

**THE
MIRACULOUS AND MYSTERIOUS
IN VEDIC LITERATURE**

DR. B. A. PARAB



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The Miraculous And Mysterious In Vedic Literature

By

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With A Foreword By

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TO
MY FRIENDS

FOREWORD

WHAT exactly is the nature of the supernatural events and the powers which brought them about described in the hymns of the Ṛgveda and the other Saṃhitās? An answer to this question has been attempted by Shri B. A. Parab in the following book and his conclusion is that generally speaking, the events and the powers are mysterious and miraculous, but not magical. For the purpose of establishing this conclusion Shri Parab has carefully and thoroughly examined all the Ṛgvedic hymns which may be supposed to contain any references to magical events and powers from his own standpoint. He makes a clear distinction between Prayer and Spell as follows:—A genuine prayer resorts to the method of appeal or moral suasion; it is characterized by humility and reverence. On the other hand a spell has the magical method which is marked by command and constraint; moreover, it displays a spirit of self-confidence and self-sufficiency. Further, he has scrutinized all the Vedic words which are likely to be misunderstood as signifying magic or magical powers and has rightly concluded that neither the words nor the hymns have any connection with magic or magical powers.

Shri Parab has fully corroborated his views and conclusions by ample and apt references to authoritative works on the subject and also to the original stanzas and passages in the Vedic texts. His treatment of the subject is critical and methodical ; his attitude towards it is sympathetic but dispassionate. I feel very happy in commending this piece of research to scholars working in the field of Vedic literature.

Shastri Hall, Bombay 7

25th May 1952

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H. D. VELANKAR

PREFACE

WHAT is published here was originally a thesis presented and approved for the Ph. D. degree in Sanskrit of the Bombay University. I have outlined the subject in the *Introduction*, indicating its nature and scope.

I am much indebted to Prof. H. D. Velankar, M. A. (formerly Professor of Sanskrit, Wilson College, and now Jt. Director of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bombay) whose guidance was invaluable to me in the writing of the thesis. He gave me light and helped me to get insight into the subject. He encouraged and helped me to prosecute and complete the work with zeal, patience and regard for truth. His 'Foreword' to this volume has placed me under a fresh obligation. I thank him heartily and bow to him in reverence.

I owe a profound debt of obligation to my publisher, Shri G. R. Bhatkal, the proprietor of the Popular Book Depot, but for whom this book would have possibly never been published. He bears half the cost of the publication of this book, the other half being borne by me with the help of my friends and well-wishers who came forward out of their regard

for me and contributed their mite to raise the required sum of money. I acknowledge my indebtedness to them all.

I am thankful to the staffs of the Wilson College Library and the University Library, Bombay, for their prompt and courteous help that I always received during the preparation of the thesis, and especially when I had to verify the references. Lastly the management and workers of the Bombay Vaibhav Press who gave me excellent co-operation and helped me to see the book through the press so well in a short period. I thank them all, even the printer's devil.

Khatau Wadi, Bombay 4
31st May 1952

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B. A. PARAB

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| 5 | 14 | constrain | constraint |
| 23 | 26 | dody | body |
| 31 | 29 | Justice | Justine |
| 75 | 21 | निऋति | निऋति |
| 100 | 20 | Vanquished | vanquished |
| 109 | 15 | Sōma | sōma |
| 156 | 18 | Bhargu | Bhṛgu |
| 163 | 14 | Angi | Agni |

INTRODUCTION

The Miraculous And Mysterious In Vedic Literature is the title of this volume. It emerged itself on the completion of the work. I had no idea of it in the beginning. At first I started collecting miracles in the Ṛgveda. As I proceeded with the work and traced the miraculous in the hymns, it became imperative to study the relation of the miraculous with the supernatural. It was later found that the subject touched on to the mysterious and the magical, especially in some of the 'late' hymns of the Ṛgveda. I was now interested in the mysterious and when I had done with the Ṛgveda, I went through the Atharva Veda and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa in search of the supernatural, the miraculous and the mysterious which I found there buried deep in heaps of magical notions and practices. Magic in the later Vedic literature is by itself a vast subject. I treated the magical in the two representative later Vedic works as an allied and subordinate topic. Its treatment here is subservient to the main argument. The thesis developed on these lines and took the final shape. The title is intended to name the subject adequately.

The book consists of four parts which are divided into chapters. Each part deals with one separate aspect of the subject.

Part I is devoted to the discussion of the relation of the miraculous and the supernatural as an introduction to the subject. *Chapter I* discusses the meaning of miracle and defines it. It concludes that (i) a miracle is a wonderful event within human experience, (ii) it is brought about

by a divine agency or a supernatural being, (iii) it exhibits special unusual control over the laws of nature, (iv) it is used for beneficent ends and so points to the grace of the author, and (v) it is an evidence of the supernatural power possessed by the performer or author. *Chapter II* discusses and establishes the relation of the supernatural and the miraculous. Here all 'miracles', except the Rgvedic ones, are brought under discussion. Magic and yogic wonders are treated so as to bring out their differences, and I have shown how they differ from genuine miracles which are the works of supernatural power. A full list of yogic feats is given from the Yōgasūtra of Patañjali. A similar list also is added further to note the yogic feats recorded in one section of the Kumārapālapratibōdha of Sōmaprabhāchārya. Miracles worked by Buddha, Christ and Vaiṣṇava saints, together with some instances in modern times, are recorded in brief. In view of the above miracles some reflections are made on the order of nature's laws and the breach of them. Then primitive man's view of miracle is considered. In this connection I have quoted the opinions of Jevons, Durkheim, Tylor, etc. and have drawn the conclusion that primitive man attributed miracles to his god or gods, and so he had the idea of the power beyond; he could not resist its influence, he could not help feeling it, even though his mind was unable to probe into its mystery. *Chapter III* treats the possibility of miracles. Widely differing views are noted here: (i) materialists reject the possibility of miracles, (ii) some philosophers admit God's existence but find miracles impossible and useless, (iii) some philosophers who do not believe in God admit miracles and by knowing them they expect to know more about nature, and (iv) some philosophers and scientists

consider the supernatural to be nothing but an unknown part of the natural order and hold the view that miracles are accidents and chance novelties in the unknown nature. Then I have referred to some recent scientist-philosophers like Dr. Alexis Carell who by experiments has proved the miraculous efficacy of prayer. The conclusion drawn is that miracles occur where faith rules over minds. In *Chapter IV* the utility of miracles is discussed. Buddha and Christ are said to have used them; miracles have helped the spread of piety and religion. In passing I have pointed out what even modern man thinks about miracles and their utility.

After discussing preliminary matters in the first part, I proceeded to expound the religious background of the subject.

Part II is divided into four chapters which respectively deal with Vedic Āryans' belief in supernatural powers, the power behind gods' deeds, the difference between prayer and spell, and the power of prayer. *Chapter V* reviews the cultural history of the Vedic Āryans and points out how their powerful speech was wedded to their great belief in supernatural powers or deities. All the gods of the Āryan are 'true' and 'not deceitful.' They bear a high moral character and protect the righteous and reward the pious and liberal. They are the divinities of the religion of sacrifice. They are omnipotent and can do whatever they wish. The poet-priests and their patrons look to them for the fulfilment of their desires. They invoke the gods to sacrifice and pray them for succour. These gods did many deeds—friendly, liberal, kindly. Many of them are miraculous. The Āryans believed in all the divinities and their deeds. *Chapter VI* tries to peep behind the gods' deeds which are cosmic, mythological or 'historical,' kind and generous. They are all marvellous. I have attempted to describe and name the power behind these

deeds. The power is undoubtedly mysterious. There are two words in the Ṛgveda that name it, viz. māyā and māyinī. The first is commonly used but the second is used only once. 'Māyā' is variously translated into English as 'craft,' 'occult power, magic,' 'skilfulness, art,' 'deceitful skill, art,' 'mysterious or wonderful power.' I have considered with full reference to the context the words māyā, māyinī, māyāvat and māyāvin in all the forms in which they occur. In discussing their various senses, their friendly as well as inimical nature, I have referred to Sāyana's commentary on the Ṛgveda. Then words like dasra, daṃsas, daṃsanā, dasma, etc., etc. which describe gods' wonderful deeds or qualify the gods are similarly treated. It is shown with illustrations that Sāyana is not always satisfactory. His comments point to some vague nature of the gods' deeds under description. He adjusts, with his etymological weapons, the meaning to suit the trend of the sentence. Then I have discussed an important topic, viz. The question—Is 'māyā' magic and does 'māyin' mean magician? Oldenberg, Schrader, Macdonell, etc. assert that there are magical influences in the Ṛgveda. There are others who have refuted the theory of magic in the Ṛgveda. For the latter view I have referred to Dr. P. S. Deshmukh's 'Religion in Vedic Literature' and A. B. Keith's 'Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upanisads'. Considering both the sides I have come to the conclusion that the Ṛgveda gives no evidence to show that the priests were magicians and that the sacrificial fire was magical; that the māyā of the gods has nothing to do with magic and it is in its original connotation as 'mysterious, illusory or supernatural power'. 'Magical traces' in the Ṛgveda are briefly considered by discussing various words that name demons or evil spirits. The topic of māyā is discussed at length as it is this power

of the gods that is responsible for their miraculous deeds. *Chapter VII* deals with hymn as prayer and spell. Macdonell's definition of hymn is discussed. The use of hymn in the R̥gveda is noted and prayer is distinguished from spell. In discussing this point I have referred to the views about the so-called 'magical hymns' in the R̥gveda. After noting the difference of language between prayer and spell, I have pointed out the fundamental difference between the two which depends on the way in which their motive is accomplished. The method of prayer is that of appeal or moral suasion and is characterized by humility and reverence while spell has the magical method, marked by command and constrain. The R̥gvedic hymns are all prayers. *Chapter VIII* describes the power of prayer as was experienced and possessed by the R̥gvedic sages. Prayer accompanied by sacrifice as well as prayer without sacrifice is considered. The Āryan believed in the power of prayer. The view that this power is not unalloyed, or is magical, is discussed here and later in the Chapter on 'Hymns of Mysterious Power' in Part III. The power derived from prayer is mysterious or mystic. Its mystery or mysticism does not warrant its being called magical. Then I have considered prayer as one of the essential elements of religion. The importance of prayer is very great since miracles are answers to prayer. The chapter ends with the conclusion that prayer has an ennobling and encouraging effect on mind and it works miracles where faith abounds and abides.

Part III consists of eight chapters. The first seven chapters treat the miracles in the R̥gveda and the last chapter discusses fully 'Hymns of Mysterious Power'. In *Chapter IX* the miracles are described in general. The R̥gvedic poet-priests were conscious of their great spiritual

power which they derived through prayer. R̥gvedic verses tell us of the sages' (supernatural) might with which they work miracles. They offered sacrifice with prayer and invoked gods who worked wonderful deeds for them. All such deeds are described in a general way and an important conclusion is drawn: The Vedic Āryan believed in these miracles, and so we must grant his belief and accept the miracles as they are. We have got to view the R̥gvedic miracles in this vein. *Chapter X* treats cosmic miracles. The creation of heaven, earth, sky, mountains, rivers, sun, moon, day, night, stars, water, rain, milk is all miraculous to the R̥gvedic Āryan. The same thing is created by many gods in turn, but the essential thing is that everyone's god creates it and the creation is miraculous. Varuṇa, Mitra, Savitr̥, Indra, Agni, Sōma, etc., etc. are the workers of cosmic miracles. To the Āryan things like mountains, rivers, moon and sun are alive. Mountains have wings, and they fly and alight wherever they like. These miracles were genuine in his eyes, there was nothing fantastic about them. The miracle of stopping the sun is described at length. It may be a reminiscence of a semihistorical battle or may refer to a solar eclipse. Such things are considered by modern man who has at his service knowledge accumulated through ages that helps him to understand things in a scientific way; to him science explains the creation of the universe. But are the things really explained by science? Instead of explaining satisfactorily the mystery behind the creation of the universe science has deepened it and scientist-philosophers have already begun to talk of a spiritual order that lies hidden behind this apparent universe. This view is discussed here. Truly science ends where religion begins. *Chapter XI* records and describes miracles

of healing and curing. I have noted first the healing and curing powers of gods like Rudra, Maruts, Sōma, the Aśvins and Indra. Then eight miracles of healing and curing are given. Healing or curing in these cases is brought about by divine power and has no concern, directly or indirectly, with the science of medicine or surgery. The process of remedying is rapid and ultramundane. It denotes an active supernatural power at work. Hence the cases of healing and curing are miracles. *Chapter XII* narrates miracles in which men are rescued by gods from the dangers of fire and water. Six such miracles are treated. It is seen from them that vile men took revenge on their enemies by throwing them in caverns or pits or hollows of trees, full of water or fire. In the case of the hollows of trees fire was perhaps set around them by heaping and lighting dry grass or leaves. Indra, the Aśvins, Br̥haspati and Agni have worked these miracles. *Chapter XIII* describes miracles of rejuvenation and removal of barrenness. The desire to be young again and a barren woman's longing to beget a child are eternal human aspirations. In the miracles noted here the remedying is explicitly the result of divine grace. *Chapter XIV* records some miscellaneous miracles which are conveniently grouped here. They are very interesting and illustrate the miraculous power in many ways. Ardent prayer is said by Śunaḥśepa and Agni saves his life. The miracle of Dadhyak's head is at once marvellous and mysterious. The Aśvins work it, and Indra is also connected with it. The R̥bhus make one cup into four. Scholars have explained this deed. The single cup has in their opinion a reference to the moon's orb with its four main phases. One miracle describes how the Aśvins' ass won a thousand in a race. So varied is the nature

of these miracles. *Chapter XV* is specially formed to describe miracles worked by sages. The first miracle relates the wonderful deed of the great Viśvāmitra who led the Bharatas safely across the unfordable confluence of the Vipāś and Śutudrī. I have given an account of the thrilling dialogue of the sage and the rivers. The second is a similar miracle in which Vasiṣṭha helps his patron king to cross a river in spate. Though he started himself to achieve the miraculous feat, (he felt perhaps that he was unequal to the task and so) he had to invoke Indra and enlist his help for the completion of the deed. The third miracle tells how Atri saved the sun from the wiles of Svarbhānu with the help of Indra. The second and the third miracle are not worked by the sages alone. In the case of the first miracle I have noted how the last stanza of RV., III. 33 came to be used as a spell. Scholars have seen and explained the 'magic' in it. The saving of the sun by Atri is explained by scholars as an instance of solar eclipse. Svarbhānu is Rāhu, the personified ascending node. But the Āryan did not know anything of eclipses as we do to-day by means of science. So in his eyes Atri's deed was nothing short of a miracle. *Chapter XVI* deals with the hymns of mysterious power. Many scholars have described these hymns concerned with magic. Before discussing the hymns I have reviewed briefly the cultural background of these compositions and pointed out the conflicts and influences of cultures. The powers invoked in these hymns are mysterious and not magical. The traditional records bearing testimony to their origin and purpose, the history of culture, and modern illuminating criticism help one to understand how they shared the fate of being used as spells as stated in later Vedic works. In explaining and indicating the nature of the hymns I have mostly relied

on the scholiast's bhāṣya and Prof. H. D. Velankar's illuminating notes. My attempt is to show that the powers invoked and the motives are far from being magical. I have called these hymns mysterious. The bard here is not a magician. He does not resort to any coercion of his deity into obeying him, but desires to gain his end by means of the power derived through his faith in his deity. Except what the purāvidas are described to have said, nothing is known about the results achieved by the singers of these hymns. The mysterious element in them expects some tangible results were experienced by those who used them.

