

RV 4.58

ṛṣi: vāmadeva gautama; devatā: agniḥ sūryo vāpo vā gāvo vā ghṛtastutir vā;
chanda: triṣṭup, 11 jagatī

समुद्राद् ऊर्मिर् मधुमाँ उद् आरद् उपांशुना सम् अमृतत्वम् आनद् ।
घृतस्य नाम गुह्यं यद् अस्ति जिह्वा देवानाम् अमृतस्य नाभिः ॥ ४-०५८-०१
वयं नाम प्र ब्रवामा घृतस्यास्मिन् यज्ञे धारयामा नमोभिः ।
उप ब्रह्मा शृणवच् छस्यमानं चतुःशृङ्गो ऽवमीद् गौर एतत् ॥ ४-०५८-०२
चत्वारि शृङ्गा त्रयो अस्य पादा द्वे शीर्षे सप्त हस्तासो अस्य ।
त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोरवीति महो देवो मर्त्यान् आ विवेश ॥ ४-०५८-०३
त्रिधा हितम् पणिभिर् गुह्यमानं गवि देवासो घृतम् अन्व् अविन्दन् ।
इन्द्र एकं सूर्य एकं जजान वेनाद् एकं स्वधया निष् टतक्षुः ॥ ४-०५८-०४
एता अर्षन्ति हृद्यात् समुद्राच् छतव्रजा रिपुणा नावचक्षे ।
घृतस्य धारा अभि चाकशीमि हिरण्ययो वेतसो मध्य आसाम् ॥ ४-०५८-०५
सम्यक् स्रवन्ति सरितो न धेना अन्तर हृदा मनसा पूयमानाः ।
एते अर्षन्त्य् ऊर्मयो घृतस्य मृगा इव क्षिपणोर् ईषमाणाः ॥ ४-०५८-०६
सिन्धोर् इव प्राध्वने शूघनासो वातप्रमियः पतयन्ति यहाः ।
घृतस्य धारा अरुषो न वाजी काष्ठा भिन्दन् ऊर्मिभिः पिन्वमानः ॥ ४-०५८-०७
अभि प्रवन्त समनेव योषाः कल्याण्यः स्मयमानासो अग्निम् ।
घृतस्य धाराः समिधो नसन्त ता जुषाणो हर्यति जातवेदाः ॥ ४-०५८-०८
कन्या इव वहतुम् एतवा उ अज्ज्य् अञ्जाना अभि चाकशीमि ।
यत्र सोमः सूयते यत्र यज्ञो घृतस्य धारा अभि तत् पवन्ते ॥ ४-०५८-०९
अभ्य् अर्षत सुष्टुतिं गव्यम् आजिम् अस्मासु भद्रा द्रविणानि धत्त ।
इमं यज्ञं नयत देवता नो घृतस्य धारा मधुमत् पवन्ते ॥ ४-०५८-१०

धामन् ते विश्वम् भुवनम् अधि श्रितम् अन्तः समुद्रे हृद्य् अन्तर् आयुषि ।
 अपाम् अनीके समिथे य आभृतस् तम् अश्याम मधुमन्तं त ऊर्मिम् ॥ ४-०५८-११

Analysis of RV 4.58

समुद्राद् ऊर्मिर् मधुमाँ उद् आरद् उपांशुना सम् अमृतत्वम् आनद् ।
 घृतस्य नाम गुह्यं यद् अस्ति जिह्वा देवानाम् अमृतस्य नाभिः ॥ ४-०५८-०१

samudrād ūrmīr mādhumāṁś ud ārad
 ūpāṁśunā sām amṛtatvam ānaḥ
 ghṛtasya nāma guhyam yad āsti
 jihvā devānām amṛtasya nābhiḥ 4.058.01

1

FORTH from the ocean sprang the wave of sweetness: together with the stalk it turned to Amṛta, That which is holy oil's mysterious title: but the Gods' tongue is truly Amṛta's centre.¹

Interpretation:

“The Wave of Honey rises from the [Subconscious] Ocean, *samudrād ūrmīr mādhumān ud ārad*, it reaches secretly to Immortality, *upāṁśunā sam amṛtatvam ānaḥ!*”

And what is [known here] as the secret Name of Clarity, *ghṛtasya nāma guhyam yad āsti*, [is actually] the Tongue of the Gods and the Navel of Immortality, *jihvā devānām amṛtasya nābhiḥ!*”

The Vedic tradition ascribes to this hymn the devatā, in this way: *agnih sūryo vāpo vā gāvo vā ghṛtastutir vā*, ‘either Agni or Surya, or Waters or Cows or Affirmation of Ghṛita’, which is quite astonishing, for all these devatās are not distinguished as different here. Sāyaṇa tries to reconcile this puzzle in his own skillful way but it does not seem to gel at the end. He tries to reconcile between the water and the fire by introducing the concept of *vaidyutaḥ agniḥ*, ‘the fire of ightning’, from which the wave of honey arises. Or all of it is rising from the Sun, for it is said in the Veda: *ādityāj jāyate vṛṣṭir iti śruteḥ*, ‘the rain is born from the Sun’, says Sāyaṇa.

The secret Name of Clarity is the Tongue of the Gods and the centre of Immortality here in the lower hemisphere. The Honey-wave rising from the lower Ocean is this secret centre of Immortality and the enjoyment of the Gods. The extracted delight of existence is seeking its own domain and enjoyment, it rises up. And that is the Enjoyment of the Gods, and that is the Navel of Immortality. The word navel is intuitively used here, for it connects the embryo to the womb of the mother, and in the occult sense it is a string attaching the subtle body to the gross physical body.

