



Secret of the Veda

Sri Aurobindo

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Sri Aurobindo breaks new ground in interpreting the ancient Vedas. His deeper insight into this came from his own spiritual practices for which he found vivid allegorical descriptions in the Vedas. Sri Aurobindo was able to uncover the mystery of the double meanings, the inner psychological and yogic significance and practices and the consistent, clear sense brought by this psychological view of the Vedic hymns. Finally, the true inner meaning of the Veda and its relevance to the seeking after self-realization and enlightenment is revealed.

Secret of the Veda Details

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From Reader Review Secret of the Veda for online ebook

Toon Pepermans says

I think Karen Thomson's take on the Rigveda (<http://www.rigveda.co.uk>), as 'a still undeciphered text' where a lot of mistranslations have occurred, is the way to go.

An example from Aurobindo is I.92.4 "where we have without any possibility of mistake the cow as the symbol of light" (p.125-6), a rather baffling image. But Thomson (at <http://www.rigveda.co.uk/asut2.pdf>) makes plausible that instead of 'cow' one should translate 'morning ray'.

Also, Aurobindo's approach of reading the Upanishads into the Rigveda feels very speculative. It would of course give the texts a much deeper meaning, but that doesn't mean it's the historically correct one.

But a lot of Western 'scholarship' on the Rigveda is probably wrong too.

Another telling example of mistranslation is on p.462, Aurobindo's translation of V.25.8 (from a hymn to Agni): "Luminous are thy flaming radiances; there rises from thee a vast utterance like the voice of the pressing-stone of delight"

A pressing-stone that has a voice sounds weird, but according to Thomson the word 'gr?van' doesn't mean 'pressing-stone' (which has been the official translation for millenia) but 'a man whose primary role is singing and praising', which seems to clear up things a bit.

Edward Butler says

Aurobindo's writings on the Vedas are an absolutely invaluable resource. He combines scholarship with practical insight and effectively restores the Vedas to their rightful place as the foundation of all later Indian philosophy. If you're reading the Vedas without having at least exposed yourself to Aurobindo's interpretive approach, chances are that you are missing much of what is going on there.

Will says

Since the inception of the study of the Vedas, through both Indian and European scholarship, the age and subsequent obscurity of the Rig Veda has caused considerable confusion in attempts to interpret its meaning and this has commonly resulted in either naturalistic/ritualistic interpretations or historical ones. Whilst not denying that these interpretations may possess some exoteric validity, in Secret of the Veda, Sri Aurobindo aims to demonstrate the esoteric psychological/spiritual inner layer of the text.

Most of the book consists of Aurobindo employing his philological method to explain the use of symbolism within the Rg Veda. We learn that the Cows of the Rg Veda represent the divine light and that the Pani's who steal them in the text represent it's concealing in an un-purified consciousness, the seven great rivers represent the metaphysical streams that flow to the Superconscious, and Surya himself represents not just the physical sun but the Superconscious truth itself.

I am not a philologist nor am I in anyway an expert on the Vedas but I found his interpretation compelling and illuminating and it is now easy to consider the Upanishads and Puranas as later developments within the

same spiritual philosophy rather than as any kind of spiritual revolt against a ritualistic/materialistic tradition.

I would recommend this text to anyone curious about the Rig Veda and its relationship to the rest of Hinduism as a religious tradition.

Revanth Ukkalam says

The greater genius than the Rishi is Sri Aurobindo who is the writer par excellence. He - in this book - is able to creatively imagine the Vedas in a new light, a shade contrary to that of indologists, orientalist, and traditional historians. With the conception of consistent and profound symbols in the Vedas he is able to send quivers through the reader's body.

Riku Sayuj says

The Open Secret

At first glance, the title of the book might give the impression that it is an esoteric defense of some Vedic 'secret'. It is true that some spiritual teachers like to emphasize the esotericity of works to claim the easy defense - "you are not spiritual enough to understand such works" - to western scholars.

Contrary to this, Aurobindo approaches the text like any genuinely curious scholar and puts together a coherent interpretation of the hymns, seen more from the Upanishadic tradition than from the materialistic/ritualistic tradition that is adopted by historic commentaries. His object is not to veil, but to uncover; not to assert that the meaning is secreted away in an inaccessible spiritual realm, but to show that the meaning is easy enough to access consistently.

Useful to understand one potent way of looking at the Rig Vedic hymns - what Aurobindo calls the 'psychological' way - suffusing the hymns with psychological symbols.

In addition, Aurobindo's interpretation is also based on a fascinating philological exploration of the hymns. Even more importantly, this reading helps to understand the multiple meanings of the many commonly used sanskrit words and comes in very handy to understand the meanings of the hymns independently even if the reader doesn't want to travel the road prepared by Aurobindo.

While it should not be taken uncritically, Aurobindo's criticism of early brahmin and western scholarship is also vital to a good understanding - especially so since scholarship available to the modern reader is heavily biased towards those interpretations.

As Aurobindo is not hesitant to say, this is only an exploration of possibilities, an attempt at uncovering the spiritual 'Secret of the Veda' from the elaborate ritualist vein under which it is enclosed - he constantly invites us to adopt a particular symbol and see 'how far it takes us' - only if he feels it consistently applicable throughout the hymns does he adopt it. This is quite reasonable and I found it acceptable to quite a degree.

The biggest contribution Aurobindo makes is to establish an alternate framework for the Rig Vedic symbols

and to ground them in credible first-hand research and scholarly commentary. The beginning reader would be served well to consult Aurobindo while reading the original hymns. However, the reader should also be aware that in translation Aurobindo departs greatly from what might seem at first glance to be the 'evident' meaning of the hymns - but this is only because he has chosen to elaborate the symbolic meaning that he believes he has uncovered.

This is useful but should not be read in isolation. The best way would be to treat Aurobindo as one more commentary along with Sayana, Dayananda and the modern scholars, read all of them and then form our own interpretations of the original sanskrit hymns.

This book only gave me company through the early Fire Hymns, after which I have been left to my own devices by Aurobindo. Even though I skipped ahead with him and read the 'selected' hymns, I am not sure I will come back to his translations when I read them again in the course of my own progress.

I think that is okay, for even as we part company, his method stays with me.

Chandan Priyadarshi says

Sri Aurobindo has revealed the truth in this book that how The Vedic scriptures were miss-interpreted and what should be the real meanings of Vedic Hymns.

Ravi Warriar says

The Vedas, until I read this book, were mysterious, superficial and materialistic to the point of being nonsensical. The verses didn't make scientific or even rational sense.

However, having read the book, I now understand the mystical nature of the knowledge that ancient Indian seers wanted to hand down to generations. I see why so many things in Hinduism are so twisted, so ritualistic and incorrect. The hidden meaning of the words and passages become clear upon reading the book and every chapter is another experience in thinking, "wow! that was a surprise!"

The book is not an easy read, just as Sri Aurobindo's other works. Written in English that most of us long stopped speaking or reading, it takes effort and a generous help from a dictionary. But all the effort is, in the end, worth it.