Part IV consists of three chapters and deals with the last aspect of the subject. *Chapter XVII* points out briefly the import of some pertinent things and indicates the decline of the supernatural and the miraculous in the later Vedic literature. To illustrate this view I have chosen the Atharva Veda and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa on account of their representative character. *Chapter XVIII* surveys the Atharva Veda. In this Veda the priest's power is called 'brahman', and it is derived from magical rites and spells. This power has assumed the role of the supernatural power in the Ṛgveda. I have noted this briefly. Then the hymns of this Veda are classified and their motive is described. I have shown how the priest is always anxious to remember and associate his gods with plants, herbs and amulets which he apostrophises and to which he attributes miraculous power. My intention is not to deal with the magical in this Veda, but to just point to it while tracing the supernatural, the miraculous or the mysterious. This Veda which consists of a huge debris of magical rites and practices is permeated very thinly with the supernatural. I have illustrated this point of view which is based on Roth's illuminating comment

on AV., IV. 16 addressed to Varuṇa, viz. "There is no other hymn in the entire Vedic literature which presents divine omniscience in terms so emphatic, and yet this beautiful fabric has been degraded to serve as an introduction to an imprecation. One may surmise, however, in this case as well as in the case of many other parts of this Veda, that fragments of older hymns have been utilised to deck out charms for sorcery." Then in *Chapter XIX* the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is examined. As the priest in the Atharva Veda differs from the Ṛgvedic priest and has far less spiritual power, so the priest in this Brāhmaṇa differs from them both. He is more particular about his social position and vies with the ruling class to secure power and prestige which his ancestors could enjoy in the good old days of the Ṛgveda. So he creates a highly artificial and laborious system of sacrificial rites and ceremonies and tries to succeed in acquiring his desires by means of it. Here the supernatural is on a rapid decline. Nay, there is the pseudo-supernatural here. Mysterious power verging on magic is attributed by the priest to almost everything that the sacrifice consists of. Sacrifice is all important. The all-powerful sacrificer or sacrifice is identified with Prajāpati, and Prajāpati is identified with the all-powerful Supreme Spirit. Prajāpati is sacrifice; he offers his own self, limb by limb, in the sacrificial fire and creates the universe. Hence sacrifice must be ever performed to restore Prajāpati's body so that the cycle of creation should go on ceaselessly. Then I have noted the building of the fire-altar which is shrouded in Agni-Prajāpati mystery. Here one thing is obvious that the priest's method is not that of the magician and there is no black magic here. His power is a queer mixture of the pseudo-supernatural, the mysterious and the magical.

PART I

DEFINITION AND DISCUSSION OF MIRACLE

CHAPTER I

WHAT IS A MIRACLE ?

“ Why ! who makes much of a miracle ? As to me, I know nothing else but miracles. ”

—WALT WHITMAN.

Generally man is inclined to believe in miracles. He likes to spin spiritual webs around his gods, saints and sages ; they are seldom found without a nimbus of miraculous traditions round their names. All the world over, founders and prophets of religions, saints and mystics are known to have held personal communion with the Divine, and they are, almost invariably, credited with miraculous power.

To common man a miracle is a thing of wonder and delight. He views a miracle as something novel and unexpected. If ‘ miracle ’ be taken to mean ‘ wonder ’ only, one will find nature full of them and say with Walt Whitman—

“ To me every hour of the light and dark is a miracle,
Every cubic inch of space is a miracle. ”

This is certainly true, and one would confront the sceptic with Laurence Housman’s challenge : “ Find something that isn’t a miracle, you’ll have cause to wonder then. ”

However, a miracle is more than a wonder. The common man’s or poet’s miracle is not that of the theologian and the philosopher. A miracle is an article of faith to the theologian. He believes in miracles, he defends them. He considers it his sacred duty to do so. He proclaims miracles as real and necessary in God’s scheme of the universe. On

the other hand, philosophers, along with scientists, define and interpret miracles so as to satisfy reason. The philosopher does not, of course, believe in them, as articles of faith, and so he tries to reason about them. He may not believe in God, but may believe in some extraordinary powers which reason fails to comprehend. There is a clear distinction between the views of the theologian and the philosopher. "The difference between the believer in miracles and the believer in extraordinary powers," according to one writer, "is that the one ascribes such events to an invading supernatural agency whereas the other, rejecting this notion, interprets the so-called miracles as unaccustomed happenings involving no breach of law but rather the operation of unknown laws outside the bounds of accepted knowledge and use."

I shall, however, consider these divergent views for understanding the correct meaning of 'miracle.' Therefore I propose to discuss here different definitions of 'miracle.'

Spinoza was, perhaps, the first philosopher who, with his hair-splitting analysis of 'miracle,' created a stir in the realm of the religious and attempted, with all his might, to deal a decisive and deadly blow to the miraculous. His influence on thinking minds is noticed even now. He speaks of miracle thus :

"Let us take miracle as meaning that which cannot be explained through natural causes. This may be interpreted in two senses: either as that which has natural causes, but cannot be examined by the human intellect; or as that which has no cause save God and God's will. But as all things which come to pass through natural causes come to pass also solely through the will and power of God, it comes to this ;

that a miracle, whether it has natural causes or not, is a result which cannot be explained by its cause, that is a phenomenon, which surpasses human understanding ; but from such a phenomenon, and certainly from a result surpassing our understanding, we can gain no knowledge.”¹

From the above words of Spinoza two things about ‘miracle’ are noticed: (1) *a miracle is an event that surpasses human understanding* whatever may be its cause, and (2) *a miracle adds nothing to our knowledge*. Spinoza has elaborately shown in his article on miracles that a miracle must contravene the fixed and immutable order of nature and God’s universal laws, so that ultimately he seems to mean that a miracle is impossible, and that it means nothing.

Many philosophers and scientists share Spinoza’s views which are discussed later on in this thesis.

Now I turn to the theologian’s view of miracle. The learned author of “Miracles” in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. VIII, defines ‘miracle’ as

“an unusual evidence of direct divine power in an action striking and unusual, yet by its beneficence pointing to the goodness of God.”

And he has asserted that “Christ’s miracles suggest unusual and striking power, presumably divine, used for beneficent ends, not to cause wonder, and this points to the essence of miracle.”

1. *The Philosophy of Spinoza*, p. 109, The Modern Library, New York.

From the above definition we find that

- (i) a miracle presents an unusual and striking action used for beneficent ends ;
- (ii) it presents an unusual evidence of divine power and goodness of the performer and therefore
- (iii) it adds to our knowledge (of God).

Unlike Spinoza, the author of the article on 'Miracles' in the E.R. E. believes in the possibility of miracle, and it adds, in his opinion, to man's knowledge of God. To Spinoza who equates nature with God belief in miracle is inconceivable, nay disastrous. "Belief in it" he proclaims "would throw doubt upon everything, and lead to atheism".²

I would like to cite here, in addition to the above views, the meaning of 'miracle' from a well-known dictionary. The lexicon states that a miracle is

"a marvellous event occurring within human experience, which cannot have been brought about by human power or by the operation of any natural agency, and must therefore be ascribed to the special intervention of the Deity or of some supernatural being; chiefly, an act (e.g. of healing) exhibiting control over the laws of nature, and serving as evidence that the agent is either divine or is specially favoured by God."³

This meaning of miracle enumerates many characteristics of miracle. They are as follows:—

- (i) a miracle is a marvellous event,
- (ii) it occurs within human experience,

2. *ibid*, p. 111,

3. A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Vol. VI, edited by Sir James A. H. Murray.

- (iii) it is brought about by God or His agency, and
- (iv) it exhibits control over the laws of nature,
- (v) and so, possession of supernatural power by the performer.

This meaning has one apparent omission; it does not specifically mention that God shows His goodness through miracles, which the author of 'Miracles' in E. R. E. considers as an *essence* of miracle, though, of course, this is suggested by the word 'healing' put within the brackets.

Many more definitions can be given here, but the above ones are sufficient for our purpose. From the foregoing discussion of the nature of miracle one gets a clear idea of what a miracle possibly is.

Now the essential constituents of a miracle are:

- (i) a miracle is a wonderful event within human experience,
- (ii) it is brought about by a divine agency or a supernatural being,
- (iii) it exhibits special unusual control over laws of nature,
- (iv) it is used for beneficent ends and so points to the grace of the author, and
- (v) it is an evidence of the supernatural power possessed by the performer or author.

Of these five elements of miracle, possession of supernatural power by the performer or author, is of primary importance. Breach of nature's laws, unusual control over them, and God's goodness are merely its corollaries.

CHAPTER II

MIRACLES AND THE SUPERNATURAL

Now I shall consider the relation of the supernatural to the miraculous.

In a miracle, the unusual control over the laws of nature, or their breach, implies some supernatural power, which interferes with the order of nature and brings it about. Here it must be noted that the supernatural power is enlisted by means of prayer, or it works willingly and there is no coercion of it as in magic.

Magic is the art of working wonders. A magician works 'miracles' by means of his mastery over the unknown laws of nature, and he may or may not enlist supernatural aid. However he often invokes and compels supernatural powers to yield favours. He does so by enlisting supernatural forces by such means as divination, spells, charms, amulets, incantations, etc.

Yōga, like magic, gives the power that works wondrous deeds. The yōgin or ascetic practises yōga and gains some mystic, mysterious, or miraculous power by virtue of which he possesses many 'siddhis'. With his siddhis the yōgin works miracles. Miracles in religion are often associated with austere asceticism, and one finds that monks or ascetics, Buddhist, Jain, or Hindu, endowed with the power of working miracles, recorded many miracles in their respective literatures.

There is no dearth of wonder-rousing miracles which aim at nothing else. The Sunday News of India, of April

10,1949, reported some wonderful miracles worked by one Kṛṣṇadāsa, a three-year-old boy, possessing normal faculties and behaving like any ordinary child. The miracles were performed at Vejalpur, about seven miles from Godhra, and were witnessed by responsible residents of the place. Kṛṣṇadāsa performed some remarkable miracles such as restoring the sight of a Sādhu, who for three years was totally blind, converting pure water into sweet scented liquid, perfuming simple cotton with the touch of his fingers, transforming straw berries into sweet edible berries at the time of worship. The Sunday News correspondent adds significantly: "No offerings in cash or kind are accepted by the boy or anybody on his behalf." These words are to assure readers that the boy's miracles have no selfish motive, and his disinterested performance makes his miracles more 'wondrous.' Common man could easily believe the boy-miracle-worker, and thought without doubt that the boy inherited miraculous power from his previous life. Non-Hindus would hardly believe in this notion based on the idea of rebirth.

The case of the supernatural in religious miracles is quite different. They are worked by God himself or His agency. There the supernatural is ever wedded to the miraculous, however various and wide be its range in different religions.

Before discussing the relation of the supernatural to the miraculous, I intend to give below the miraculous powers stated in the Pātañjalayōgasūtra, III and many interesting miracles found in the Buddhist, Jain, Christian, and Bhāgavat literatures. The miracles in the Ṛgveda are, of course, enlisted and discussed in eight chapters in Part III.

A yōgin acquires occult or miraculous powers by means

of samādhi or samyama. Section III of the Yōga-sūtra of Patañjali states many such powers.

A yōgin by means of samādhi or samyama

(1) acquires the knowledge of the past and future (III, 16),

(2) comprehends the sense of the sound uttered by any being (III, 17),

(3) gets a knowledge of former existence (III, 18),

(4) knows the mind of others (III, 19),

(5) brings about the disappearance of his body (III, 21),

(6) knows the time of his death (III, 22),

(7) finds no difficulty in enlisting the good will and friendship of any one at any moment (III, 23),

(8) acquires the powers of animals (by performing the samyama on them) (III, 24),

(9) gets the knowledge of the subtle, the obscure and the remote (III, 25).