¹ Griffith's translation

Vocabulary:

a upāṃśu, [u ind. (fr. aṃś, 'to divide', with upa and affix u T. (?) g. svar-ādi Pāṇ. 1-1 , 37) , secretly , in secret RV. x , 83 , 7 MBh. Ragh. &c.; in a low voice , in a whisper ŚBr. AitBr.; m. a prayer uttered in a low voice (so as not to be overheard) Mn. ii , 85 MārKp. &c.; a particular Soma oblation = upāṃśu-graha below VS. TS. ŚBr. &c.

वयं नाम प्र ब्रवामा घृतस्यास्मिन् यज्ञे धारयामा नमोभिः ।

उप ब्रह्मा शृणवच्च छस्यमानं चतुःशृङ्गो ऽवमीद् गौर एतत् ॥ ४-०५८-०२

vayāṃ nāma prā bravāmā ghr̥tāsya
asmín yajñé dhārayāmā námobhiḥ
úpa brahmā śṛṇavac chasyámānaṃ
cātuḥśṛṅgo avamīd gaurá etát 4.058.02

2

Let us declare aloud the name of Ghrta, and at this sacrifice hold it up with homage. So let the Brahman hear the praise we utter. This hath the four-horned Buffalo emitted.

Interpretation:

“Forward, fulfilling all, we thus should express the Name of Clarity in this Sacrifice, *vayaṃ nāma pra bravāmā ghr̥tasyāsmín yajñe*, holding onto it with the help of our multiple surrenders, *dhārayāmā námobhiḥ!*

May Brahman hear the uttered praise [of ours], *upa brahmā śṛṇavac chasyamānaṃ*, for this the Four-horned Bull had utterly emitted, *cātuḥśṛṅgo'avamīd gaura etat!*”

According to Sāyaṇa brahmā here is *parivṛḍadevaḥ*, ‘increased god’, and *cātuḥśṛṅgaḥ* is depicted as bahuvrīhi compound: *catvāri śṛṅgāṇi vedacatuḥṣṭayarūpāṇi yasya saḥ*, ‘the one who has the form of four Vedas’.

Sri Aurobindo interprets this symbol of the four-horned bull as ‘the divine Purusha whose horns are infinite Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Truth.’

चत्वारि शृङ्गा त्रयो अस्य पादा द्वे शीर्षे सप्त हस्तासो अस्य ।

त्रिधा बद्धो वृषभो रोरवीति महो देवो मर्त्यान् आ विवेश ॥ ४-०५८-०३

catvāri śṛṅgā tráyo asya pādā
duvé śīṛsé saptá hástāso asya
trídhā baddhó vṛṣabhó roravīti
mahó devó mártiyāṃ'ā viveśa 4.058.03

3

Four are his horns, three are the feet that bear him; his heads are two, his hands are seven in number. Bound with a triple bond the Steer roars loudly: the mighty God hath entered in to mortals.

Interpretation:

“Four horns he has, and three feet, *catvāri śṛṅgā trayo asya pādā*, two heads and seven hands has he, *dve śīrṣe sapta hastāso asya*.

He roars, being bound by the triple [cord of Nature], *tridhā baddho vṛṣabho roravīti!* The God of Greatness has entered [thus] the mortals, *maho devo martyān ā viveśa!*”

“Vamadeva describes the Purusha in the figure of a man-bull,” - says Sri Aurobindo, - “whose four horns are the four divine principles, his three feet or three legs the three human principles, mentality, vital dynamism and material substance, his two heads the double consciousness of Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, his seven hands the seven natural activities corresponding to the seven principles. “Triply bound”—bound in the mind, bound in the life-energies, bound in the body—the Bull roars aloud; great is the Divinity that has entered into mortals.”

There is an interesting passage in *The Life Divine* describing the sevenfold activities of the Spirit:

“In our scrutiny of the seven principles of existence, says Sri Aurobindo, it was found that they are one in their essential and fundamental reality: for if even the matter of the most material universe is nothing but a status of being of Spirit made an object of sense, envisaged by the Spirit's own consciousness as the stuff of its forms, much more must the life-force that constitutes itself into form of Matter, and the mind consciousness that throws itself out as Life, and the Supermind that develops Mind as one of its powers, be nothing but Spirit itself modified in apparent substance and in dynamism of action, not modified in real essence. All are powers of one Power of being and not other than that All-Existence, All-Consciousness, All-Will, All-Delight which is the true truth behind every appearance. And they are not only one in their reality, but also inseparable in the sevenfold variety of their action. They are the seven colours of the light of the divine consciousness, the seven rays of the Infinite, and by them the Spirit has filled in on the canvas of his self-existence conceptually extended, woven of the objective warp of Space and the subjective woof of Time, the myriad wonders of his self-creation great, simple, symmetrical in its primal laws and vast framings, infinitely curious and intricate in its variety of forms and actions and the complexities of relation and mutual effect of all upon each and each upon all. These are the seven Words of the ancient sages; by them have been created and in the light of their meaning are worked out and have to be interpreted the developed and developing harmonies of the world we know and the worlds behind of which we have only an indirect knowledge. The Light, the Sound is one; their action is sevenfold.”²

² Volume: 18-19 [SABCL] (*The Life Divine*), Page: 482

त्रिधा॑ हित॑म् पणि॑भिर् गुह्य॑मानं॑ गवि॑ देवासो॑ घृत॑म् अन्व॑ अविन्दन् ।
इन्द्र॑ एकं॑ सूर्य॑ एकं॑ जजान॑ वेनाद् एकं॑ स्वधया॑ निष्॑ टतक्षुः ॥ ४-०५८-०४

trīdhā hitām paṇībhir guhyāmānaṃ
gāvi devāso ghr̥tām ānv avindan
īndra ékaṃ sūrya ékaṃ jajāna
venād ékaṃ svadhāyā niṣ ṭatakṣuḥ 4.058.04

4

That oil in triple shape the Gods discovered laid down within the Cow, concealed by Panis. Indra produced one shape, Surya another: by their own power they formed the third from Vena.

