assume from the first that 'Yavana' means 'Greek', there is no cause to believe that whenever in the *Manusamhita* we have the Yavanas there is an interpolation. Panini himself is placed in the fifth century B.C. and refused greater antiquity partly because he mentioned them. Or else whatever king, custom and geographical condition he is

¹ *Hindu Civilisation*, p. 159.

² III, 1.4.

deemed contemporary with is dated on the assumption that Asoka was the grandson of Sandrocottus. Dr. V.S. Agrawala, in his exhaustive study *India as known to Panini*, tries with great acumen to oppose all arguments for a date earlier than the fifth century B.C.¹ and we must grant that he has a closer acquaintance with his subject than any other scholar; but his own conclusion—namely, that Panini lived after Buddha and immediately before Mahapadma Nanda, the founder of the dynasty preceding the Mauryas—can bring Panini down to the second half of the fifth century B.C. only if Sandrocottus is taken, as by Agrawala, to be Chandragupta Maurya. If we do not start with this hypothesis, the range we get for dating Panini is really indicated by what Agrawala calls the astronomical argument. We need not follow his elaboration of it: his subsequent summary will suffice: “The astronomical argument is based on the fact that in the list of ten star-names given in sutra IV.3.34 Sravishtha begins the list. This points to the astronomical reckoning of the Vedanga Jyotisha in which Sravishtha was the first of the *nakshatras*. This position of Sravishtha continued from B.C. 1372 to about 401 B.C. After this the asterism of Sravana was taken to commence the star-list.”² This gives us a definite upper limit and a lower for Panini’s time. It may be disputed whether he was before or after Mahapadma Nanda, but, as Agrawala himself implies, we cannot dispute that he flourished between the dates mentioned. And if Asoka were shown to be far from post-Alexandrine, Panini would move towards the upper limit. That there is an upper limit of 1372 B.C. makes a pre-Achaemenian date plausible for him. Nor is such a date unpalatable for other writings which refer to Yavanas. At least the Mahabharata in some form must have preceded Panini, for he refers to it³ and, as Agrawala notes, names its three principal characters, Vasudeva, Arjuna, Yudhisthira⁴. Raychaudhuri also has said: ‘Vaiśampāyana and his version of the Mahabharata are well-known to Āśvalāyana and Panini’.⁵

The error of the claim that before Greek contacts under the Achaemenians the Yavanas could not be spoken of as being in India and that they were not an ancient Indian tribe can be exposed indirectly by a glance at the similar claim that the Sakas who are coupled with the Yavanas in Indian literature as ex-communicated Kshatriyas, or else purified Sudras, in the north-western regions of India were foreigners prior to the second century B. C. and could not be spoken of before that time as being in this country. Agrawala calls our

¹ Pp 455-75.

² P. 475.

³ VI 2. 38-1.

⁴ IV 3 98; VIII. 3. 95

⁵ *The Political History of Ancient India*, p. 6

attention to the Saka origin of the Sanscrit word “kanthā” for “town”: all scholars know that it is akin to the Saka “kand” or “kanda”. The inscriptions of Darius in the sixth century refer to Sakas living beyond the Oxus and to the east of the Caspian Sea, and “that region naturally still abounds”, says Agrawala, “in *kanthā*-ending place-names, such as Samar-kand, Kha-qand, Chun-kand, Tash-kent, Panj-kand, Yar-kand, all indicating Saka influence.”¹ But Panini, according to Agrawala, gives a string of *kanthā*-ending place-names in the Usinara country in the heart of the Punjab: Chihanākanthā, Madarakanthā, Vaitulakanthā, Patatkakanthā, Vaidālikarnakanthā, Kukkutakanthā, Chitkakanthā, the first one in *sutra* VI. 2. 125 and the rest in *gana*. “How such names could be in India”, comments Agrawala, “is an unexplained problem. It points to an event associated with Saka history even before Panini, probably an intrusion which left its relics in place-names long before the Saka contact with India in the second century B.C.” What Agrawala terms “an intrusion” was, according to Indian tradition, part of a process of “extrusion” or at least of “excursion” from India. And if the Sakas were in India “even before Panini”—which may mean, “even before 1372 B.C.”—it is highly probable that the Yavanas whom ancient Indian literature so often puts together with them and considers to be Indian tribes like them were there before the Achaemenians designated the Greeks as Yauna.