A yōgin by performing samyama

(10) on the sun gets the knowledge of the space (III, 26),

(11) on the moon gets the knowledge of the starry regions (III, 27),

(12) on the pole-star gets the knowledge of stars and planets (III, 28),

(13) on the navel-circle gets the knowledge of the arrangement of the body (III, 29),

(14) in the pit of the throat gets the knowledge of the cessation of hunger and thirst (III, 30),

(15) in the kūrma-nāḍi makes his body completely steady and immovable (III. 31),

(16) in the light in the head sees the siddhas (who possess miraculous powers and so more unseen by mortals) (III, 32),

(17) on the intellect acquires all the powers stated above (III, 33),

(18) in the heart knows the mind of others as well as his own (III, 34).

A yōgin acquires the following powers also :

(19) His mind enters another body by the relaxation of the cause of bondage and by the knowledge of the method of passing (III, 38).

(20) By mastery over udāna he acquires the power of ascension and of non-contact with water, mud, thorns, etc. (III, 39).

(21) By mastery over samāna, he acquires effulgence (of his body) (III, 40).

(22) By saṃyama on the relation between ākāśa and the sense of hearing he acquires supernatural audition (III, 41).

(23) By saṃyama on the relation between the body and ākāśa, as also by being identified with light (things like) cotton he can float freely in space (III, 42).

(24) By mastery over elements he is able to effect anything by the mere force of his will (III, 44).

(25) He, by saṃyama, acquires aṇimā and other siddhis (III, 45).

The powers conferred by the siddhis are as follows: The *animā* which enables to assimilate oneself with an atom; the *mahimā* enabling to expand oneself into space; the *laghimā* that empowers one to be as light as cotton; the *garimā* enables to grow as heavy as anything; the *prāpti* enables to have access to anything, even to the moon; the *prakāmya* enables to realise the fulfilment of all wishes; the *īśatva* enables to have the power of creation, the *vaśitva* enables to have the power to command all.

I have given above most of the eminent occult powers acquired by a yōgin. The reference to the sūtras is stated in the brackets.

The Sūtra III, 37 explicitly states that the above powers acquired by means of samyama are obstacles in the way of samādhi and are powers in the moments of suspension. Because they distract the yōgin's mind by the feelings they excite in his mind, and thus take it away from Kaivalya, the supreme aim of Yōga.

Again, Section IV, 1 states that the siddhis are the result of birth, herbs, incantation, austerities, or samādhi. This indicates the scope and nature of the occult powers described by the author of the Yōga-sūtra.

Now I would like to note one thing before mentioning here some of Buddha's miracles. Many eminent scholars of Buddhism have deliberately omitted the miraculous legends of Buddha in their works. The miracles and marvellous events in the Buddhistic literature are, in their opinion, apocryphal additions; over-enthusiastic missionaries and commentators, too eager to convince the followers of Buddha, are indeed responsible for the miraculous aftermath that is especially found in noncanonical Pāli works.

There are certainly some works wherein “the Buddha appears purely as a man and teacher, and only speaks of himself as of an extraordinary mortal, who has gained certain knowledge and who looks forward to entering into complete Nirvāṇa,” and “he relates in simple language a part of his biography free from all miracles.” But in non-canonical works Buddha performs all kinds of miracles, and is made a god; nay, he is exalted above all gods.¹

Such being the condition of the miraculous in the Pāli literature, it is almost impossible to separate the spurious from the genuine from the heap of miracles alleged to be worked by Buddha. However, as Buddha is admitted to be a man of superhuman power, one is prone to believe that he might have worked some miracles, even though Pāli literature has evidence to show that he was against magic and miracles. He was too enlightened to like to play the role of a miracle-worker. Yet he might have worked some miracles not to cause wonder but to prove his ‘power’ and to rouse faith.

I give below a few of Buddha’s miracles:—

- (1) The miracle of the pairs or Yamaka-patihārīya: From Paṭisambhidāmagga, i, 125 and Mahāvastu, iii, 115, the nature of this miracle is known to be as follows: “Buddha rose in the air, flames of fire came from the upper part of his body and streams of water from the lower part. Then the process was reversed. Next fire came from the right side of his body and water from the left, and so on through twenty-two variations of pairs. He then created a jewelled promenade in

1. *Winternitz*: A History of Indian Literature, Vol. II, pp. 51-52.

the sky, and walking along it produced the illusion that he was standing or sitting or lying down, and varied the illusions in a similar way. The Jātaka says that he performed it on three other occasions, at his enlightenment to remove the doubt of the gods, at the meeting with Patika, and at Ganda's mango tree."²

- (2) The miracle of a mango tree: Buddha had promised to work the miracle of the pairs. He wished to work it at Sāvatti at the foot of Ganda's mango tree. "When the time came the heretics pulled up all the mango trees for a league round, but Ganda, the King's gardener, found a ripe mango and presented it to Buddha. He was told to plant the seed, and no sooner had Buddha washed his hands over it than it sprang up into a tree fifty hands high".³
- (3) In his last days Buddha set out with Ānanda for Kusinara. On the way Buddha got very thirsty; he was suffering. "There he asked for water to drink from the stream, but Ānanda said that five hundred carts had just passed over, and the river was flowing muddy and turbid. Not far away was the river Kakuttha (or Kukuttha), where the Lord could drink and bathe his limbs. Three times Buddha asked, and when Ānanda went to the stream, he found the water flowing clear and pure, which he took in a bowl, marvelling at the wondrous power of the Tathāgata."⁴

2. *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History* by Edward J. Thomas, pp. 98-99.

3. *Ibid*, p. 114.

4. *Ibid*, pp. 149-150.

- (4) The miracle of the loaves and fishes: The introduction to Jātaka No. 78 tells us how a gildmaster and his wife gave a meal to Buddha and his five hundred disciples. “The wife placed a cake in the bowl of the Tathāgata. The teacher took as much as was sufficient, and likewise, the five hundred monks. The gildmaster went round giving milk, melted butter, honey, and sugar, and the teacher with five hundred monks finished his meal. The great gildmaster and his wife also ate as much as they wished, but there was no end of the cakes, and even when the whole monastery of monks and eaters of broken meat had received, there was no sign of finishing. They informed the Lord, ‘Lord, the cake is not coming to an end.’ (The Lord replied:) ‘Then throw it down by the gate of the Jetavana.’ So they threw it down where there is a slope near the gate. And to-day, that place at the end of the slope is known as the Kapalla-puva (Pane-cake).”

“This belongs to the same part of the Jātaka as the tale of the disciple walking on the water”.⁵

- (5) In his last days Buddha had gone to Pātaliputra from where he proceeded. He had to cross the Ganges. “The Ganges however was in flood, and people were crossing it in boats and rafts; the Buddha, just as a strong man might stretch out or bend his arm, disappeared from the bank of the Ganges and stood on the other bank together with his monks.”⁶

- (6) Buddha stayed at the Uruvela Āśrama of Kassapa. One day it rained so heavily that there was a flood all

5. *Ibid.* p. 246.

6. *Ibid.* p. 144.

over. Kassapa and his pupils went in a boat to see if Buddha was safe. Then Kassapa saw that Buddha walked to and fro, and the flood was divided on both sides of the spot which was quite dry.⁷

- (7) The Therīgāthā records a miracle of healing: The nun Subhā was pursued by a rogue in the forest. He wanted her to return his love for her. She advised him to leave her alone. But he went on, admiring her charms. Thereupon Subhā tore out one of her eyes and handed it to the man, who in shame went away. Then the nun went straight to Buddha, and as soon as the Master looked at her, that eye of hers shone forth as before.⁸

Like the Pāli Literature, the Ardhamāgadhī or Jain Literature contains 'miracles'. Their scrutiny convinces us that the miraculous in them is clearly the product of ascetic or mysterious power obtained through yogic practices.

The Labdhiswarūpavarṇana in the third 'prastāva' of the Kumārapālapratibōdha of Sōmaprabhāchārya gives the following yogic miracles (and their siddhis by means of which they are worked are enumerated in the Chaturtha Pāda of the Pātañjalayōgasūtra):—

1. A leper is cured even by a little phlegm of the muni or ascetic.

2. The dirt of the ascetic's body cures all diseases, it smells as musk, and with the touch of his hand a disease disappears as with nectar.

7. *Buddhalīlāsāra-saṅgraha* (Marathi) by Prof. Dharmānanda Kōsāmbī, pp. 108-109.

8. *Therīgāthā*, pp. 366-369.

3. His sweat or the 'water of his ablutions' destroys diseases as the sun does darkness.

4. By the wind, bracing his body, he destroys poison of serpents and other poisonous things.

5. Poisonous food becomes free from poison when it enters his mouth.

6. By hearing his words, evil thoughts disappear.

7. His nails and hair are medicine to the sick.

8. By means of 'aṇimā' he can pass through even the hole of a needle.

9. He can assume, by means of 'mahimā', a form larger than the Meru, the mountain of gods.

10. By means of 'laghimā' he can surpass the lightness of wind even.

11. By dint of 'garimā' his greatness becomes unbearable to even Indra and others.

12. By virtue of 'pāvaṇasatti' he can touch the top of the Meru mountain with his finger (of course, while standing on the earth).

13. By means of 'pākamma' he wades through water as he would walk on the earth, and vice versa.

14. By means of 'issariya' he can create the glory of an emperor.

15. By means of 'sābuvasittā' (power of influencing others) he calms even evil creatures.

16. By means of 'appadighāyattā' (want of impediment) he can pass through even a mountain.

17. By means of 'antaddhāna' he becomes invisible like wind.

18. He can pervade the world by means of his power assuming any form or forms.

19. His 'bīyabuddhiriddhi' empowers him to produce various seeds from the seed of one kind.

20. He possesses 'kuttha-buddhi' like the inexhaustible stock of corn deposited in a granary.

21. He who follows the word 'payānusārī' can comprehend the whole of the work from a single word.

22. With power of his mind, he dives in the ocean of learning by introspection. He can express it by means of his power of speech in a moment.

23. He, who has 'amay-khira-mahu-ghaya-āsavaladdhi', does not get exhausted even in the pratimā posture on account of the power of his mind.

24. Even coarse food, that drops in his bowl, becomes nectarlike and his words have the effect of nectar on the sick.

25. By means of 'akkhīṇa-mahāṇasa-laddhi' even a little food in his bowl is not exhausted although much of it is given away, provided he does not eat it himself.

26. By means of 'akkhīṇa-mahālaya-laddhi' he can accommodate easily a great crowd even in the place like the hall of Tīrthānkara.

27. By means of one organ of sense he can perceive the objects of the rest of the senses, which is due to his penance; this power is called 'sambhinna-sōya-laddhi'.

28. By means of 'jaṅghāchāraṇaladdhi' with a single stride he reaches the Ruyaga mountain, with one stride he goes to Nandisāra, and with another he goes home;

29. Starting from there, with one stride he goes to the top of the Meru, then to the Nandanavana, and with the third stride home.

30. With 'vijjaladdhi' he, with one stride, goes above the world.

31. By means of 'āsivisa-iddhi' he is able to arrest as well as release (beings).

After the narration of the above wonderful deeds that can be worked by means of the various 'laddhis' or 'siddhis', the author, Sōmaprabhāchārya, remarks that the ascetic does not use his powers to bring about small results, and that the ascetic who employs his 'laddhis' for the sake of the saṅgha does not incur sin.

Now I pass on to a very great worker of miracles. Jesus is said to have wrought very many miracles. They are as follows :—

1. *He raised the dead* : Jairus' daughter (Mat. 9. 18, 19, 23-26 ; Mark 5. 22-24, 35-43 ; Luke 8. 41, 42, 49-56); the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7. 11-18); Lazarus (John 11).

2. *He cast out demons* : Gadarine swine (Mat. 8. 28-34 ; Mark 5. 1-20 ; Luke 8. 26-40); dumb demoniac (Mark 9. 32-35); deaf mute (Mat. 12. 22, Luke 11. 14); Syrophenician woman's daughter (Mat. 15. 21-28; Mark 7. 24-30); child (Mat. 17. 14-21 ; Mark 9. 17-29 ; Luke 9. 38-42); in the synagogue (Mark 1. 23-28; Luke 4. 33-37).

3. *He healed the afflicted and sick* : Leper (Mat. 8. 2-4 ; Mark 1. 40-45 ; Luke 5. 12-15); centurion's palsied servant (Mat. 8. 5-13 ; Luke 7. 1-10); Peter's mother-in-law sick of a fever (Mat. 8. 14, 15., Mark 1. 30, 31 ; Luke 4. 38, 39); palsied man (Mat. 9. 1-8 ; Mark 2. 1-12; Luke

5. 18-26); two blind men (Mat. 20. 30-34); deaf mute (Mark 7. 31-37); blind man (Mark 8. 22-26); blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10. 46-52; Luke 18. 35-43); crippled woman (Luke 13. 11-17); dropsical man (Luke 14. 1-6); ten lepers (Luke 17. 11-19); Malchus' ear (Luke 22. 50-51); nobleman's sick son (John 4. 46-54); feeble man at the pool of Bethesda (John 5. 1-16); man born blind (John 9).

4. *He worked various other miracles*: Stilling the storm (Mat. 8. 23-27; Mark 4. 37-41; Luke 8. 22-25); feeding 5,000 (Mat. 14. 15-21; Mark 6. 35-44; Luke 14. 22-33; Mark 6. 45-55; John 6. 15-21); feeding 4000 (Mat. 15. 32-48; Mark 8. 1-9); blasting the fig-tree (Mat. 21. 18-22; Mark 11. 12-14, 20-24); the draught of fish (Luke 5. 1-9); turned water into wine at Cana (John 2. 1-11); the draught of fish after the resurrection (John 21. 1-14).⁹

Christ made no show of his miraculous power. He worked his miracles with a view to helping the afflicted, sick, needy. They all point to the goodness that was responsible for enlisting the supernatural power. Hence one finds in his miracles the essence of miracle illustrated in manifold ways.