Interpretation:

“Triple is the established Clarity, found by the Gods, hidden in the Cow by the Misers (or Traffickers) of Sense, *trīdhā hitām paṇībhir guhyāmānaṃ gavi devāso ghr̥tām ānv avindan!*

Indra made one, *indra ekam*, Surya – another, *sūrya ekam jajāna*, and from the longing [of the lower Nature] by itself they fashioned other kind, *venād ekam svadhayā niṣ ṭatakṣuḥ.*”

Sri Aurobindo comments on this passage in the Secret of the Veda: “For the “ghritam”, the clear light of the mentality reflecting the Truth, has been hidden by the Panis, the lords of the lower sense-activity, and shut up in the subconscious; in our thoughts, in our desires, in our physical consciousness the Light and the Ananda have been triply established, but they are concealed from us. It is in the cow, symbol of the Light from above, that the gods find the clarified streams of the “ghritam”.³

Vocabulary:

vena, mf(ī)n. *yearning, longing, eager, anxious, loving RV.*; m. *longing, desire, wish, care* ib.; N. of a divine being of the middle region Naigh. v , 4, Nir. x , 38 (also applied to Indra, the Sun, Prajā-pati, and a Gandharva ; in AitBr. i , 20 connected with the navel); (ā) f. *love, desire RV.*

एता॑ अर्षन्ति॑ हृद्यात्॑ समुद्राच्च॑ छतव्रजा॑ रिपुणा॑ नावचक्षे॑ ।
घृत॑स्य धारा॑ अभि॑ चाकशीमि॑ हिरण्ययो॑ वेतसो॑ मध्य॑ आसाम् ॥ ४-०५८-०५

etā arṣanti hr̥diyāt samudrāc
chatāvrajā ripuṇā nāvacākṣe
ghr̥tāsya dhārā abhī cākaśīmi
hiraṇyāyo vetasó mādhyā āsām 4.058.05

³ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 308

5

From inmost reservoir in countless channels flow down these rivers which the foe beholds not. I look upon the streams of oil descending, and lo! the Golden Reed is there among them.

Interpretation:

“These streams of Clarity rise from the Ocean-Heart, *etā arṣanti hṛdyāt samudrāc*, by hundreds they are kept imprisoned by the Enemy [for us] to see not *chatāvrajā ripúnā nāvacákṣe!*

The streams of Clarity I thus behold, *ghṛtāsya dhārá abhí cākaśīmi !* [Where] I am a golden pillar (=steadiness) among them, *hiraṇyáyo vetasó mádhya āsām!*”

“These streams, says the Rishi, rise from the heart of things, from the ocean of the subconscious, *hṛdyāt samudrāt*, but they are confined in a hundred pens by the enemy, Vritra, so that they may be kept from the eye of discernment, from the knowledge that labours in us to enlighten that which is concealed and deliver that which is imprisoned.”⁴

Vocabulary:

a vetasa, m. (cf. veta and vetra) *the ratan (Calamus Rotang) or a similar kind of cane , a reed , rod , stick RV. &c. &c.*

स॒म्यक् स्र॑वन्ति॒ सरि॑तो न॒ धेना॑ अन्त॒र् हृ॒दा म॑नसा॒ पू॒यमा॑नाः ।
ए॒ते अ॑र्षन्त्य् उ॒र्मयो॑ घृ॒तस्य॑ मृ॒गा इ॒व क्षि॑प॒णोर् ई॑ष॒माणाः ॥ ४-०५८-०६

samyák sravanti saríto ná dhénā
antár hṛdā mánasā pūyámānāḥ
eté arṣanti ūrmáyo ghṛtāsya
mṛgā iva kṣipañór īṣamāṇāḥ 4.058.06

6

Like rivers our libations flow together, cleansing themselves in inmost heart and spirit. The streams of holy oil pour swiftly downward like the wild beasts that fly before the bowman.

Interpretation:

“The feeding streams flow perfectly like rivers, *samyák sravanti saríto ná dhénā*, made pure by inner heart and mind, *antár hṛdā mánasā pūyámānāḥ*.

The waves of Clarity run, *eté arṣanti ūrmáyo ghṛtāsya*, as if the beasts escaping from the arrow of the archer, *mṛgā iva kṣipañór īṣamāṇāḥ*.”

Vocabulary:

kṣipañu, m. ‘an archer’, or (u) n. ‘a missile weapon’ *RV. iv , 58 , 6;* (us) m. air , wind *Uṇ. iii, 52.*

⁴ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 308

dhenā, m. *the ocean or a river* L.; (dhenā) f. *a milch cow; pl. any beverage made of milk* RV.; a mare (?), i, 101, 10, v, 30, 9; *speech, voice* (?), i, 2, 3 (Sāy.; cf. Naigh. i, 11); N. of the wife of Brihaspati TAr. Vait.

īṣ, 1. A. (with prep. also P., īṣate,-ti p. īṣamāṇa RV. AV.; īṣe, īṣitum) *to go, to fly away, escape* RV. AitBr.; *to attack, hurt* TS.; *to glean*.