A look at some other tribes confirms the probability. Take the Yavanas’ immediate companions, the Kambojas. Dr Pusalker informs us: “The fact that Kamboja teachers were reputed for their Vedic learning shows them to have been Vedic Aryans, so the Kambojas were an Aryan settlement. Later on Kambojas settled to the north-west of the Indus and were the Kambujiyas of the old Persian inscriptions.”² The information given in the *Manusamhita* seems faithfully paraphrased in its essence. Even the Bahlikas whose name is connected with the country of Balkh or Bactria are recognised as an Indian tribe, exactly as by the *Manusamhita* and the Mahabharata. To quote Dr. Pusalker. “The Bahlikas are spoken of as people of the west of the Punjab in the *Satapatha Brāhmana* (I. 7. 3. 8)...Roth and Weber are inclined to place this tribe in Irān, but there is no need to assume any Iranian influence, for we find that Bāhlika is the name of a Kuru prince (XII. 9. 3. 3)”³. Again, we are told: “Vāhlika and Vālhika appear as variants of Bāhlika. The Mahābhārata and the Purānas locate the tribe in the neighbourhood of the Gandhāra and Punjab.”⁴ A map of ancient India in *The Vedic Age* shows this tribe to the south-

¹ *India as Known to Panini*, p. 68f.

² *The Vedic Age*, pp. 259-60.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 257, 259.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 263, note 37.

east of the Kambojas who are put along the Indus.¹ Indian tradition about the associates of the Yavanas and the Sakas is accepted as correct; but, instead of regarding them also as indigenous in origin and as foreign only on their incursion from a later settlement abroad, our historians obstinately stick to the theory of their foreign derivation. No map of old India is allowed to show them anywhere among the ancient Indian tribes. We have clearly nothing save prejudice blocking the way.

Especially when the Sakas who are supposed to have come to India later than even the Yavanas are proved by Agrawala to have been already there centuries earlier, no ground remains for conceiving the Yavanas to be a pre-Alexandrine Greek colony. Why not therefore understand once for all the term Yavana as meaning originally an Indian tribe that moved to the north-west of the country, afterwards foreignised Indians and still more subsequently foreigners, whether they be Greeks, Persians, Afghans or invaders from Central Asia, people distinguished from the foreign Sakas in proportion as they came more from the west than the north and tending to be called either or both together when they came broadly from the north-west? We must grant that in a particular epoch the Greeks figured prominently as Yavanas, but these were primarily the Bactrian Greeks who came with the Persian term for all Greeks clinging to them so that they got most easily and most appropriately pinned with the Indian label for foreigners, a label which continued for the Indo-greeks.

There is no historic evidence that the Macedonians were called Yavanas by their Indian contemporaries. They may have been, but we know nothing about it. And even if they were so called we have nothing to connect them, by virtue of such a name, with Asoka's Yonas or Yona rajas. The Buddhist chronicles about Asoka have the term Yona just as his inscriptions do, but, while his names of Yona rajas raise a controversy about the Macedonian kings, these chronicles give not the slightest cause for discussing in relation with him Antiochus II and his fellows. All arguments bringing in those kings just from Asoka's mention of Yonas seem to be unfounded.

The derivation of "Yavana" or "Yona" from "Ionia" is arbitrary. S. N. Pradhan has reminded us of the Mahabharata's statement: "It has been remembered that the Yavanas are the descendants of Turvasu, the son of Yahati Nahusa."² And after mentioning that "Turvasu" is the Puranic form of "Turvas" mentioned in the Rig Veda (VII. 19. 8), he has added: "Philologists declare that the Y in Yavana may be replaced by J; that is, both the forms Yavana and Javana are permissible and therefore interchangeable. Javana even in later

¹ *The Vedic age*, p. 545

² I. 79.42.