Now from pre-historic and ancient times I turn to recent ages, when Indian saints, who were great Vaiṣṇavas, flourished and influenced the masses. Their miracles are recorded in a metrical work in Marathi language called *Bhaktivijaya* of Mahipati (1715 A. C. to 1790 A. C.), some of which I give below:—

9. - The above miracles are quoted from *Columbia Encyclopaedia* (In One Volume), p. 1180.

I. *Raising the dead :*

1. The poet and devotee (or bhakta) Jayadeva brought his dead wife Padmāvati to life by singing verses in praise of Kṛṣṇa.¹⁰

2. A woman's husband died. Just then she went and bowed to Tulasīdāsa who gave an āśīrvāda (or blessing), saying, "May you have eight sons." Thereupon she told the great Bhakta that her husband had just died. Tulasīdāsa, however, assured her that Rāma, his Deity, would make his āśīrvāda true, and when she approached her husband's corpse, she found him sitting up.¹¹

3. The head of Kabir's son was cut off in a theft committed by the father and the son. Then by the King's order the son's headless trunk was impaled on a stake. None knew, of course, who the killed thief was. While some sadhus passed by the stake, the headless trunk made a namaskāra to them, by joining its hands. The sadhus were surprised, and inquired and knew from Kabir himself how he had cut off his son's head in the theft committed by him to procure materials for the feast of some sadhus. Then the sadhus placed the son's head, which Kabir had taken home, on the trunk and the boy was alive.¹²

4. The king of Delhi attended Nāmadeva's kīrtana (i, e. sermon on God), in the midst of which the king killed a cow and asked Nāmadeva to bring the animal to life and

10. *Stories of Indian Saints: English Translation of Mahipati's Marathi Bhaktivijaya*, by Dr. Justice E. Abbott and Pandit Narhar R. Godhole, Ch. II, pp. 28-29.

11. *Ibid.*, Ch. III, p. 49.

12. *Ibid.*, Ch. VI, pp. 99-107.

prove thereby the truthfulness of his songs. And Nāmadeva by his 'bhajana' raised the dead cow to life.¹³

5. The potter-saint Rākā piled his raw pots for baking. He put fuel on the pile and set fire to it. And alas! when the pile was ablaze, the family cat rushed to the spot and with piteous cries went round and round the terrible fire. Rākā suddenly came to know that the cat must have delivered its kittens in one of the raw jars. It was no use taking out the jars, and all thought that the kittens were burnt alive. The mother cat kept on going round and round the fire, crying loudly. Rākā was moved to pity and for three days he sang 'bhajana', praying to God to save the young ones. And on the third day the fire cooled and the jars were visible; the kittens heard their mother's voice and answered her by mewling in return. The potter and his wife thanked God for His mercy.¹⁴

6. God gave Gōrā, the potter-saint, new hands and brought his dead child to life.¹⁵

7. Tukārāma, the famous saint-poet of Mahārāṣṭra raised the dead son of a coppersmith, who, leaving his sick child at home, attended the saint's kīrtana. The child in the meanwhile died. The smith's wife brought her son's corpse to the place of kīrtana and bluntly scolded Tukārāma for being responsible for the mishap. Tukārāma repeated the name Viṭṭhala and sang bhajana. God Viṭhōbā answered the saint's prayer by reviving the dead child.¹⁶

13. *Ibid.*, Ch. X, pp. 171-175.

14. *Ibid.*, Ch. XVII, pp. 279-281.

15. *Ibid.*, Ch. XVII, pp. 286-294.

16. *Ibid.*, Ch. XLVIII, pp. 215-216.

8. The kīrtana of the saint Bōdhalā was very interesting and thousands of men flocked to hear him. One night a band of villagers started for his kīrtana. On their way one of them was bit by a serpent and died instantly. They brought his corpse to the place of kīrtana and seated it amidst them. When Bōdhalā sang bhajana and all clapped with their hands, saying "Viṭṭhala! Viṭṭhala!", the corpse alone was silent and motionless. Bōdhalā, not knowing the condition of it, asked it to clap and say 'Viṭṭhala! Viṭṭhala!', whereupon the dead person came to life and began to clap and sing like others. ¹⁷

II. *Healing the afflicted* :—

1. Gōrakṣa regained his eyes, which he had given away, through the favour of his guru Matsyendra. ¹⁸ This miracle has a touch of ascetic power.

2. Padmanābha, a pupil of Kabir, advised a hopeless leper to repeat the Rāma-nāma; the leper followed his advice and was fully cured of the deadly disease. ¹⁹

3. Suradāsa, a great devotee of Kṛṣṇa, was blind from his birth. When he went to Mathurā, he prayed to the god, and lo! Suradāsa was able to see the god's idol with his eyes. He gained his eyes through prayer. ²⁰

4. A Brahmin leper of Trimbakeśwar had a dream in which god Śiva asked him to see Ekanātha, the great saint and poet, and beg of him a part of his 'merit' (or puṇya), so that he would be cured of the disease with it. The leper came to Ekanātha, and the kindly man took water in his

17. *Ibid.*, ch. LIV, pp. 316-318.

18. *Ibid.*, ch. XXII, p. 368.

19. *Ibid.*, ch. XXIV, pp. 391-395.

20. *Ibid.*, ch. XXXIII, pp. 16-17.

folded hands and poured it in the hands of the Brahmin, and thus gave his 'merit', when instantly the leper was cured of the deadly malady. ²¹

III. *General Miracles*:—

1. Mirābāi, the devotee of Kṛṣṇa, was given a cup of poison to drink by her mother as per the order of her husband. Mirābāi drank it, and Kṛṣṇa's white idol, in front of which she sat and sang bhajana, became immediately green all over. When the king, Mirābāi's father, saw it, he was afraid that he had offended the god and so requested Mirābāi to change the idol's colour to the original. Mirābāi, who had no effect of the poison on her, sang Kṛṣṇa's bhajana and the idol became as white as before. ²²

2. Tukārāma's manuscripts of his works were thrown in the Indrāyaṇī river. When he knew it, he was much aggrieved. He went to the temple on the bank of the river and sat there for thirteen days and nights, without food or water, and sang "Rāma Kṛṣṇa Hari!" On the last day the manuscripts floated on the water of the river to the great surprise of his revilers. ²³

3. Dnyānadeva made a buffalo repeat the Vedas with proper intonation to convince some vain learned Brahmins that there was God even in a buffalo. ²⁴

These miracles of the bhaktas or saints are fully characterized by their authors' goodness towards others. The power of Nāma-repetition or prayer is responsible for most of them. The saints or bhaktas are divine agents

21. *Ibid.*, ch. XLVI, pp. 181-182. 22. *Ibid.*, ch. XXXVIII, pp. 74-76.
23. *Ibid.*, ch. LII, pp. 291-292. 24. *Ibid.*, ch. IX, pp. 144-145.

through whom the miraculous is seen to work. The bhaktas were, however, innocent of this power, and they only believed in the will and power of God whom they invoked to help them.

The above mentioned miracles are possible only when the known order of nature's laws is abrogated. This consideration that the breach of nature's laws is brought about by supernatural powers has modernity about it. Modern man, with his heritage of scientific knowledge, can conceive the idea of the breach of nature's laws, and therefore, by implication the existence of an order of nature's laws. Primitive man had, of course, no such notion. He viewed miracles as unusual and wonderful events beyond the reach of ordinary men, and in awe and surprise he attributed them to his god or gods.

Though the savage or primitive man was unable to probe into the mystery of the miraculous, he had certainly not failed to notice and feel the supernatural in the miraculous or wonderful events he had experienced or heard from others. Some thinkers like Jevons associate the supernatural with man right from the dawn of history.

In his 'History of Religions'²⁵ Jevons has given his views on the above point. Durkheim J. W. Swain has admirably summarised them as follows :

"...human mind, says Jevons, has no need of a properly scientific culture to notice that determined sequences, or a constant order of succession, exist between facts, or to observe, on the other hand, that this order is frequently upset. It sometimes happens that the sun is suddenly eclipsed,

25. Introduction, p. 15 ff.

that rain fails at the time when it is expected, that the moon is slow to reappear after its periodical disappearance, etc. Since these events are outside the ordinary course of affairs, they are attributed to extraordinary exceptional causes, that is to say, in fine, to extra natural causes. It is under this form that the idea of the supernatural is born at the very outset of history, and from this moment, according to this author, religious thought finds itself provided with its proper subject.”²⁶

Jevons's view is in consonance with the spirit of definitions of religion, which generally attribute the very existence of religion to the idea of the supernatural. “Religion in its widest sense,” says A. A. Macdonell, “includes on the one hand the conception which men entertain of the divine or supernatural powers and, on the other, that sense of dependence of human welfare on those powers, which finds its expression in various forms of worship.”²⁷

One may believe in the supernatural power or not, but he must admit that the belief in the supernatural power is common to almost all religions.

The above views of Jevons are opposed by many thinkers on the ground of what they call universal determinism. Durkheim has made out a strong case of this in ‘The Elementary Forms of Religious Life,’ pp. 26–27. According to him I find that

(i) primitive man had no idea of the order of nature's laws,

26. The Elementary Forms of Religious Life, pp. 27–28,

27. Vedic Mythology, p. 1.

(ii) miracles did not exhibit to him any breach of that order, for they contained nothing which did not appear perfectly conceivable to his mind, and lastly

(iii) as he took miracles to be quite natural events, he saw nothing supernatural about them.

E. B. Tylor, while considering a savage's view of marvellous events, says, "They are not to his mind marvellous in a frequent modern sense of the word, that is, they are not violations or supersessions of recognized laws of nature."²⁸

Primitive man's mind could not conceive, according to those who are opposed to Jevons's views, that the phenomena of the universe are bound together by some natural order of things. They say, it is the positive sciences that have succeeded in establishing the idea of universal determinism, that is to say, things in the universe have relations of laws, there is a natural order of things that rules the world; hence the primitive man had no idea of the breach of any laws, and consequently he could have no idea of any power beyond, suggested by the violation of the laws. "That is why," asserts Durkheim, "the miraculous interventions which the ancients attributed to their gods were not to their eyes miracles in the modern conception of the term. For them, they were beautiful, rare or terrible spectacles, or causes of surprise and marvel; but they never saw in them the glimpses of a mysterious world into which the reason cannot probe."²⁹

28. *Primitive Culture*, Vol. II, p. 371.

29. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, p. 27.

I need not array any more words of writers who support or oppose the idea of associating the conception of the supernatural with man right from the dawn of history. They would only show that there is no finality about the point under discussion.

But from the above representation of the opposite views, one thing is quite clear and beyond doubt: primitive man attributed miracles to his god or gods, and so he had the idea of the power beyond; he could not resist it, he could not help feeling it, even though his mind was unable to probe into its mystery.

This last consideration does vouch for the association of the supernatural with the miraculous.

CHAPTER III

POSSIBILITY OF MIRACLES

Common man has no scruples about the association of the supernatural with the miraculous. Even today, men believe in the miraculous inspite of the wide and rapid advancement of scientific knowledge and they attribute all marvellous events to the power beyond. They believe in miracles ; they find no difficulty in the way of their possibility. The second world war satisfied man's curiosity by its use of wonderful weapons manufactured by science. The Germans were simply, for a pretty long time, modern wonder-workers for the common run of men.

In the remote as well as recent past man had his gods, heroes, sages and ascetics to work miracles for him. They catered freely to his curiosity which ascribed those marvellous deeds to the supernatural power possessed by the miracle-workers as an extraordinary gift of God. In the last chapter I have given various miracles of Buddha, Christ, ascetics and Bhāgavata Saints who were superhuman or had the gift of the supernatural. People had no doubt about this. They accepted their miracles without question, and instead of trying to explain the events reasonably, they naturally looked to the power beyond and attributed to it the will responsible for those events.

Nowadays religion seldom works miracles for man as it did so frequently long ago. But the inherent thirst for the miraculous is well satisfied by science with its ever increasing number of wonderful inventions ; and to men,

who are neither scientists nor philosophers, what are the telephone, radio, television, wireless, etc., if not miracles ?

One can safely say that most of the men who believe in miracles do not really know how they are brought about in the domain of religion, where faith abounds and abides for ever, or how they occur in the world of science. But as soon as man begins to think of the miraculous or wonderful events and struggles to solve the mystery about them with the help of logic, the mystery of the miraculous begins to evaporate and his belief in it loses ground bit by bit. When he thinks of the forces and laws that possibly may govern the working of those marvellous events, they are no more charming to him. Modern man can successfully solve the mystery about the wonders of science by means of his inherited mass of scientific knowledge. But the distant, dim, mysterious domain of religious miracles refuses to reveal to him the secret forces at work.

Scientists and thinkers have, however, tried to tackle the problem of the miraculous in religion. From time to time they have advanced arguments; and, to guide further discussion about the possibility of miracles, I state their different conclusions below :

(i) Miracles cannot happen.

(ii) Miracles can happen, but no divine or supernatural power is necessary for this.

(iii) It is as much possible for man to understand the mystery of the working of this universe with all its phenomena as it is for one, who lives within a watch, to know how it goes on. The problem of the miraculous is akin to the mystery of the world.

Materialists and scientists reject miracles altogether; they proclaim that miracles cannot happen. In their opinion "no testimony could establish a miracle, unless its falsehood would be more miraculous than the alleged miracle itself."¹

.For some philosophers God exists and for others He does not exist. However, their attack on miracles is all alike, though its brunt varies according as God is or is not.