सिन्धोर् इव प्राध्वने शूघनासो वातप्रमियः पतयन्ति यद्वाः ।

घृतस्य धारा अरुषो न वाजी काष्ठा भिन्दन् ऊर्मिभिः पिन्वमानः ॥ ४-०५८-०७

síndhor iva prādhvané śūghanāso
vātapramiyaḥ patayanti yahvāḥ
ghṛtāsya dhārā aruṣó ná vājī
kāṣṭhā bhindānn ūrmíbhiḥ pínvamānaḥ 4.058.07

7

As rushing down the rapids of a river, flow swifter than the wind the vigorous currents, The streams of oil in swelling fluctuation like a red courser bursting through the fences.

Interpretation:

Sri Aurobindo gives completely different interpretation of these verses:

“They move in the path on the borders of the subconscious, dense if impetuous in their movements, limited by the nervous action, in small formations of the life-energy Vayu, vātapramiyaḥ.”⁵

So we may translate this verse as follows:

“As if on the shore of the Ocean, *síndhor iva prādhvané*, the energetic currents flow, *śūghanāsaḥ patayanti yahvāḥ*, measured (or diminished) by the vital force of life-god, *vātapramiyaḥ*, braking through fences, *kāṣṭhā bhindan*, like a courser of the Sun, *aruṣó ná vājī*, the streams of Clarity, *ghṛtāsya dhārā*, overflow [them] by the waves, *ūrmíbhiḥ pínvamānaḥ*.”

Vocabulary:

sindhu, m. and f. (prob. fr. 1 . sidh ‘to go’) *a river, stream* (esp. the Indus) RV. &c. &c.; m. *flood, waters* (also in the sky) RV. AV.; *ocean, sea* RV. &c. &c.

prādhvana, n. *the bed of a river or stream* RV.

śūghana, mfn. *going quickly, swift, fleet* (=kṣipra) RV. iv, 58, 7 (cf. Naigh. ii, 15).

vāta-pramī, mfn. *outstripping the wind* RV. iv, 58, 7

pataya, Caus. patayati, *to fly or move rapidly along* RV. VS.; *to speed* (trans.; cf. patayat) pinv, 1. P. (Dhātup. xv, 79 pinvati), *to cause to swell, distend, to cause to overflow or abound* RV. AV.; (A pinvate), *to swell, be distended, abound, overflow* ib.

⁵ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 308

अभि प्रवन्त समनेव योषाः कल्याण्यः स्मयमानासो अग्निम् ।
 घृतस्य धाराः समिधो नसन्त ता जुषाणो हर्यति जातवेदाः ॥ ४-०५८-०८

abhí pravanta sámaneva yóṣāḥ
 kalyāṇīyaḥ smáyamānāso agnīm
 ghr̥tāsya dhārāḥ samídho nasanta
 tā juṣāṇó haryati jātavedāḥ 4.058.08

8

Like women at a gathering fair to look on and gently smiling, they incline to Agni.
 The streams of holy oil attain the fuel, and Jatavedas joyfully receives them.

Interpretation:

“They all at once rush onto Agni, *abhí pravanta sámaneva agnim*, like the beautiful maidens smiling [when approaching], *yóṣāḥ kalyāṇīyaḥ smáyamānāsaḥ*, the streams of Clarity, *ghr̥tāsya dhārāḥ*, come all igniting [like a fuel for fire], *samídho nasanta*, and happy Jatavedas delights in them, *tā juṣāṇó haryati jātavedāḥ*.”

“Purified progressively by the experiences of the conscious heart and mind, these energies of Nature become finally capable of the marriage with Agni, the divine Will-force, which breaks down their boundaries and is himself nourished by their now abundant waves. That is the crisis of the being by which the mortal nature prepares its conversion to immortality.”⁶

Vocabulary:

abhipru, 1., to hasten near or towards RV. iv , 58 , 8; to jump into ŚBr.
 samanā, ind. in one point , together RV.: at a time , all at once ib.; likewise , uniformly ib.
 nas, 1. A. (Dhātup. xvi , 26) nasate (aor. Pot. nasīmahī RV. ii , 16 , 8 ; pf nese ; fut. nasitā Gr.) to approach, resort to, join, copulate (esp. as husband and wife) RV.; to be crooked or fraudulent Dhātup.
 hary, cl. r.P. (Dhātup. xv , 7) haryati (rarely A. -te; pr. p. P. haryat, or haryamāṇa), to like, delight in, be fond of or pleased with, yearn after, long for (acc. or loc.) RV.; to go Naigh. ii , 14

कन्या इव वहतुम् एतवा उ अञ्ज्यु अञ्जाना अभि चाकशीमि ।
 यत्र सोमः सूयते यत्र यज्ञो घृतस्य धारा अभि तत् पवन्ते ॥ ४-०५८-०९

kanyā iva vahatúm étavā u
 añjī añjānā abhí cākaśīmi
 yātra sómaḥ sūyāte yātra yajñō
 ghr̥tāsya dhārā abhí tát pavante 4.058.09

⁶ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 308

9

As maidens dock themselves with gay adornment to join the bridal feast, I now behold them. Where Soma flows and sacrifice is ready, thither the streams of holy oil are running.

Interpretation:

"I see, *abhi cākaśīmi*, them adding brightness to their shining beauty, *añjī añjānā*, (or anointing themselves with brilliancy), as if the maidens who put up the makeup to go for marriage, *kanyā iva vahatúm étavā u*, where the Soma-wine is pressed, *yatra somaḥ sūyate*, and the Sacrifice [is performed], *yatra yajñāḥ*, the streams of Clarity purify that, *ghṛtāsya dhārā abhi tát pavante*."