Sanskrit literature means 'one who possesses speed'. (Compare Yaska's derivation of Pijavana, *Nirukta* II, 24, Roth's edition, Gottingen.) Now the word Turvas also means 'one who runs fast', so that both the words Turvas and Javana mean the same."¹ An association of youthfulness with rapid running led perhaps to the secondary significance which T. Subba Row recommended even as early as 1883² to counteract the theory that in the word Yavana we see how the Greeks "projected their influence"—the significance "young" or "younger" from the Sanscrit *Ywan* to designate people of a less old race than the Indians, strangers of any kind who came from abroad. "An exact parallel," remarks Subba Row, "is afforded in our present day. To the Tibetans every foreigner is known as a *Peling*; the Chinese designate Europeans as 'red-haired devils'; and the Mussalmans call everyone outside of Islam a Kaffir."

If it be asked how "Ionia" came to resemble "Yona" and "Yavana", the answer could be either that like several other terms it derived from a common original stock or that there was a migration of the Indian Yavanas to the West. It is curious to find Dorvas and Daradas listed among ancient Indian tribes and to encounter Dorians and Dardanians among the Greeks. Perhaps what will explain this "coincidence" will explain also the occurrence of "Ionia". The even greater resemblance of the Persian equivalent of "Ionia" to the Indian term is easily intelligible, for the old Persian language was considerably allied to the speech of ancient India.

To assert that Asoka's five rajas were Greeks merely because they were Yavana is to prejudge the issue of Sandrocottus. Of course, in relation to their names, we cannot avoid discussing those of Alexander the Great's successors, and we shall soon come to grips with them. But all the evidence from ancient Indian usage of the term Yavana creates the presumption that these names do not have Greek originals.

And the presumption is the stronger because, if Asoka were the grandson and Bindusara the son of Sandrocottus, we should expect another term. Once we conceive Chandragupta Maurya to be Sandrocottus, we have to think of him as one who was familiar with Alexander the Great's presence along the Indus, who knew the ambassador Megasthenes sent by Seleucus Nicator to Pataliputra, and who contracted even a "matrimonial alliance" with a daughter of Seleucus; and we must think of Bindusara as having received one or two ambassadors from Ptolemy: all this intercourse by them with these Greeks could never leave them ignorant of the fact that Alexander who is clearly called a Macedonian or a Hellene by Arrian and whom Plutarch always calls a Macedonian came from

¹ *The Chronology of Ancient India*, p. 95.

² In a number of the periodical *Theosophist*.

Macedonia and that Ptolemy was also from the same country. And if they knew this very well, then, as Rajendralala Mitra remarks, "it would be in the last degree inconsistent to suppose that Asoka was other than thoroughly cognisant of the proper name of the Greeks and of the history of the Macedonian invasion from which he was so little removed in time and in which his grandfather took so prominent a part. And such being the case, it is to be expected that he should, when describing persons of the race of his grandmother, in a state document of great importance, call them by their proper tribal or race name."¹ When he does not, we may urge the excuse of a hypothetical pre-Alexandrine Greek colony by the Indus, which had made all Greeks Yonas to Asoka's India; but the odds are surely in favour of the conclusion that he did not because his five rajas were Yavanas who were not at all Macedonians.

Bhandarkar is evidently aware of these odds when he makes it one of the arguments for his Greek colony that if the Greeks had for the first time been known to the Indians in the time of Alexander the Great they would have been called by another name than "Yavana" because the Greeks who accompanied Alexander were not Ionians.² Perhaps the sense of the improbable *vis-à-vis* the postulation of such a colony as well as *vis-à-vis* Asoka's omission to employ some equivalent of "Macedonian" is at the back of R. Shama Sastry's note that Asoka's subject Yavanas are not necessarily Greeks but merely clans of foreigners, implying that the term Yavana for the five independent rajas, although meaning Greek, is also broadly used to say "foreign".³ The sense of the improbable is justified, but, even apart from other testimonies, now when the Yavanas are yoked with the Kambojas and Gandharas in the manner of numerous ancient Indian writings they cannot easily be considered as foreigners in general any more than as colonising Greeks in particular. The strangeness of Asoka's failure to speak of Macedonians remains unmitigated if we take him to be a contemporary of Antiochus, Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander of Epirus and to have perhaps even had Macedonian blood in his veins.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

¹ *Indo-Aryans*, Vol. II, p. 202.

² *Asoka*, pp. 30-1.

³ *Evolution of Indian Polity*, p. 111, footnote 158.