The great philosopher Spinoza attacked miracles and declared them to be impossible. In fine his views are as follows: The laws of nature are God's decrees. Miracles cannot happen as they contravene the order of nature, and if miracles do happen, God would contradict Himself. For to him the order of nature is fixed and immutable and God's universal laws undergo no change or do not increase. Miracles cannot be explained for they surpass human understanding. And lastly, belief in miracle would throw doubt upon everything and lead one to atheism.²

Spinoza's views invited criticism as he sought to reduce God and miracles to nothing. Spinoza's pantheistic doctrine of God reduces the creator of the universe to a mere machine. He assumes that God has no freedom to change His own laws once created. He has no will to create new forces in the universe. He does not allow existing forces to interact and produce new forces. Moreover Spinoza ignores, or forgets to consider, the fact that the material universe may be subject to some spiritual order. Modern men of science have already begun to realise that there is some other world

1. E. R. E., Vol. VIII, p, 685.

2. The Philosophy of Spinoza, pp. 103 to 121.

behind this material world. This fact is well illustrated with sufficient evidence by C. E. M. Joad in his "Guide to Modern Thought". He says in one place, "Philosophy being demanded, a number of physicists, as I have already pointed out, are doing their philosophising for themselves and surmise that behind the world which physics studies there is another, this other world is conceived as a mental or spiritual unity..."³ What Joad says of the physicists is shown by him to be equally true in the case of other scientists.

The philosophers who are agnostics see in miracles an opportunity to augment their knowledge of nature. Their case may be briefly stated thus :

"Agnosticism, as represented by Huxley, admitted the possibility of miracle, but, in the event of such wonderful events happening would widen its view of nature. All that thus would be shown would be that all experience, however long or uniform, is apt to be incomplete. There would be no necessary divine power behind such a wonderful event."⁴

The agnostics' view admits of what Spinoza denies to the order of nature. The agnostics do not admit the existence of God, but they hope to extend their experiences of nature by understanding miracles.

What the agnostics hope to discover through the understanding of miracles would be an unknown aspect of this very world. But then the discovery of the unknown aspect of the universe, or rather the discovery of the unknown laws of the world which are at work in producing

3. Guide to Modern Thought, pp. 20-21.

4. E. R. E., Vol. VIII, p. 685.

miracles, annihilates the very idea of a supernatural world. Many scientist-philosophers like Russell are opposed to the concept of a supernatural world. Dr. S. Rādhākṛṣṇan has put their views in a nutshell thus : " If it (the supernatural world) is conceived as existent and not merely logically thought, then it must have active relations with the world in which we live. Miracles, incarnations, ascensions are invoked to bring the natural and the supernatural worlds into intimate union. If the two are bound together according to fixed laws there is no reason why we should break up reality into the two opposite camps of nature and supernature. It is all nature; only we should not confine the term to the obvious facts and forces noticed by our imperfect science. The natural and supernatural are distinction within reality, not between a world we know and another we do not know. If the supernatural is opposed to the natural, it is sometimes confused with a chaotic as distinct from the ordered. It is full of chance novelties and incalculable accidents. Such a kind of supernatural is repudiated by science. The true conception of the supernatural is, however, different. Nature has an order of its own. The supernatural is the natural in her true depths and infinity. It is not anything different from nature. " ⁵

To reduce the natural and the supernatural to the same order is to dismiss miracles. This view does not help one to understand miracles and one is constrained to reject it totally. Sponsors of this view are in reality akin to Spinoza: The latter equates God with nature while the former find no place for Him in the scheme of the universe. Suppose, one grants that the supernatural is a part of the natural.

5. *An Idealistic View of Life*, p. 59.

But how does this view enable one to explain why the forces in the supernatural are at work to produce miracles only when a prayer is said to that effect, or a saint, a prophet or an ascetic wills to effect an unusual event. Why do the unknown forces in the so-called 'natural' supernatural world produce marvellous events only under circumstances in which miracles throughout the world are seen and known to occur? One cannot help conceiving some paramount will that controls and directs the forces in the supernatural world. Miracles cannot be mere accidents or chance novelties.

To sum up the views of the materialists and philosophers:

- (i) Materialists reject the possibility of miracles.
- (ii) Some philosophers admit God's existence but find miracles impossible and useless.
- (iii) Some philosophers who do not believe in God admit miracles and by knowing them they expect to know more about nature.
- (iv) Some philosophers and scientists consider the supernatural to be nothing but an unknown part of the natural and hold the view that miracles are accidents and chance novelties in the unknown nature.

The above views are shared by most philosophers and materialists. But there is a new class of scientist-philosophers who with patient researches of many years have gathered facts and tried to probe into the mystery of the miraculous. Dr. Alexis Carell is such a scientist-philosopher. He has thrown some inspiring light on the problem of the miraculous in his "Man the Unknown". He carried his researches at the Medical Bureau of Lourdes (America)

with regard to miraculous cures. He tells that miraculous cures seldom occur. But the few cases of miraculous healing indicate the existence of unknown organic and mental processes. They prove beyond doubt that certain mystic states, such as that of prayer, have definite effects. Healing miracles are recorded in all countries, but the belief in them, he says, was undermined by the great impetus of science in the nineteenth century which proclaimed that 'not only miracles did not exist but that they could not exist.' He further says: "As the laws of thermodynamics make perpetual motion impossible, physiological laws oppose miracles. Such is still the attitude of most physiologists and physicians. However in view of the facts observed during the last fifty years this attitude cannot be sustained. The most important cases of miraculous healing have been recorded by the Medical Bureau of Lourdes. Our present conception of the influence of prayer upon pathological lesions is based upon the observation of patients who have been cured almost instantaneously of various affections. The miracle is chiefly characterized by an extreme acceleration of the processes of organic repair. There is no doubt that the rate of cicatrization of the anatomical defects is much greater than the normal one. The only condition indispensable to the occurrence of the phenomenon is prayer. But there is no need for the patient himself to pray or even to have any religious faith. It is sufficient that some one around him be in a state of prayer. Such facts are of profound significance. They show the reality of certain relations, of still unknown nature, between psychological and organic processes. They prove the objective importance of the spiritual activities, which hygienists, physicians, educators, and sociologists have

almost always neglected to study. They open to man a new world.”⁶

I have given above rather a long quotation, only because Dr. Alexis Carell's is a unique voice. He sounds a note of warning. He speaks from experience. What he says about healing miracles drops sufficient suggestion and indicates a line of work to those who would by researches establish the possibility of other miracles. Especially his words about the efficacy of prayer speak volumes.

However philosophers like Viscount Samuel refuse to agree with Dr. Alexis Carell and assert that all conditions described by him may be true, the rapid healing may be true, but that gives no definite proof of the supernatural.⁷ These opponents trace the cure to psychic influences and dismiss the supernatural element.

But pious men find no difficulty in admitting God's existence and flexibility of the order of nature's laws. They attribute to God beneficent will which, by modulating the order of nature, works itself, or through specially gifted beings, miracles for the good of man. This view of the possibility of miracles is based upon the belief that God is, that He guides the universe and works at times miracles in response to prayer, or to save His devotees from calamities, or to prove His existence or good will towards man.

After all the above discussion, one realises more the truth of Alfred Loisy's assertion: "Miracle, properly understood, is the course of the world and life as viewed by faith,

6. *Man the Unknown*, p. 143, Pelicon Books.

7. *Belief And Action*, p. 57, Pelicon Books.

which alone penetrates the enigma; the same course of life and the world, viewed as it were, from outside, by reason, becomes the order of nature, the domain of science and religion. ”⁸

The more one thinks of the mystery of the supernatural the more it puzzles. I repeat here what I have already stated above: It is as much possible for man to understand the mystery of the working of the universe as it is for one who lives within a watch to know what makes it go on.

In fine one can say that miracles occur where faith rules over human mind.

8. From *Credence to Faith in 'Religion in Transition'*, edited by Vergilins Ferm, p. 147.

CHAPTER IV

UTILITY OF MIRACLES

Now I shall consider the utility of miracles. When I think of their utility, I ask : What are the uses of miracles ? Have miracles helped man to enrich his religious experience ? Have they helped the spread of religion ? Have they added to the happiness or enlightenment of man ? These are the questions I shall have to answer to find out the utility of miracles.

Materialists and scientists have proclaimed miracles as useless. Spinoza asserted long ago that they add nothing to our knowledge about God, and belief in miracles, to repeat his words, would throw doubt upon everything and lead to atheism. Deists opposed miracles and asserted that belief in miracles was a kind of treason to God. David Hume proclaimed that nothing could establish the truth of miracles, and he had no doubt about its falsehood. But he has admitted that miracles have pleased men and created religious enthusiasm in them. However he has denied any share to miracles in the making of religion ; no religion is founded on miracles.

Those who have faith in God believe generally in miracles. Miracles, which are not mere wonders, but bear testimony to God's kindness and grace, (e.g. miracles of healing), rouse religious feeling in the heart of the devout and strengthen their faith in God. When in serious illness, in grave danger, in sudden calamity man is utterly helpless and no mundane power can save him, he is constrained to seek aid from above. He prays to God, and God answers his earnest prayer.

God works a miracle by saving him. Thereby man's faith is strengthened, and his religious experience is increased. His mind becomes more humble, it gets rid of its egoism. Miracles set man's mind thinking of the unknown and human dependence upon it. Can man deny this? When doctors have given up a case as beyond cure and have unanimously declared the patient would live only a few hours, a near and dear relation of the serious patient prays in devout silence to the family deity, and the danger is averted and the patient recovers gradually to the surprise of the doctors especially. Men, who have seen, experienced, heard this, cannot help believing the miraculous effect of earnest prayer. And, I may note in passing that such prayer is sometimes accompanied by a promise of offering to the deity.

A real miracle is an index to God's goodness. Men do not look upon miracles as mere wonders, they regard them as an evidence of divine care of man. Knowledge of miracles enriches man's idea of a good, kind, helpful God.

To the materialist and scientist, God may exist or not. But after all God is an idea, and the idea of God is as real as other ideas.¹

1. "All our attitudes, moral, practical, or emotional, as well as religious, are due to the 'objects' of our consciousness, the things which we believe to exist, whether really or ideally, along with ourselves. Such objects may be present to our senses, or they may be present only to our thoughts. In either case they elicit from us a reaction; and the reaction due to things of thought is notoriously in many cases as strong as that due to sensible presences. It may be even stronger...The more concrete objects of most men's religion, the deities whom they worship, are known to them only in idea" (*The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James, p. 53).

Stronger the concept of the idea of God, greater the faith of man. Hence faith has no scruples about miracles, and it is enriched by the experience of miracles.

Now I turn to the question—Have miracles helped the spread of religion ?

History of religions tells that there has been a craving for signs and wonders since man conceived the idea of God and religion became the habit of his life. Martin Luther is said to have dismissed outward miracles as jugglery or apples and nuts for children. Before the advent of scientific knowledge, men were children and their strong faith in God could make no room for any kind of doubt about things divine. Such men are found even today where science has not encroached upon the domain of religion. Miracles attract them, and when religions began their careers, miracles certainly had won converts. Miracles help therefore the spread of religion. When a Christ or a Buddha works miracles, the news spreads far and wide; religious men's curiosity is roused and they listen to what the miracle-worker has to say. Then they are easily converted to his faith.

But, did the founders of religions use miracles as a means of spreading their faiths ? It is said by many that Buddha, Christ or Mohammed had declined to play the role of wonder-worker. Buddha forbade the display of miraculous power (which is often described wrongly as 'magic power' by Europeans) can be amply proved by citing passages from the oldest Buddhist canons. Then, how could hundreds of miracles find their way in the Pali literature ? And how did most of the miracles happen to be ascribed to Buddha ? I have already given a few of his miracles.²

2. See p. 23,

Just after his enlightenment, Buddha started his first preaching and at Uruvela Buddha by his supernatural powers overcame two nāgas that vomitted smoke and flame, received visits from various gods, read the thoughts of Uruvela Kassapa, split wood, created stoves for them to use after bathing in the cold weather, and worked in all 3500 miracles.³

Buddha is reported to have then won over Kassap the great ascetic, and converted him together with his hundreds of pupils to Buddhism. By working the miracle of pairs he won over the whole of the Śākya community. We find an instance of a young ascetic who had no desire to see Buddha if he did not perform miracles. Miracles were expected of superhuman beings, and it was but natural that Buddha was expected to work them. One should note here also that it was enjoined on Jain ascetics to work miracles only for the sake of their Saṅgha.⁴

Like Buddha, Christ was against playing the role of a wonder-worker. How is it then that so many miracles are recorded to his credit in the Bible? A. D. Ritchie has offered an explanation; "One of the most striking things in the record of the Gospels is Jesus's reluctance to work miracles and His realization that they would be misinterpreted (see, e. g. St. Mark, V, 43; VII, 36; VIII, 11-12; St. John, iv, 48). Moreover, He said explicitly that it was not a case of His doing something to passive recipients, but of something in which they also must cooperate (see, e.g., St. Mark, vi, 1-6; vii, 24-30)".⁵

3. *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, p.91. 4. See p.29.
5. *Civilization, Science and Religion*, p. 72. Pelicon Books.

From the above quoted words it does not certainly follow that Christ did not work miracles; only he did not like to display his miraculous powers as a wonder-worker. The point that Christ did not wish his miracles to be misinterpreted is noteworthy. But the more important point is this: He desired that men must cooperate in his doing. Here we get at the truth about Christ's or Buddha's reluctance to work miracles. They did not want to impress on man that he had no part to play in their religion. If superhuman power could do everything, then man has simply to rely on that power and has nothing to do. Religion creates in man the sense of his dependence on God, but it must not, Christ must have thought, rob him of his power of self-reliance. Moreover religion is indeed a thing to practise and not to wonder at. The miraculous works of the prophet must not eclipse his teachings. Miracles have a very limited purpose to serve, and they must not be allowed to cloud the sense of religion. That is why Christ and Buddha were reluctant to work miracles.