Vocabulary:

vahatu, m. *the bridal procession (to the husband's house) , nuptial ceremony RV. AV. AitBr. (pl. the objects constituting a bride's dowry TBr.), means of furthering RV. vii , 1 , 17*

añji, mfn. *applying an ointment or pigment RV. ointment , brilliancy RV. unctuous , smooth , sleek (membrum virile) VS.*

añjana, n. *paint , especially as a cosmetic*

अभ्य् अर्षत सुष्टुतिं गव्यम् आजिम् अस्मासु भद्रा द्रविणानि धत्त ।
इमं यज्ञं नयत देवता नो घृतस्य धारा मधुमत् पवन्ते ॥ ४-०५८-१०

abhy àrṣata suṣṭutīm gávyam ājīm
asmāsu bhadrā dráviṇāni dhatta
imāṃ yajñāṃ nayata devātā no
ghṛtāsya dhārā mádhumat pavante 4.058.10

10

Send to our eulogy a herd of cattle bestow upon us excellent possessions. Bear to the Gods the sacrifice we offer the streams of oil flow pure and full of sweetness.

Interpretation:

"Flow quickly towards [this] perfect Affirmation, *abhy àrṣata suṣṭutīm*, establish in us the Luminous Knowledge, Victory on the Path to the Goal, and blissful things, *gávyam ājīm asmāsu bhadrā dráviṇāni dhatta*.

Bring our Deities to this Sacrifice, *imāṃ yajñāṃ nayata devātā naḥ!* The streams of Clarity purify sweetly like a honey, *ghṛtāsya dhārā mádhumat pavante*."

Vocabulary:

ṛṣ, (1. P. arṣati, ānarṣa, arṣitā), *to flow , flow quickly , glide , move with a quick motion RV. AV. VS.; to bring near by flowing RV.*

āji, m. rarely f. only once in RV. i , 116 , 15 , (aj) , *a running-match a fighting-match , prize-fight, combat RV. AV. &c.; war , battle (ājau, in battle MBh. R. Ragh. xii , 45 , &c.) place for running , race-course RV. iv , 24 , 8, AV. xiii , 2 , 4*

धामन् ते विश्वम् भुवनम् अधि श्रितम् अन्तः समुद्रे हृद्य् अन्तर् आयुषि ।
 अपाम् अनीके समिथे य आभृतस् तम् अश्याम मधुमन्तं त ऊर्मिम् ॥ ४-०५८-११

dhāman te víśvam bhúvanam ádhi śritám
 antáḥ samudré hṛdí antár āyuṣi
 apām ánīke samithé yá ābhṛtas
 tám aśyāma mádhumantaṃ ta ūrmím 4.058.11

11

The universe depends upon thy power and might within the sea, within the heart, within all life. May we attain that sweetly-flavoured wave of thine, brought, at its gathering, o'er the surface of the floods.

Interpretation:

“It is in your Abode, *dhāman te*, that all this world is dwelling, *víśvam bhúvanam ádhi śritám*, and in the Ocean of Subconscient, in the Heart and in Life, *antáḥ samudré hṛdí antár āyuṣi*.

May we enjoy that, *tám aśyāma*, which is brought to the surface from the [deep] waters, *apām ánīke samithé yá ābhṛtas*, your wave of Honey, *mádhumantaṃ ta ūrmím!*”

“In the last verse of the hymn Vamadeva describes the whole of existence as established above in the seat of the divine Purusha, below in the ocean of the subconscient and in the Life, *antaḥ samudre hṛdi antarāyuṣi*.

The conscious mind is, then, the channel through which there is communication between the upper ocean and the lower, between superconscient and subconscient, the light divine and the original darkness of Nature.”⁷

Sri Aurobindo translates this passage also as: “May we taste that honeyed wave of thine”—of Agni, the divine Purusha, the four-horned Bull of the worlds—“which is borne in the force of the Waters where they come together.” So Sri Aurobindo follows literal translation of the words *apām anīke samithe* ‘in the force of the Waters coming together’, which is suggestive of a deeper mystic significance where the waters of the Superconscient and Subconscient Oceans create the third movement, a wave, as it were, of our Conscious Existence.

Vocabulary:

anīka, m.n., *face appearance, splendour, edge, point front, row, array, march, army, forces war, combat.*

samitha, m. *hostile encounter, conflict, collision RV.; offering, oblation ib.*

⁷ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 307

Commentaries by Sri Aurobindo:

“The psychological conceptions of the Vedic Rishis have often a marvellous profundity and nowhere more than when they deal with the phenomenon of the conscious activities of mind and life emerging out of the subconscious. It may be said, even, that this idea is the whole basis of the rich and subtle philosophy evolved in that early dawn of knowledge by these inspired Mystics. Nor has any other expressed it with a greater subtlety and felicity than the Rishi Vamadeva, at once one of the most profound seers and one of the sweetest singers of the Vedic age. One of his hymns, the last of the fourth Mandala, is indeed the most important key we possess to the symbolism which hid behind the figures of the sacrifice those realities of psychological experience and perception deemed so sacred by the Aryan forefathers.

In that hymn Vamadeva speaks of the ocean of the subconscious which underlies all our life and activities. Out of that ocean rises “the honeyed wave” of sensational existence with its undelivered burden of unrealised delight climbing full of the “Ghrita” and the “Soma”, the clarified mental consciousness and the illumined Ananda that descends from above, to the heaven of Immortality. The “secret Name” of the mental consciousness, the tongue with which the gods taste the world, the nexus of Immortality, is the Ananda which the Soma symbolises. For all this creation has been, as it were, ejected into the subconscious by the four-horned Bull, the divine Purusha whose horns are infinite Existence, Consciousness, Bliss and Truth. In images of an energetic incongruity reminding us of the sublime grotesques and strange figures that have survived from the old mystic and symbolic art of the prehistoric world, Vamadeva describes the Purusha in the figure of a man-bull, whose four horns are the four divine principles, his three feet or three legs the three human principles, mentality, vital dynamism and material substance, his two heads the double consciousness of Soul and Nature, Purusha and Prakriti, his seven hands the seven natural activities corresponding to the seven principles. “Triply bound”—bound in the mind, bound in the life-energies, bound in the body—“the Bull roars aloud; great is the Divinity that has entered into mortals.”