Students' Section

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SELF: *I have been experiencing calm and silence, but the Ananda and love which I was feeling have disappeared.*

SRI AUROBINDO: The basis of calm and silence should be there first—otherwise the Ananda and love may take a too vital character and prove unstable. (19-1-1934)

SELF: *You once wrote about the disappearance of love and Ananda: "It is so with all the spiritual experiences. The ordinary consciousness is not accustomed to hold them." But if calm and silence came, would one still be the ordinary consciousness?*

SRI AUROBINDO: I mean by the ordinary consciousness the human consciousness which has to be changed—it is into that consciousness that all these experiences from above come in order to change it first into higher mind and then into a still higher thing. Before [the] divine Love and Ananda can be able to settle, there is much more that is to be done—first the psychic love must be there and other things besides. (9-2-1934)

SELF: *How would you distinguish the psychic love from the divine love?*

SRI AUROBINDO: The psychic love is pure and full of self-giving without egoistic demands, but it is human and can err and suffer. The Divine Love is something much vaster and deeper and full of light and Ananda. (13-2-1934)

SELF: *It is said that all the higher movements proceed from the heart. How is it then that one can feel the Mother's work proceeding from the forehead-centre?*

MOTHER INDIA

SRI AUROBINDO: In the heart-centre is the psychic being—but the Force may come downward from above as well as from inward. (24-4-1934)

SELF: *One is told that without a universal love there can be no real progress. But mostly one remains inwardly withdrawn and concentrated on the Mother.*

SRI AUROBINDO: You are not able now to have the universal love—it is not in your nature. Wait till your nature is widened by the higher consciousness, then your disabilities in that direction will disappear. (7-5-1934)

SELF: *An energy comes which allows no tamas, and supports the actions with a quietness and tries to accomplish everything harmoniously and steadily.*

SRI AUROBINDO: That is the beginning of what is called Tapas, though at first it tends to have a rajasic element. (7-7-1934)

SELF: *Sometimes the being feels something physically all over like a thrill, but it is not exactly a thrill. Is it what may be called a "glow"?*

SRI AUROBINDO: A glow means a subdued but rich light or else a sort of warm exhilaration of a luminous kind. (27-10-1934)

SELF: *What is indicated by the vibrations that one feels in inner experience?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Vibrations are either of a Force or a Presence. (3-2-1934)

SELF: *One feels sometimes an emptiness or void. Somebody said that the void is a Divine Darkness.*

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't believe much in this Divine Darkness. It is a Christian idea. For us the Divine is Peace, Purity, wideness, Light, Ananda. (1-11-1934)

SELF: *It is difficult to take rasa in the work. One's attention is mainly on the inner sadhana.*

SRI AUROBINDO: There must be the rasa, but it comes when there is the dynamic descent of the Power.

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

SELF: *What are the higher dynamic activities?*

SRI AUROBINDO: Knowledge, higher Will, Force, universal Ananda.
(18-12-1934)

SELF: *With a certain kind of will, one can quiet even the subconscious for a while. But a greater will-power is required for a constant hold.*

SRI AUROBINDO: That is one of the higher dynamic activities.

NAGIN DOSHI

A PRAYER

He weeps to-day...
In the bondage of the very liberty
He had so ardently sought
He weeps to-day.
“Take away this freedom,” he prays.
“Leave me no more in this dark ignorance,
This garbage of infatuation.
Strike me no more
With the lashes
Of the thousand everyday deaths...
All the morns of my life’s ego
Are now blossoming
As flowers of offering.
Oh, come!
Accept me with Thy unreasoning mercy.
Under the dust of Thy Feet
Let me be the dust.
All my heart yearns to-day
To be Thine,
Only Thine...
Will not my tears reach Thee—
Ever?”

ANIRUDDHA

(Adapted from a Bengali poem by Kanupriya Chatterjee.)

LYRICS FOR THE LITTLE ONES

GOOD WISHES

MAY all be happy, hale and strong!
Let no one suffer here!
May all enjoy without a break
God's blessings of good cheer!

May all have sight to see the truth,
And strength to live the right!
Let love be born in every heart
Changed to a heaven bright!

May sorrows, struggles meet their end
With all the gathered gloom,
And peace become the law of life,
And beauty be in bloom!

May all find home in God's great heart
Of love and light and bliss!
And let their infant cheeks receive
His soul-entrancing kiss!