There is really no evidence to prove that Christ or Buddha did not work miracles. Vivekānanda, the greatest of modern champions of Hindu religion, protested against miracles, but he did not assert their impossibility. What he intended to point out was the misuse of the miraculous power and its ultimate effect on religion, which is nothing but degradation. Originally the number of miracles might be very small, but in course of time zealous followers at first and later on missionaries, too anxious to spread their religion, made an apocryphal addition to the original miraculous stories. Men of science have already made an intrusion in the domains of philosophy and religion and they have thoroughly searched the religious literatures of the world.

A. D. Ritchie writes about the multiplication of Christ's miracles thus :—“The disciples of Jesus who considered him to be God Incarnate naturally also held that he could do things that no ordinary man could. Therefore, they repeated stories about these things which tended to grow by repetition. Consequently the miracle stories as they have come down to us are not so much evidence for the divinity of Jesus as evidence for the disciple's belief in His divinity.”⁶

Ritchie is partially right. His view can account for some miracles and not for all miracles. To suppose that all miracles known to man are mere inventions of religious enthusiasts is to cast doubt on the universally admitted character of pious men of the highest order and scrap all books of religions. Common man has however no scruples about the superhuman powers of Buddhas and Christs, sages and saints. He believes that they could and can work miracles.

Even today there is no want of miraculous deeds. An African Chief, described as a man of miracles, was sometime ago reported in a local newspaper to have miraculous healing power. He only sat by the man affected, ill or blind, and merely said his prayer and the sufferer was healed.

It is interesting to note here that in the days of our recent national distress due to the partition of India, some one asked Mahatma Gandhi to work a miracle and save India and the Hindus and the Sikhs if he was really a Mahatma. Gandhiji said that he was an ordinary human being like others, and thus disappointed the man.⁷

6. *Ibid*, p. 72. 7. Delhi Diary, p. 41.

The Mahatma's reply well becomes a great man of piety. But who dose not know of his miraculous fasts and the miraculous work he did in Noakhali where he mightily stemmed the tide of fanaticism of a community gone mad, gave hope to the forlorn, and brought back to Hindu fold thousands of men and women who were forcibly converted to Islam ?

One cannot help thinking that the miraculous makes a very popular aspect of religion, which gains converts and helps men to adhere to religion. Whenever common men talk of saints and sages, prophets and gods they are fain to indulge in the narration of their miraculous deeds which have a powerful hold on common minds. Is not this sufficient evidence to prove that miracles help the spread of religion and make men happier ?

PART II

ARYANS' BELIEF IN THE SUPERNATURAL

CHAPTER V

VEDIC ĀRYANS AND SUPERNATURAL POWERS

The Vedic Āryans were certainly a civilized race. Their thought-life was anything but primitive. The R̥gvedic poetry is by no means 'a naive outburst of poetic feeling'. The hymns surely indicate a remarkable mental development of their poets and their admirers who used the hymns. Mental development and civilization go hand in hand. The Vedic Āryans came to India with a cultural heritage that had a long distant past. "In the period of R̥gveda," I quote a modern authority, "Āryans had already a high stage of civilization. In knowledge, in power and social organization they had attained a high stage. The Vedic literature does not mark the starting of a civilization; on the other hand it marks the starting of the decadence of a high civilization".¹

The Indo-Aryans are supposed to have come from beyond the Hindukush and Karakoram mountains to India—a land of beautiful nature with its sky-kissing snow-clad mountains, oceanlike rivers, splendid seasons, green boundless meadows. Here the Āryan was turned into a poet, a sage, a seer. The Vedic poet had a soaring imagination that visualised unseen things and gave them bodies and minds, that is to say, they saw gods, held communion with them and wrote inspired hymns to describe their experiences to their ordinary fellowmen. The Vedic Āryans inherited the

1. Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. I, p. 39.

belief in these gods from their remote ancestors outside India. These ancestors belonged to the Indo-European race, which had come to believe in some power or powers beyond, through its experiences of fear and surprise and exigencies of life. This belief of the Indo-Europeans in the power beyond was gradually associated with strong natural powers such as the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, wind, fire, etc. They called these powers 'devas', i. e. 'the shining ones' or 'the bright ones'. Moreover, as a consequence of the belief, they invoked the shining ones to succour them and save them in calamities. This was but a natural step from the belief to the prayer, for the Indo-Europeans were very practical, to which the R̥gvedic poetry bears sufficient testimony, and they would not have cared for the devas if they were not helpful.

Besides the belief in the supernatural powers the Vedic Āryans had brought with them two important things, viz. an evergrowing powerful speech and the cult of soma-sacrifice, both of which were instrumental to the Āryan's composition of the laudatory hymns. These poetic compositions do not simply describe the gods or supernatural powers to give information about them; the poets do not stand at a distance from their gods. They hold direct communion with them. The ṛ̥ṣis are gifted poets and can see things and powers that transcend the comprehension of common man. Being endowed with intense imagination and abiding religious fervour, the ṛ̥ṣis personified striking powers of nature such as fire, rain, wind, sun, thunder-storm, etc., and transformed them into living creatures endowed with limbs, mind, and actions. Thus they are given head, face, mouth, tongue, cheeks, eyes, hair, breast, belly, shoulders, arms, hands, feet, fingers, etc.

Indra and Maruts are martial persons with head, breast, arms and hands. Flames of Agni are his tongues or limbs. The sun's rays are his hands. Trita has fine fingers with which he prepares soma-juice. Indra has a very big round belly which shows his capacity for soma juice. In short, the powers were personified so as to bring out their salient features.

These personified powers, or gods, were almost invariably beneficent to the Vedic Āryan who was a successful conqueror and whose outlook on life was therefore optimistic. To them he offered oblations in fire, accompanied by hymns, and invoked them to bestow upon him cart-loads of riches, herds of cows and strong brave sons. These gods have the feelings of man. They are friends of him who offers sacrifices to them and punish those who fail to do so. They are often invoked by their worshippers to punish and destroy evil spirits and demons from whom evils such as sickness, diseases, drought and darkness result and cut short man's life.

With the solitary exclusion of Rudra who has more maleficent traits than beneficent ones, all gods are benevolent. They rule the world and control the forces of nature. They watch the good as well as bad deeds of men. Neither gods nor men can upset the order set by them. They dwell in the highest heaven. When men offer sacrifices to them, they come to the earth in their bright cars and seat themselves on the kusha-grass seats and accept libations. Being pleased with the oblations of soma, milk, honey they confer boons on their worshippers. All the gods are 'true' and 'not deceitful'. They bear a high moral character. They protect the righteous and reward the pious and liberal.

They are, therefore, offered sacrifices, praised, flattered, and coaxed too. The poet-sage lavishly attributes all good qualities and even wonderful powers to almost every god. This practice was carried to a fault, and its obvious result was the indistinctness of the various divinities in the Rgveda.

The powers attributed to the gods by the Vedic Āryan are, indeed, great and wonderful. They bestow treasures on their worshippers and remove their poverty. They make wars on their enemies whom they kill and confer the booty on their worshippers. They cure the worshipper's diseases, restore his eyesight, relieve him of peril, rejuvenate the old, give wives to the wifeless, and can do many more wondrous deeds. Their great cosmical functions speak volumes for their amazing might. They have supported the heaven, they have established the earth, lest the former falls down and the latter becomes unsteady. As many as a dozen gods are said to have created individually the heaven and the earth. The sun also is a creation of half a dozen or more gods who have fixed it in the sky and have made a path for it to move on. Some gods are said to have taken care to keep the heaven and the earth apart which would, otherwise, come in clash. These and other cosmical feats of the gods are obviously the outcome of their goodness and kindness to man.

To sum up: These supernatural powers or gods are omnipotent. They can do whatever they wish. The poet-priests and their patrons look to them for the fulfilment of their desires; they invoke them to sacrifices and pray to them for succour. Their deeds are various—friendly, liberal, kindly. The Vedic Āryan believed in these powers.

CHAPTER VI

A PEEP BEHIND THE GODS' DEEDS

Various and innumerable are the deeds of the Ṛgvedic gods. They are cosmic, mythological, kind and generous. They are all marvellous, They are each an index to the greatness and kindness of their doers. The Ṛgvedic poet-sages are too careful to offend any divinity. They describe all the gods in equally flattering tones and glowing terms. They desire the gods to fulfil their manifold wishes in return of their libations and praises; they expect the gods to answer their prayers with the exercise of their wondrous powers for their benefit.

The hymnal admiration varies directly as the strength and awe of the divinity in whose honour the poet sings. Generally all the gods are great to him; but one discerns without doubt, that some of the gods like Indra, Varuṇa, Agni and Mitra tower above all others and command a greater degree of honour, respect and attention. They rule supreme. Their dominion is vast, their might tremendous and their power unchallenged. Hence the poet's admiration of their powers pours forth in superb numbers.

These four and other gods who work wondrous deeds possess some mysterious power which I propose to discuss and describe in this chapter.

The mysterious power behind the gods' deeds is not easy to describe or name. It is called by various names, or, to be accurate, it has been translated variously in English. Also the word used to denote this power in one hymn is

found to be used in another to express a bad or opposite sense in the case of gods' enemies.

I shall consider words signifying gods' power or their deeds worked through this power.

Words—(i)

Such a word is 'māyā' which is applicable in a good sense to gods and in a bad sense to demons. Macdonell assures that "it has almost exact parallel in English word 'craft', which in its old signification meant 'occult power, magic', then 'skilfulness, art' on the one hand and 'deceitful skill, wile' on the other."¹

There is only one other word viz. māyinī,² which is used to denote the mysterious power. Sāyaṇa describes māyinī as 'prajñāvatī satī', but it is best translated as 'mysterious energy or power.'

The word māyā occurs in the following cases:—māyā, māyāḥ, māyām, māyayā, māyābhiḥ. Māyā occurs three times, māyāḥ twenty-four times, māyām three times, māyayā nineteen times, and māyābhiḥ thirteen times.

I shall now consider the senses of the various forms of the word.

Varuṇa's mysterious power is described at RV., V, 85.5.6; VIII, 41.3; IX, 73.9. The poet describes Varuṇa's power as 'mahīm māyām' and 'māyām mahīm' at V, 85.5 and 6 respectively. The sense in both the cases is the same. The verses 5 and 6 describe the god's wondrous deeds. V.5 tells that Varuṇa stood in the sky and measured the earth

1. Vedic Mythology, p. 14.

2. RV., V, 48.1.

with the sun as a measuring rod. V.6 declares that the god's power is unimpeded and it is this power on account of which the (ever) flowing rivers do not fill up the sea. The poet tells what is done by the god's power (māyayā) at VIII, 41.3 and IX, 73.9. VIII, 41.3 tells that the god has encompassed the nights and established the morns, and IX, 73.9 speaks of the thread of sacrifice (ṛtasya tāntuḥ) which is attained by the wise on account of this power of the god (māyayā).

RV., X, 177.1 describes Asura's power that reveals the pataṅga or sun to the wise. Mitra and Varuṇa cause rain by means of Asura's māyā³ and guard the divine ordinances by means of the same power.⁴

The mysterious power is described as possessed by Mitra and Varuṇa together at RV., III, 61.7; V, 63.4. III. 61.7 tells how the great power (mahī māyā) of Mitra and Varuṇa shines forth everywhere and V. 63.4 informs that the gods' power rests in heaven.

Indra has this power which is described at RV., I, 80.7; II, 17.5; III, 53.8; IV, 30.12. 21; VI, 22.6; VI 47.18; X, 54.2 In I, 80.7 Indra is said to have killed the guileful beast with his māyā. II, 17.5 tells how Indra with his māyā made the hills steady, ordered the rivers to flow, established the earth and held back the sky from falling down. III, 53.8 and VI, 47.18 say that Indra can assume whatever forms he desires to have by means of his mysterious power or māyā. IV, 30.12 tells that Indra checked the river (Sindhu) and spread the water on the land and IV, 30.21 narrates how with his māyā he sent to sleep

3. RV., V, 63,3. 4. RV., V, 63,7.

thirty thousand dāsas for the sake of Dabhīti. V, 22.6 tells that Indra vanquished Parvata with his māyā. X, 54.2 tells that what men called Indra's battle was illusion.⁵ Here māyā is used in the sense of illusion. The description of Indra's deeds shows that his power is mysterious and miraculous.

Agni's māyā is referred to at RV., I, 144.1 ; I, 160.3 ; III, 27.7 ; VIII, 1.10. At I, 144.1 Agni is described as a priest that sends the brilliant hymn with his māyā. I, 160.3 tells that Agni purifies the world with his māyā. In III, 27.7 Agni is said to lead the way with his māyā. There is in these verses something that indicates the mysterious and wondrous power of Agni.

Ādityas' māyā is said to spread against the enemies.⁶ RV., X, 85.18 tells that Ādityachandrau move on by means of the same power.

RV., VI, 58.1 tells that Pūṣan aids all with his mysterious powers. Tvaṣṭṛ's power is described at RV., X, 53.9. Here māyā may mean the god's wondrous skill or art.

RV., X, 86.6 refers to gods' wondrous power.

The māyā possessed by gods is thus divine and wondrous and mysterious. The general broad description of the deeds speaks of this nature.

Māyā is also used to denote the powers of the enemies of the gods at RV., I, 32.4; I, 117.3; II, 11.10; III, 20.3; V, 2.9; V, 31.7; V, 40.6.8; VI, 18.9; VI, 20.4; VI, 22.9; VI, 44.22; VI, 45.9; VII, 98.5; VII, 99.4; VIII, 41.8; X, 73.5; X, 99.2; X, 111.6. In these places charms of the

5. मायेत् सा ते यानि युद्धान्याहुः.