For the “ghritam”, the clear light of the mentality reflecting the Truth, has been hidden by the Panis, the lords of the lower sense-activity, and shut up in the subconscious; in our thoughts, in our desires, in our physical consciousness the Light and the Ananda have been triply established, but they are concealed from us. It is in the cow, symbol of the Light from above, that the gods find the clarified streams of the “ghritam”. These streams, says the Rishi, rise from the heart of things, from the ocean of the subconscious, *hṛdyāt samudrāt*, but they are confined in a hundred pens by the enemy, Vritra, so that they may be kept from the eye of discernment, from the knowledge that labours in us to enlighten that which is concealed and deliver that which is imprisoned. They move in the path on the borders of the subconscious, dense if impetuous in their

movements, limited by the nervous action, in small formations of the life-energy Vayu, *vātapramiyah*. Purified progressively by the experiences of the conscious heart and mind, these energies of Nature become finally capable of the marriage with Agni, the divine Will-force, which breaks down their boundaries and is himself nourished by their now abundant waves. That is the crisis of the being by which the mortal nature prepares its conversion to immortality.

In the last verse of the hymn Vamadeva describes the whole of existence as established above in the seat of the divine Purusha, below in the ocean of the subconscious and in the Life, *antaḥ samudre hṛdi antarāyūṣi*. The conscious mind is, then, the channel through which there is communication between the upper ocean and the lower, between superconscious and subconscious, the light divine and the original darkness of Nature.⁸

There is another great passage where Sri Aurobindo comments on this Hymn in the Secret of the Veda:⁹

“Let us then start from this decisive fact put beyond doubt by this passage—whether we take the great stream to be Saraswati itself or the Truth-ocean—that the Vedic Rishis used the image of water, a river or an ocean, in a figurative sense and as a psychological symbol, and let us see how far it takes us. We notice first that existence itself is constantly spoken of in the Hindu writings, in Veda, Purana and even philosophical reasoning and illustration as an ocean. The Veda speaks of two oceans, the upper and the lower waters. These are the ocean of the subconscious, dark and inexpressive, and the ocean of the superconscious, luminous and eternal expression but beyond the human mind. Vamadeva in the last hymn of the fourth Mandala speaks of these two oceans. He says that a honeyed wave climbs up from the ocean and by means of this mounting wave which is the Soma (amśu) one attains entirely to immortality; that wave or that Soma is the secret name of the clarity (ghṛtasya, the symbol of the clarified butter); it is the tongue of the gods; it is the nodus (nābhi) of immortality.

Samudrād ūrmir madhumān udārad,
upāmśunā sam amṛtatvam ānaḥ;
Ghṛtasya nāma guhyaṃ yad asti,
jihvā devānām amṛtasya nābhiḥ.

I presume there can be no doubt that the sea, the honey, the Soma, the clarified butter are in this passage at least psychological symbols. Certainly, Vamadeva does not mean that a wave or flood of wine came mounting up out of the salt water of the Indian Ocean or of the Bay of Bengal or even from the fresh water of the river Indus or the Ganges and

⁸ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 307

⁹ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 102

that this wine is a secret name for clarified butter. What he means to say is clearly that out of the Subconscious depths in us arises a honeyed wave of Ananda or pure delight of existence, that it is by this Ananda that we can arrive at immortality; this Ananda is the secret being, the secret reality behind the action of the mind in its shining clarities.

Soma, the god of the Ananda, the Vedanta also tells us, is that which has become mind or sensational perception; in other words, all mental sensation carries in it a hidden delight of existence and strives to express that secret of its own being. Therefore Ananda is the tongue of the gods with which they taste the delight of existence; it is the nodus in which all the activities of the immortal state or divine existence are bound together. Vamadeva goes on to say, "Let us give expression to this secret name of the clarity,—that is to say, let us bring out this Soma wine, this hidden delight of existence; let us hold it in this world-sacrifice by our surrenderings or submissions to Agni, the divine Will or Conscious-Power which is the Master of being. He is the four-horned Bull of the worlds and when he listens to the soul-thought of man in its self-expression, he ejects this secret name of delight from its hiding-place."

Vayam nāma pra bravāmā ghṛtasya,
 asmin yajñe dhārayāmā namobhiḥ;
 upa brahmā śṛṇavac chasyamānam,
 catuḥśṛṅgo avamīd gaura etat.

Let us note, in passing, that since the wine and the clarified butter are symbolic, the sacrifice also must be symbolic. In such hymns as this of Vamadeva's the ritualistic veil so elaborately woven by the Vedic mystics vanishes like a dissolving mist before our eyes and there emerges the Vedantic truth, the secret of the Veda. Vamadeva leaves us in no doubt as to the nature of the Ocean of which he speaks; for in the fifth verse he openly describes it as the ocean of the heart, hr̥dyāt samudrāt, out of which rise the waters of the clarity, ghṛtasya dhārāḥ; they flow, he says, becoming progressively purified by the mind and the inner heart, antar hrdā manasā pūyamānāḥ. And in the closing verse he speaks of the whole of existence being triply established, first in the seat of Agni—which we know from other riks to be the Truth-Consciousness, Agni's own home, svam damam ṛtaṃ br̥hat,—secondly, in the heart, the sea, which is evidently the same as the heart-ocean,—thirdly, in the life of man.