THY SMILE

THY gracious smile is all to me;
It makes me happy like a god;
It brings a rippling rhythmic life
Of nectar to this deathful clod.

It is a promise bright and sure
To my dull soul stuck deep in mire,
That it shall be redeemed and raised
To heaven's tier on shining tier.

It is a purifying force
Of Ganga true for sullied hearts;
Bathed in its light the nature turns
To jasmine-bloom in all its parts.

It comforts us in our distress
And brightens up our gloomy hours;
It helps and hews through hardships all
And leads us to God-haloed towers.

Thy smile, sweet Mother! is love's bloom
That's here to change and mould our earth
Into an Eden of delight,
The Immortals' glorious home and hearth.

PUJALAL

THE FOUR AGES OF INDIA'S CULTURAL CYCLE

THE VEDIC AGE: THE AGE OF SYMBOLISM

IN accordance with the Hindu theory of India's cultural cycle—its Yuga Chakra—the first of its four ages is Satya Yuga; and corresponds to the Age of Symbolism of our present Cycle as described by Sri Aurobindo in his book *The Human Cycle*. All writers, that is the Hindu traditionalists and the modern History scholars both European and Indian, agree that this is also the Vedic age. Sri Aurobindo too agrees with them; but the agreement between them all is only in giving this particular name to it and no further. In providing the readers of History with a historical knowledge of the Vedic age, the Hindu traditionalists and the modern historians, of whom at present only the latter are generally accepted as right, are poles asunder. The Hindu traditionalists say that the Vedic age or Satya Yuga of this cycle—according to them there are many cycles and each cycle begins always with Satya Yuga—began 38,88,000 years ago and its Iron age, Kali Yuga, began about 5000 years ago. The modern historians say that the Vedic age began about 4000 years ago and continued up to the time of Buddha for about 1500 years; and they do not account for the History of India through the two intermediate ages, Treta and Dwapara, the age of the Smritis and that of the Puranas, of the Hindu theory. The history of the first three ages is supposed to have passed through 1500 years and is called the pre-historic age of India by the modern historians. Both these groups base their history of India on India's ancient scriptures only; but they differ from each other in the interpretation of these writings.

It is not by the attitudes with which these two groups approached this subject that we can get the true history of the Vedic age. It can be made available only by an understanding of how individuals and society and the different aspects of their life were influenced by the three disciplines, the ritualistic, the psychological and the spiritual contained in the secret symbolism of the Veda. It is only when the clue of this secret symbolism is found that we can know the true history of the Vedic age and its development in a most natural way afterwards from age to age. It is because the Hindu traditionalist as a ritualist and the modern historian as a naturalist could not find the clue to the secret symbolism of the Veda that their versions differed from each other and also from the truth. Sri Aurobindo has not attempted to write a

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history of ancient India, but what he has written, though it does not give us the chronological sequence of the history of its civilisation and culture, gives us its psychological stages in a more thorough manner than the histories of both the ritualists and the naturalists. Of the Vedas, the Hindu traditionalist has been able to know the ritualistic symbolism, not as it was practised then but as it was practised during the period of the Sutras thousands of years after the Vedic period. Similarly the modern historian has been able to appreciate the naturalistic interpretation of the four Vedas as Professor Max Muller and his company of scholars of Oriental Studies understood them—as being a mere “henotheistic” worship of Nature Powers by primitive barbarians. As for instance, it is said that in the earliest days of this cycle, the Veda was only one and included Rik, Yajus and Saman, the Veda Trayi, the Three Words collectively, and that later it branched off into three Veda Sakhas or branches of Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Sama Veda, and that still later a fourth Veda of Atharva was added to it, and that later still the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads were successively included in the category of the Veda. But neither the ritualistic nor the naturalistic historian has been able to give an intelligible version of the perfectly natural growth of the religious and spiritual thought and belief through all these stages of one Veda to three and then to four and then to seven parts of Veda of which the Rig Veda formed the beginning and the Upanishads the end. Then again we know that Atharvan, a great Rishi who is said by the Rig Veda to have lived in some previous cycle as a divine-human being, has not himself composed any hymns of the Rig Veda in the Rig Vedic period. All on a sudden he appears in Atharva Veda, which goes by his name perhaps because this whole Veda is inspired by him or most of it is composed by him;¹ and it is a different branch or Sakha from the other three Sakhas. Then all the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads belong to one or another of these four Sakhas. Mundakopaniśad belongs to Atharva Veda Sakha and in the first sloka of it is said that Atharvan is the son of Brahma to whom the Divine knowledge in that Upanishad is disclosed. In the second sloka it is said that Atharvan narrated it to Angir, he to Satyavaha of the clan of Rishi Bharadwaja, and he to Angirasa. In the third Sloka it is said that Seunaka approached and learnt the knowledge from Angirasa. At present the version that we have of this Upanishad is as Shounaka heard it from Angirasa. It is not known whether there is an Atharvan