6. RV., II, 27.16.

malignant Dasyus, guileful devices of the Dānavas, Svarbhānu's 'magic', Śuṣṇa's charms, Saptatha's 'magic devices' etc., etc. are expressed by the word. The word in the form 'māyayā' is used in its evil sense with reference to the tricks of a sorceress at RV., VII, 104.24 and the wiles of a wicked magician at RV., VIII, 23.15.

Indra is said to have vanquished god-less wiles at RV., VII, 98.5. RV., VII, 99.4 tells that Indra and Viṣṇu defeated the Dāsa's māyā or wiles.

Sāyana interprets māyā variously in his bhāṣya, e. g. मित्रस्य वरुणस्य माया प्रभारूपा सती;⁷ मायया प्रज्ञया;⁸ मायया स्वकीयया शक्त्या;⁹ मायया कर्मणा प्रज्ञया वा;¹⁰ मायया कर्मविषयाभिज्ञानेन;¹¹ मायया त्रिगुणात्मिकया;¹² मायाभिः तत्प्रतिकूलकपटविशेषैः;¹³ मायाभिः जयोपायज्ञानैः;¹⁴ मायाभिः वंचनाभिः बुद्धिविशेषैः;¹⁵ etc., etc.

Sāyana takes माया as प्रज्ञा, प्रज्ञान, कर्मन्, कर्मविषयाभिज्ञान, कपटविशेष, जयोपायज्ञान, स्वकीया शक्ति, etc., etc. To him māyā is prabhārūpā or lustrous. But these meanings of māyā do not satisfy one who takes into account the fact that these senses are grafted on the word to suit the trend of the verses commented upon. The scholiast does not help us to grasp the real nature of the mysterious māyā. The adjective 'triguṇātmikā' used by him describes Asura's power that reveals the patāṅga or sun as said above. He comments on 'mahīm māyām Varuṇasya'¹⁶ as follows:—मायां प्रज्ञां । कैषा मायेति सोच्यते । यो वरुणोऽतरिक्षे तस्थिवान् तिष्ठन्मानेनेव दंडेनेव सूर्येण

7. Sāyana on RV., III, 61.7.

8. Sāyana on RV., II, 17.5;
IV, 30.12.

9. Sāyana on RV., IV, 30.12.

10. Sāyana on RV., IX, 73.5.

11. Sāyana on RV., III, 27.7.

12. Sāyana on RV., X, 177.1.

13. Sāyana on RV., I, 11.7.

14. Sāyana on RV., I, 51.5.

15. Sāyana on RV., X, 147.2.

16. RV., V, 85.5.

पृथिवीं अंतरिक्षं विममे परिच्छिनत्ति तस्यैषा माया. He describes the power thus.

Now I consider the words that denote the possessor of māyā, viz, māyāvat, māyāvin, māyin.

Māyāvān (Nom. sing. of māyāvat m.) is used only to qualify a Dasyu,¹⁷ and Sāyaṇa comments on it as māyāvān kapāṭavān i. e. guileful or wily.

Māyāvin is used in different cases to qualify gods as well as demons.

मायाविना at RV., X, 24.4 qualifies the Aśvins who kept the worlds, heaven and earth, apart. Sāyaṇa comments on it thus—मायाविना मायाविनौ प्रज्ञावंतौ शत्रुवंचनकुशलौ. The form is used only once. मायाविनः is also used only once at RV., IX, 83.3 to describe the sages where Sāyaṇa gives its meaning as प्रज्ञावंतः. At RV., II, 11.9 'māyāvinam' qualifies the demon Vṛtra.

The word मायिन् is used as मायी; मायिनं, मायिनः, मायिना, मायिनां, मायिनि, मायिनी in altogether thirty-four places.

मायी qualifies Indra¹⁸ and Varuṇa¹⁹ as the possessors of the mysterious power. In RV., VI, 48.14 we find वरुणमिव मायिनं with regard to Indra. The scholiast comments on मायिनं as प्रज्ञावन्तं. It is used in RV., VIII, 76.1 in the same sense. It is used also for Agni.²⁰ मायिनः describes sages in RV., III, 38.7 where the scholiast's comment is मायिनो मायया स्वीकृतकामरूपाः। यद्वा मायिनः प्रज्ञावंतः. It is used to qualify Marut²¹ and gods²² where their wondrous power is

17. RV., IV, 16.9.

18. RV., X, 147.5.

19. RV., VII, 28.4; X, 99.10.

20. RV., V, 58.2,

21. RV., I, 64.7.

22. RV., III, 38.9.

referred to. In RV., VI, 63.5 मायिना qualifies the Aśvins. At RV., VII, 82.3 there is मायिनः where Sāyana comments on अस्य मायिनः as प्रज्ञाकरस्य सोमस्य. मायिनः is used to denote the wonderful power of sages.²³ मायिनी in RV., X, 5.3 means 'two (ones) of marvellous power'; Sāyana explains it as प्रज्ञावत्यौ कर्मयुक्ते वा यावापृथिव्यौ यज्ञसाधनभूते अरणी वा.

मायिनं is used in the case of the gods' enemies in as many as six places. It qualifies Namuchi,²⁴ Suṣṇa,²⁵ a beast,²⁶ Abi,²⁷ and Vṛtra.²⁸ The scholiast does not reveal the whole nature of the māyā possessed by the asuras. The word is used as मायिनः to denote the evil nature of demons in as many as ten places, viz. RV., I, 39.2; I, 51.5; I, 54.4; II, 11.10; III, 56.1; V, 44.11; VI, 61.3; VII, 3.19; VIII, 23.14; X, 138.3. Sāyana explains मायिनः in III, 56.1 as ऋषट्बुद्ध्युपेताः असुराः. The word is applied to Bṛsaya,²⁹ Arbuda,³⁰ Pipru³¹ and other demons or asuras. मायिनां is used to describe 'enchanters' or demons in RV., I, 32.4; III, 20.3 and III, 34.3. मायिनि qualifies Vṛtra in RV., V, 48.3.

Words—(ii)

Now I turn to other words which signify the mysterious power in the Ṛgveda, viz, दंसस्, दंसना, दस्र, दंसिष्ठ, दस्म, etc.

'Damsas' means a wonderful deed, a miracle. Sāyana says, दंसः कर्मनामैतत्. The word occurs in the case of Indra

23. RV., I, 159.4.

24. RV., I, 53.7.

25. RV., I, 56.3.

27. RV., II, 11.5;

V. 30.6.

28. RV., X, 147.2.

26. RV., I, 80.7 where Sāyana comments on मायिनं मृगं etc. as मायिनं मायाविनं त्यं तं प्राप्तिद्धं वंचयितारं लोकोपद्रवकारिणं.

29. RV., VI, 61.3.

30. RV., VIII, 3.19.

31. RV., X, 138.3.

in RV., I, 62.6 and VI, 17.7. I, 62.6 speaks of the fairest deed of the wondrous god and VI, 17.7 tells the god's miraculous deed, viz. the broadening of the earth and propping up of heaven. The word is used also for Agni in RV., I, 69.4 with reference to his deed. It refers to the miracle of Dadhyak's head, worked by the Asvins at RV., I, 116.12.

दंसांसि (Acc. plu.) occurs in RV., I, 116.25 ; V, 73.2 and VIII, 9.3 where it describes the wondrous deeds or miracles of the Aśvins. The scholiast explains the word here as पुराकृतानि कर्माणि. दंससा (Instr. sing.) occurs at RV., IX, 108.12 where it speaks of the wonderful power of Sōma and in RV., X, 138.2 where it is said that Indra created productive powers, cleft the hills, drove out the cows, drank sweet madhu and caused an increase or plenty through this Tree's miraculous might or deed. दंसोभिः (Instr. plu.) in RV., I, 117.4 and V, 73.7 describes the deeds of the Aśvins, viz, their miraculous succours. In the first case Sāyana explains दंसोभिः as आत्मीयैः भेषज्यरूपैः कर्मभिः which refers to their miraculous cures. The miracles of the Aśvins are described fully in Part III.

The word दंसना meaning 'miraculous deed' occurs eight times. It refers to Indra's deeds in RV., I, 29.2 ; VIII, 1.27 ; VIII, 88.4 (77.4). The scholiast's comment on the word is—दंसना कर्मविशेषः अनुग्रहरूपः. The word refers to the Aśvins' miracles in RV., I, 119.7 and X, 40.9, to Agni's deeds in RV., III, 9.7 and VI, 48.4, where according to Sāyana अग्निहोत्रादिकं कर्म is meant. The word is used in RV., V, 87.8 in the case of Marut and in RV., VIII, 101.2 (90.2) it speaks of the power of 'Mitrāvaruṇau'. The form दंसनाभिः (Instr. plu.), meaning 'with miraculous or great deeds' occurs

in the case of the Aśvins in RV., I, 118.6 ; VII, 69.7 ; X, 131.5 ; and in the case of R̥bhus³² and Indra.³³ In these instances the scholiast's commentary helps us little to guess at and grasp the real nature of the gods' power responsible for their marvellous deeds. Sāyana takes the word to mean karman and specifies the general nature of a god's deeds. For example, in the case of the R̥bhus he explains दंसनाभिः as अन्यैः चमसनिर्माणादिभिः कर्मभिः. This explanation fails to help one to understand the real nature of the power of the R̥bhus and one does not understand how they could make one wooden cup into four cups. The form दंसनाभ्यः occurs in RV., III, 3.11 and refers to the deeds of Vaiśvānara. Marut's deeds are referred to by the form दंसनैः in RV., I, 166.13.

दंसनावान् in the sense of 'one having (the power of doing) miraculous deeds' occurs in RV., I, 30.16 and III, 39.4. It qualifies Indra. The word means karmavān according to Sāyana.

It is clear from the above general description of the gods' deeds signified by the words दंसस् and दंसना that the deeds are miraculous and that they are neither mundane nor magical.

Now I shall pass on to the words that mean 'wondrous', 'miraculous' or 'one working miracles'. These words are adjectives that qualify the gods or their deeds.

दस्र is used in the sense of wondrous or miraculous or 'one working miracles'. It occurs in forty-seven places. It is used in the case of Pūṣan in RV., I, 42.5; VI, 56.4. Here Sāyana explains दस्र as दर्शनीय यद्वा वैर्युपक्षयकारिन् पृषन् in the

32. RV., IV, 32.2.

33. RV., VI, 17.6.

first two cases and दस्रा at RV., X, 26.1 means दर्शनीयौ यद्वा दस्रा दंशयितारौ कर्मणामुपक्षपयितारौ पत्नीयजमानौ. दस्रा is used to qualify Indra-Viṣṇu in RV., VI, 69.7 where the scholiast gives its meaning as दर्शनीयौ. दस्राः is used for Maruts in RV.. V, 55.5 and is equal to दर्शनीयाः शत्रूणामुपक्षपयितारो वा according to Sāyana. दस्र is used in the case of the Aśvins in at least forty-two places, viz. RV., I, 3.3; I, 30.17; I, 46.2; I, 47.3; I, 47.6; I, 92.16.18; I, 112.24; I, 116.10; I, 116.16; I, 117.5; I, 117.20.21; I, 118.3.6; I, 119.7; I, 120.4; I, 139.3.4; I, 158.1; I, 180.5; I, 182.2.3; I, 183.4.5; IV, 43.4; IV, 44.6; V, 75.2; VI, 62.5; VII, 68.1; VII, 69.3; VIII, 5.2.11; VIII, 8.1; VIII, 22.17; VIII, 26.6; VIII, 86.1 (75.1); VIII, 87.5; X, 40.14; I, 30.18; I, 117.22; V, 75.9. In the last three instances the word has the form दस्रौ and in the rest of the instances दस्रा is used. दस्रा or दस्रौ is the dual number of दस्र m. In the case of the Aśvins दस्रा means according to Sāyana दर्शनीयौ or शत्रूणामुपक्षपयितारौ यद्वा देववैद्यत्वेन रोगाणामुपक्षपयितारौ. Sāyana's meaning is not satisfactory; the word is explained by him almost in the same sense in the case of Pūṣan, Maruts and Aśvins.. Of course, devavaidyatva is considered while the word is explained in the case of the Aśvins. But all this fails to give a clear idea of the mysterious power possessed by the gods, and especially, Sāyana does not help one to probe that power of the Aśvins who perform many a miracle.

Another adjective of similar signification is दंसिष्ठ. दंसिष्ठ (Voc. sing.) qualifies Indra at RV., VIII, 24.25.26. Sāyana explains दंसिष्ठ as अत्यंतदर्शनीयं यद्वा शत्रूणामुपक्षपयितर्. दंसिष्ठं in RV., VIII, 22.1 qualifies the chariot of the Aśvins. Here also the scholiast comments as above—अत्यंतदर्शनीयं यद्वातिशयेन शत्रूणामुपक्षपयितारं त्यं तं (रथं). The word qualifies the twin gods in RV., I, 182.2, and the comment of Sāyana on it is दंसिष्ठा अतिशयकर्माणौ. One gets little idea of the power of the

gods from the commentary. दंसिष्टौ qualifies the Ásvins in RV., X, 143.3 where they are said to have saved Atri. But here the scholiast explains दंसिष्टौ as दर्शनीयतमौ. The miraculous deed of saving the life of Atri is not explained by this explanation.