Dhāman te viśvam bhuvanam adhiśritam,
 antaḥ samudre hr̥dyantar āyuṣi.

The superconscious, the sea of the subconscious, the life of the living being between the two,—this is the Vedic idea of existence. The sea of the superconscious is the goal of the rivers of clarity, of the honeyed wave, as the sea of the subconscious in the heart within is their

place of rising. This upper sea is spoken of as the Sindhu, a word which may mean either river or ocean; but in this hymn it clearly means ocean. Let us observe the remarkable language in which Vamadeva speaks of these rivers of the clarity. He says first that the gods sought and found the clarity, the ghr̥tam, triply placed and hidden by the Panis in the cow, gavi. It is beyond doubt that go is used in the Veda in the double sense of Cow and Light; the Cow is the outer symbol, the inner meaning is the Light. The figure of the cows stolen and hidden by the Panis is constant in the Veda. Here it is evident that as the sea is a psychological symbol—the heart-ocean, samudre hr̥di,—and the Soma is a psychological symbol and the clarified butter is a psychological symbol, the cow in which the gods find the clarified butter hidden by the Panis must also symbolise an inner illumination and not physical light. The cow is really Aditi, the infinite consciousness hidden in the subconscious, and the triple ghr̥tam is the triple clarity of the liberated sensation finding its secret of delight, of the thought-mind attaining to light and intuition and of the truth itself, the ultimate supra-mental vision. This is clear from the second half of the verse in which it is said, “One Indra produced, one Surya, one the gods fashioned by natural development out of Vena”; for Indra is the Master of the thought-mind, Surya of the supra-mental light, Vena is Soma, the master of mental delight of existence, creator of the sense-mind.

We may observe also in passing that the Panis here must perforce be spiritual enemies, powers of darkness, and not Dravidian gods or Dravidian tribes or Dravidian merchants. In the next verse Vamadeva says of the streams of the ghr̥tam that they move from the heart-ocean shut up in a hundred prisons (pens) by the enemy so that they are not seen. Certainly, this does not mean that rivers of ghee—or of water, either—rising from the heart-ocean or any ocean were caught on their way by the wicked and unconscionable Dravidians and shut up in a hundred pens so that the Aryans or the Aryan gods could not even catch a glimpse of them. We perceive at once that the enemy, Pani, Vritra of the hymns is a purely psychological conception and not an attempt of our forefathers to conceal the facts of early Indian history from their posterity in a cloud of tangled and inextricable myths. The Rishi Vamadeva would have stood aghast at such an unforeseen travesty of his ritual images. We are not even helped if we take ghr̥ta in the sense of water, hr̥dya samudra in the sense of a delightful lake, and suppose that the Dravidians enclose the water of the rivers with a hundred dams so that the Aryans could not even get a glimpse of them. For even if the rivers of the Punjab all flow out of one heart-pleasing lake, yet their streams of water cannot even so have been triply placed in a cow and the cow hidden in a cave by the cleverest and most inventive Dravidians. “These move” says Vamadeva “from the heart-ocean; penned by the enemy in a hundred enclosures they cannot be seen; I look towards the streams of the clarity, for in their midst is the Golden Reed. Entirely they stream like flowing rivers becoming purified by the heart within and the mind; these move, waves of the clarity, like animals under the mastery of their driver. As if on a path in front of the Ocean (sindhu, the upper ocean) the

mighty ones move compact of forceful speed but limited by the vital force (vāta, vāyu), the streams of clarity; they are like a straining horse which breaks its limits, as it is nourished by the waves." On the very face of it this is the poetry of a mystic concealing his sense from the profane under a veil of images which occasionally he suffers to grow transparent to the eye that chooses to see. What he means is that the divine knowledge is all the time flowing constantly behind our thoughts, but is kept from us by the internal enemies who limit our material of mind to the sense-action and sense-perception so that though the waves of our being beat on banks that border upon the superconscient, the infinite, they are limited by the nervous action of the sense-mind and cannot reveal their secret. They are like horses controlled and reined in; only when the waves of the light have nourished their strength to the full does the straining steed break these limits and they flow freely towards That from which the Soma-wine is pressed out and the sacrifice is born.

Yatra somaḥ sūyate yatra yajño,
ghṛtasya dhārā abhi tat pavante.

This goal is, again, explained to be that which is all honey,—ghṛtasya dhārā madhumat pavante; it is the Ananda, the divine Beatitude. And that this goal is the Sindhu, the superconscient ocean, is made clear in the last rik, where Vamadeva says, "May we taste that honeyed wave of thine"—of Agni, the divine Purusha, the four-horned Bull of the worlds—"which is borne in the force of the Waters where they come together."

Apām anīke samithe ya ābhṛtas,
tam aśyāma madhumantam ta ūrmim.

We find this fundamental idea of the Vedic Rishis brought out in the Hymn of Creation (X.129) where the subconscious is thus described. "Darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning was this all, an ocean without mental consciousness . . . out of it the One was born by the greatness of Its energy. It first moved in it as desire which was the first seed of mind. The Masters of Wisdom found out in the non-existent that which builds up the existent; in the heart they found it by purposeful impulsion and by the thought-mind. Their ray was extended horizontally; there was something above, there was something below." In this passage the same ideas are brought out as in Vamadeva's hymn but without the veil of images. Out of the subconscious ocean the One arises in the heart first as desire; he moves there in the heart-ocean as an unexpressed desire of the delight of existence and this desire is the first seed of what afterwards appears as the sense-mind. The gods thus find out a means of building up the existent, the conscious being, out of the subconscious darkness; they find it in the heart and bring it out by the growth of thought and purposeful impulsion, pratiṣyā, by which is meant mental desire as distinguished from the first vague desire that arises out of the subconscious in the merely vital movements of nature. The

conscious existence which they thus create is stretched out as it were horizontally between two other extensions; below is the dark sleep of the subconscious, above is the luminous secrecy of the superconscious. These are the upper and the lower ocean.