¹ Of all Indian Vedic Scholars, perhaps only Swami Dayananda is of the definite opinion that the Rik, Yajur, Saman and Atharvan alone form the Veda, and the other three Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads do not form it, though all may be called Sruties. If the intrinsic merit of each of these is known, maybe the difference of opinion in giving names to them will really cease.

of the Brahmanas and another of Aranyakas also. Are all these Atharvans with their different characters one and the same historical figure or different historical figures? Whatever the answer is, the birth and history of Atharvan are puzzling to the naturalistic historian; Professor Max Muller says in his preface to the *Sacred Books of the East* about the Upanishads, "I confess it has been a problem to me, aye, and to a great extent is so still, how the Sacred Books of the East should, by the side of so much that is fresh, natural, simple, beautiful, and true, contain so much that is not only unmeaning, artificial and silly, but even hideous and repellent." Sri Aurobindo quotes the above passage in his article "On Translating the Upanishads" which is published in his book *Eight Upanishads*. With reference to it he writes "Now, I myself being only a poor coarse-minded Oriental and therefore not disposed to deny the gross physical facts of life and nature or able to see why we should scuttle them out of sight and put on a smug, respectable expression which suggests while it affects to hide their existence, this perhaps is the reason why I am somewhat at a loss to imagine what the professor found in the Upanishads that is hideous and repellent. Still I was brought up almost from my infancy in England and received an English education, so that I have glimmerings. But as to what he intends by the unmeaning, artificial and silly elements, there can be no doubt. Everything is unmeaning in the Upanishads which the Europeans cannot understand, everything is artificial which does not come within the circle of their mental experience and everything is silly which is not explicable by European Science and wisdom. Now this attitude is almost inevitable on the part of an European, for we all judge according to our lights and those who keep their minds really open, who can realise that there may be lights which are not theirs and yet as illuminating or more illuminating than theirs, are in any nation a very small handful. For the most part men are the slaves of their associations." (P. IX)

The same can be said about the ritualistic historian who is not open to the psychological and spiritual disciplines behind the secret symbolism of the Veda, their significances and their results on man's life. He translates the scriptures literally and not knowing their symbolic meaning asserts that their literal meaning must be a historical fact on the ground that scriptures and traditions must be believed even if there is contrary evidence. In the versions, by both these groups, of the ancient history of India there are as many errors as there are truths, and both in the errors and the truths the versions differ from each other. The errors are mainly due to reading our own mentality into that of our ancient forefathers; this can be avoided only by our subjective identification with their spirit. However, on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's writings on these scriptures, a third version can be given.