This Vedic imagery throws a clear light on the similar symbolic images of the Puranas, especially on the famous symbol of Vishnu sleeping after the pralaya on the folds of the snake Ananta upon the ocean of sweet milk. It may perhaps be objected that the Puranas were written by superstitious Hindu priests or poets who believed that eclipses were caused by a dragon eating the sun and moon and could easily believe that during the periods of non-creation the supreme Deity in a physical body went to sleep on a physical snake upon a material ocean of real milk and that therefore it is a vain ingenuity to seek for a spiritual meaning in these fables. My reply would be that there is in fact no need to seek for such meanings; for these very superstitious poets have put them there plainly on the very surface of the fable for everybody to see who does not choose to be blind. For they have given a name to Vishnu's snake, the name Ananta, and Ananta means the Infinite; therefore they have told us plainly enough that the image is an allegory and that Vishnu, the all-pervading Deity, sleeps in the periods of non-creation on the coils of the Infinite. As for the ocean, the Vedic imagery shows us that it must be the ocean of eternal existence and this ocean of eternal existence is an ocean of absolute sweetness, in other words, of pure Bliss. For the sweet milk (itself a Vedic image) has, evidently, a sense not essentially different from the madhu, honey or sweetness, of Vamadeva's hymn.

Sri Aurobindo speaks about the oceans in the Veda commenting on the hymns to King Varuna:¹⁰

"Ether and ocean meet together and become one in the mystic conception; and the origin of this unity is not far to seek. The ancient concept of creation, held all over the world from the Himalayas to the Andes, conceived of the stuff of things as a formless expanse of waters covered over in the beginning by darkness out of which day and night and heaven and earth and all worlds have emerged. "Darkness," says the Hebrew Genesis, "was upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of God moved on the waters." By the word he divided the waters with Heaven, the firmament; so that now there are two waters, one earthly below the firmament, the other heavenly above. The mystics seized on this universal belief or this universal image and crowded into it their opulent psychological values. Instead of one firmament they saw two, the earthly and the celestial; instead of two oceans, three spread out before their unsealed vision.

What they saw, was what man will ever see when he changes the physical for the psychical vision of Nature and the world. Below them they looked down on an unfathomable night and surging

¹⁰ Volume: 15 [CWSA] (The Secret of the Veda), Page: 501

obscurity, darkness hidden within darkness, the inconscient waters from which by the mighty energy of the One their existence had arisen. Above them they beheld a remote ocean of light and sweetness, a highest ether, the supreme step of all-blissful Vishnu, to which their attracted being must ascend. One of these was the dense dark ether, an unformed material inconscient Non-existence; the other a luminous ethereal All-conscient and the absolute of existence. These two were the dark and the shining extension of the One.

Between these two unknown infinities, infinite potential zero and infinite plenary x, they saw around them, before their eyes, below, above, a third sea of ever-developing conscious being, a sort of boundless wave, which they spoke of by a hardy metaphor as climbing up or flowing up beyond heaven to the supreme seas.

It is this perilous ocean which we have to navigate. There Bhujyu, the seeker of enjoyment, son of King Tugra the Forceful-Hastening, was about to sink, cast in by his false companions, souls of an evil movement; but the marvellous chariot-ship of the Ashwins came hastening to his succour. Varuna must teach with his vast Right and Truth our limited will and judgment, if we would escape such perils: we must embark in no human galley, but "ascend the divine ship, the blameless and well-oared vessel that sinketh not, by which may we voyage safe beyond sin and evil." Into this intermediate ocean, above our earth, we have seen the sun of Knowledge rise out of the inconscient cave and voyage led by the seers. For this too is an ocean-ether. Or, let us say, it is a tier of ethers. To follow the Vedic imagery we must suppose ocean superimposed upon ocean. This world is a series of heights that are depths and a mutual involution and evolution of vastnesses that have no ending: ether below rises to ever more luminous ether above, every stratum of consciousness rests upon many inferior and aspires to many higher strata.

But beyond our farthest skies in the supreme ocean of light and expanse of the highest superconscient ether our haven awaits us in a Truth hidden by lesser truth, even as in the inconscient Night darkness is enwrapped and protected by an ever greater darkness. That is the truth of King Varuna. Thither the Dawns shining arise, the rivers travel and the Sun unyokes there the horses of his chariot. And Varuna contains, sees, governs all this in his vast being and by his illimitable knowledge. All these oceans are his, even to the Inconscient and its nights so opposite in their seeming to his nature which is that of the extended radiance of one eternal, vast sun of happy light and truth. Day and Night, light and darkness are symbols in his infinity. "Luminous Varuna has embraced the nights; he holds the Dawns within him by his creative knowledge; visioned, he is around every object."

From this idea of the oceans arose naturally the psychological concept of the Vedic rivers. These rivers are everywhere. They are the waters which flow down from the mountain and ascend the mind ranging through and illuminating with their flow the dark subconscious secrets of Vritra; they

are the mighty ones of Heaven whom Indra brings down on the Earth; they are the streams of the Truth; they are the rain from its luminous heavens; they are the seven eternal sisters and companions; they are the divine waters who have knowledge. They descend upon the earth, they rise from the ocean, they flow to the ocean, they break out from the doors of the Panis, they ascend to the supreme seas. Oceanic Varuna is king of all these waters