THE FOUR AGES OF INDIA'S CULTURAL CYCLE

We may next take up for consideration some concrete examples of the symbolism of the ancients and then of their psychological and spiritual disciplines. According to their doctrines, "the supreme truth of all that is is a Being or an existence beyond the mental and physical appearances we contact here. Beyond mind, life and body there is a Spirit and Self containing all that is finite and infinite, surpassing all that is relative, a supreme Absolute, originating and supporting all that is transient, a one Eternal", towards whom all Nature inwardly strives through all the complexity of her paths and by-paths and finally moves in a conscious way through humanity for a complete possession and expression of the Divine Essence, Consciousness, Force and Bliss. Everything was thus seen ultimately in terms of the Spiritual Reality and sought to be moulded according to them. To quote one historical example, as Sri Aurobindo puts it: "The Indian ideal of the relation between man and woman has always been governed by the symbolism of the relation between the Purusha and Prakriti (in the Veda Nri and Gna), the male and female divine Principles in the universe." Then again there is the example, also cited by Sri Aurobindo, of the body of the Creator, the Supreme Divine, in the Purusha Sukta of the Rig Veda representing the four cosmic Principles of Divine Wisdom, Divine Power, Divine Harmony and Divine Work symbolising the four orders of society. These orders later degenerated into castes. But the original Principles played an important part in stabilising society in the earlier periods of Hindu life and may be considered in their spiritual, psychological and physical effects on life. In the Rig Veda there is absolutely no mention of castes except the mention of the four Varnas, and that too only once in this Sukta, which cannot be taken as a proof of the existence of the caste system then. All that is mentioned of Varna is in terms of Arya Varna and Dasa Varna and here it never meant caste system as the word "Varna" is understood now. Throughout the Rig Vedic period the spiritual perfection of man aimed at seems to be more or less integral and this Sukta seems to have been composed at the end of the Rig Vedic period. The aim of this kind of spiritual perfection could not be continued throughout the cycle, perhaps because the Supreme Divine's preoccupation through Nature with man in the mass was first to develop him mentally and make him enlightened; even the Aryan man in the mass in those days had not reached such a stage; he was still living in the sense-mind though with an intense religious and spiritual aspiration. So after an experiment and trial of this integral spiritual perfection of man on a pretty large scale, the next attempt was at spiritual perfection of the type, as represented by the four cosmic Principles. In spite of the caste system not being followed in countries other than India, and its not being strictly followed even in India at present, are not the four Cosmic Principles of Knowledge, Power,

Harmony and Work represented in the four orders of society, the men of Knowledge, the men of Power, the men of Harmony and unity, and finally the men of Work and service everywhere in humanity? This symbol of the four Varnas of society represented then the psychological perfection and spiritual truth of the inner being of man more than the outer caste system; and without following the caste rigidity, the truth behind this symbol can be put into practice in life even now, and that is what it is leading to at present. The whole of man's social life in the Vedic period was religionised and based on a spiritual culture of symbolic rites and ceremonies; only, we do not know the methods of symbolism in the early days of the Vedic age while we know the methods in the later days through the Brahmanas and the still later Sutras.

“Their (the Vedic hymns’) formulas and ceremonies are, overtly, the details of an outward ritual devised for the Pantheistic Nature-Worship which was then the common religion, covertly the sacred words, the effective symbols of a spiritual experience and knowledge and a psychological discipline of self-culture which were then the highest achievement of the human race...” (*On the Veda*, page 9.)

“Here (in the Rig Veda) we have the ancient psychological science and the art of spiritual living of which the Upanishads are the philosophical outcome and modification and Vedanta, Sankhya and Yoga the late intellectual result and logical dogma. But like all life, and like all science that is still vital, it is free from the armoured rigidities of the reasoning intellect; in spite of its established symbols and sacred formulae it is still large, free, flexible, fluid, supple and subtle. It has the movement of life and the large breath of the soul. And while the later philosophies are books of Knowledge and make liberation the one supreme good, the Veda is a Book of Works and the hope for which it spurns our present bonds and littleness is perfection, self-achievement, immortality.” (*On the Veda*, page 423.)

What then is “the psychological science and the art of spiritual living” in the Rig Veda? What is the “hope of perfection, self-achievement and immortality,” for which, the Veda, the Book of Works, spurns our present bonds and littleness, while the later philosophies which are the Books of Knowledge make only liberation the one supreme good? We shall examine the Rig Veda itself and the Aitereya Brahmana which belongs to the Rig Veda branch for an answer to the above questions. We have seen in the previous chapter that the hymns of the Rig Veda are Words of Power, composed by the Rishi in a deeper consciousness than the normal, framed in the heart, held in the surface mind and concentrated upon, on account of which they attained powers to act and produce results on the physical, vital and mental planes. This inner practice of the Rishis and its power during those days was a thing that was possible not

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only to them but to all others who took to the method initiated by the Rishis. Perhaps it is a thing that is now also made possible to humanity by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother.

Though the hymns were Words of Power, they were composed sometimes in terms of the actual historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the hymn, sometimes in terms of allusions to ancient myths and legends but almost always in terms of the external religion of the primitive man who could use the hymn and perform the sacrificial ceremony with physical and corresponding psychological results. But then the initiates were introduced through these very hymns into psychological and spiritual disciplines.

(To be continued)

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