Now lastly the word दस्म which occurs in forty-eight places. It refers to Agni in eighteen places, viz. RV., I, 77.3 ; I, 148.4 ; II, 1.4 ; II, 9.5 ; III, 1.7 ; III, 3.2 ; IV, 1.3 ; IV, 6.9 (in this case it refers to Agni's horses) ; V, 6.5 ; V, 17.4 ; V, 49.3 ; VI, 1.1 ; VI, 13.2 ; VII, 3.4 ; VIII, 74.7 (63.7) ; VIII, 103.7 (92.7) ; X, 7.1 ; X, 11.4. Sāyana explains दस्म as शत्रूणामुपक्षयित्,³⁴ and दर्शनीय,³⁵ and in RV., VI, 13.2 the compound दस्मावर्चाः is explained as दर्शनीयदीप्तिः.

दस्म refers to Indra or his deeds in eighteen places and in two more places in association with other gods, viz. RV., I, 4.6 ; I, 62.5 ; I, 62.6.11.12 ; I, 129.3 ; V, 31.7 ; 34.1 ; VI, 18.5 ; VII, 22.8 ; VII, 31.9 ; VIII, 45.35 ; VIII, 88.1 (77.1) ; VIII, 92.18 (82.18) ; X, 31.3 ; X, 43.2 ; X, 147.5 (148.5?) ; I, 173.4 and (in conjunction with Varuṇa) IX, 41.6 and (with other gods) V, 49.3.

The meaning of दस्म with reference to Indra is almost the same as in Agni's case. Indra is once called दस्मतम, meaning 'most wonderful' or 'best wonder-worker' in RV., II, 20.6. In the compound दस्मवर्चाः in RV., I, 173.4 वर्चस् means 'might' and not 'light' or 'lustre' as in the case of Agni as shown above. According to Sāyana, 'शत्रूणामुपक्षयित्', the meaning of दस्म, suits Indra well.

दस्म refers to Pūṣan in RV., I, 138.4 ; I, 42.10 ; VI, 58.4. In the last instance there is the compound दस्मवर्चाः qualifying

34. The bhāṣya on RV., V, 6.5. 35. The bhāṣya on RV., II, 9.5.

the god, which the scholiast explains as दस्मं दर्शनीयं वचः (रूपं) यस्य. But in I, 138.4 दस्म is commented on as शत्रूणामुपक्षयितर्. In I, 42.10 दस्म means 'mighty' or 'wondrous'.

दस्म refers to Sōma in RV., IX, 82.1, to Varuṇa in RV., X, 99.10 ; IV, 41.6 and V, 49.3, to Day and Night in RV., III, 55.15, and to the (skilful) priest in RV., VII, 18.11. In the case of Day and Night the scholiast explains the word thus—दस्मे सर्वदर्शनीये ते उभे.

From दस्म is formed दस्म्य adj. It occurs in RV., VIII, 24.20³⁶ where it means 'wondrous'.

In the discussion of the words माया, दंसस्, दंसना, दस्र, दस्म, etc. I have referred to an exhaustive list of places where they occur. A broad and general description of the power or deeds worked by it is given. A full description of the miracles is given in Part III.

The word māyā and its derivatives are used to describe the gods and their power as well as the demons and their power. The power is different in the two cases. But in the case of the words given above in the list, Words-(ii), only gods and their deeds and power are described or referred to. They do not qualify demons, nor they describe their deeds.

Now, lastly, I shall discuss a vital point. The words māyā and māyin occur in the Ṛgveda very often, especially in connection with Veruṇa and Indra. To render these words as 'magic' and 'magician' is misleading and is likely to create wrong impression about the extent to which magic prevails in the Ṛgveda. It is established beyond doubt that with the exception of a few late hymns the Ṛgveda has no magic hymns. The few late 'magic' hymns are a few drops in the

36. दस्म्यं वचः

ocean of the ritualistic poetry of the Ṛgveda. The poet-priests or poet-sages stand on a higher plane and hate magic; in RV., VII, 104. 16 we find a Vasiṣṭha, who is pure, complains against him who calls him a magician and a friend of evil spirits, and invokes Indra to kill him.

There are, however, eminent scholars like Oldenberg, Schrader, Macdonell, etc. supporting the theory which establishes a relation between prayer and magic spell, priest and magician, and discovers magic hymns and influence of magic in the Ṛgveda.

First of all, we must bear in mind that the Ṛgvedic poet stood on a high religious plane, found the greatest delight in his composition, and seriously believed that he held communion with his gods and enjoyed actually their company. He would have hardly wished to indulge in magical practices of lower religion.

Dr. P. S. Deshmukh in his 'Religion In Vedic Literature' has with evidence admirably and ably refuted the above theory of 'magic in the Ṛgveda'. He has proved that the religion of the Indo-Europeans did not rise from magic³⁷, that the Ṛgveda of the Indo-Aryans and the Gāthic hymns of the Indo-Iranians have both prayer and sacrifice purer and nobler than what we find in later periods³⁸, and that the notion that fire was used for magical purposes in the Ṛgveda is without any ground, for there is no evidence which can prove its truth from the Ṛgvedic hymns. The ṛṣis enkindled sacrificial fire just before sunrise. This fact has misled those, who associate magic with religious practices, to

37. Religion In Vedic Literature, Ch. III, p. 45.

38. *Ibid.*, Ch. VI, p. 130.

think that the ṛsis exercised magical influence on the sun by enkindling fire³⁹. A. B. Keith's discussion of the magic efficacy of sacrifice in the Ṛgveda supports Deshmukh's view⁴⁰.

Keith has discussed many instances⁴¹ regarded as magical.

The Ṛgveda is, however, not entirely free from magical practices in which the enemies of sacrifice certainly indulged; but it is quite certain that the sages in general never used magical methods, at least in the Ṛgveda.

The famous Sasarparī with whose help Viśvāmitra vanquished his rivals is supposed by some to be an evil spirit or a yātu given to him by the Jāmadagnis. III, 53. 15.16 refer to this Sasarparī. The verses describe her power and glory. She lows with a powerful voice. She is the sun's

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 278-288.

40. "...and the question arises whether the Ṛgveda shows any real trace of the belief in the magic efficacy of the sacrifice. Much of the evidence which has been adduced by both Bergaigne and Geldner for the view that the priests claim to control the gods, to capture them in the net of the sacrifice, and make them do their bidding is clearly without weight; the simple imagery of the poets cannot be pressed to mean more than it says. The late literature which regards the priest as powerful to control the gods, openly says so, and provides the believer with magic devices in order to bind hard the Adityas until they yield what is desired, and Kutsa is said to tie Indra up in disgraceful fashion, but nothing of that gross kind can certainly be found in the Ṛgveda" (The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣads, pp. 260-261).

41. RV., VI, 51.8; VII, 38.2; I, 83.5; I, 83.3.4; X, 90.6.9:—The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and the Upaniṣads, p. 261.

daughter. She bestows great power. Ancient Jāmadagnis gave her to Viśvāmitra. Sāyaṇa at the commencement of his commentary on these stanzas refers to the traditional story about Sasarparī. I tell it but briefly here. At a sacrifice of King Sudās, Viśvāmitra's power and speech were completely vanguarded by Shakti, the son of Vasiṣṭha. So, to save his position the Jāmadagnis drew from the sun a voice called Sasarparī, the daughter of Brahmā or sun and gave her to the sage. She drove away the dumbfoundedness of the Kuśikas and Viśvāmitra paid a tribute to the Jāmadagnis in the above mentioned verses. Sasarparī is called पक्ष्या which Sāyaṇa explains as सा पक्ष्या पक्षस्य पक्षादिनिर्वाहकस्य सूर्यस्य दुहिता सा वाक्. Perhaps it is the same as पक्षिणी हेतिः of RV., X, 165 2.3 in which case the word may mean an evil spirit or yātu, and it is also possible that Viśvāmitra might have made use of it as a last resource. But this is not certain.

Next, there are words like यातु and यातुधान which are sometimes mentioned and are often taken by scholars to mean evidently evil spirits. Evil spirits like निरृति, यक्ष, द्रुह are also mentioned. The R̥gvedic poet expresses his hatred and fear of all these and the Rākṣasas and particularly those men who control them.

The hymns RV., VII, 104 and X, 87 deal with such evil spirits. Some of the contents of VII, 104 are worth noting here. Verse 18 invokes Maruts to seize and kill the Rākṣasas who in the disguise of birds fly about at night and spoil sacrificial worship. Verses 20 to 22 tell that the evil spirits become flies and dogs, and that they would harm even Indra. They indulge in mischief-making. The priest invokes Indra to kill the fiend in the form of an owl, dog, cuckoo,

eagle or vulture. In Verse 23 Kimīdinas (and Kimīdinīs) are mentioned as going in pairs. Verse 24 invokes Indra to kill the Yātudbāna and his female companion. Verse 24 mentions Mūradevas. Sāyaṇa explains mūradeva as maranakrīda, whereas it is generally translated as a goblin or a kind of demon.

X, 87 mentions some more evil spirits. Verse 7 mentions क्षिंकाs. Sāyaṇa explains the word thus:—क्षिंका नाम पक्षिविशेषा and क्षिंकाः अपक्रस्य मांसस्य भक्षकाः शब्दकारिण्यः Verse 11 tells that the Yātudbāna destroys ṛta or the moral order of the gods by means of anṛta or falsehood.⁴² Verse 16 says that the Yātudbāna smears himself with the flesh of cattle or horses or men and he steals cows' milk. Verse 24 invokes Agni to burn the Yātudbāna and Kimīdinas.

There are then द्रुह् and निर्ऋति. These are evil spirits. Sāyaṇa explains द्रुहस्पदे निरामिणो at RV., II, 23.16 as ये चोराः प्राणद्रोहस्य पदे स्थाने निरामिणो नितरां रमणशीला रिपवो हिंसकाः etc. At RV., 61.5 the poet says that evil spirits i. e. druhvas follow men who are not truthful. द्रुहन्s, who are magicians or sorcerers controlling evil spirits, are mentioned at RV., VI, 22.8 and X, 99.7 where the deity is Indra and at RV., I, 25.14 where the deity is Varuṇa. In VI, 22.8 the poet invokes Indra to burn the druhvas and to kill the evil spirit at X, 99.7. At I, 25.14 Varuṇa is described to be untouched by the druhvas. Then comes निर्ऋति, an evil spirit. It occurs at many places⁴³. Commenting on I, 38.6 Sāyaṇa explains निर्ऋतिर्दुर्हणा as निर्ऋतिः रक्षोजातिदेवता, दुर्हणा केनापि हेतुना दुःशक्या.

42. ऋतं यो अग्ने अनृतेन हन्ति ।

43. RV., I, 24.9; I, 38.6; I, 117.5; V, 41.17; VI, 74.2; VII, 58.1; X, 10.11; 18.10; 36.4; etc., etc.

RV., X, 165 describes an evil spirit in the form of a dove. It is called हेतिः पक्षिणी in verses 2 and 3, commenting on which Sāyana explains the words as पक्षिणी पक्षोपेता हेतिः हननहेतुः.

Now the last but not the least word is रक्षस् which is often mentioned in the R̥gveda and is translated as devil, demon or fiend. रक्षस् means also an evil spirit. Sorcerers control evil spirits and are called रक्षस्विन्स. The word रक्षस्विन् occurs at RV., I, 12. 5; I, 36. 20; VII, 94. 12; VIII, 22.18; VIII, 47.12; 60 (49) .8.20. Also यातुमावान्⁴⁴ and यातुमान्⁴⁵ mean sorcerer and यातुमती⁴⁶ means sorceress. The रक्षः of the यातुमावान् is mentioned at RV., VII, 104.23, and both the रक्षः and यातु of the यातुमावत्स are mentioned at RV., VIII, 60 (49) 20.

The Rākṣasas are described as the destroyers of sacrifice. Like the Rākṣasas and evil spirits, the sorcerers are hated by the sages. Agni is prayed to burn the Rākṣasas⁴⁷ and to drive them away⁴⁸. Like Agni, Indra has power over the Rākṣasas and evil spirits. Indra protects the priest from the Rākṣasas. At, RV., I, 133 he is invoked to kill the Rākṣasas and evil spirits and protect the priest. In verse 1 the priest says that Indra burns up the she-fiends who are 'anindras' i. e. who do not serve Indra or worship him.

The killer of रक्षस् is called रक्षोहन्, which is the epithet of Sōma⁴⁹, Agni,⁵⁰ Indra⁵¹ and the Aśvins⁵².

44. RV., I, 36.20; VII, 1.5.

45. RV., VII, 104.20.25.

46. RV., I, 133. 2.3.

47. RV., I, 12.5; I, 36.20.

48. RV., VIII, 60 (49). 20.

49. RV., IX, 1.2; 37.3; 67.20.

50. RV., VII, 8.6; X, 87.1; 162.1.

51. RV. I, 129.6.11; II, 23.3

52. RV., 73.4.

From the above examination it will be very clear that the Ṛgvedic poets hated the magicians and had always appealed to their great deities Agni and Indra to destroy them.

Then there is the word 'mantra' which originally meant 'hymn' or 'part of a hymn'. But later it came to mean 'incantation' or 'magical formula' in modern Indian languages. The Ṛgvedic hymns are called mantras in the original sense. A 'mantra' as prayer is distinguished from a 'mantra' as spell in the next chapter.

And, therefore, 'māyā' of the gods has nothing to do with magic. Māyā is in its original connotation 'mysterious, illusory, or supernatural power', which works in the Ṛgveda many miraculous deeds. The supernatural powers do these deeds in answer to human prayer, the power of which is closely related to the supernatural or miraculous power. Efficacy of prayer depends on the willing response of the supernatural. I propose to deal with the power of the Ṛgvedic prayer in Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER VII

HYMN : PRAYER AND SPELL

The Ṛgveda is a book of hymns which, with the exception of a few, are addressed to gods and deified objects.

Now, what is a hymn? What are its contents? Macdonell has defined 'hymn' as follows :—

“A ritual poem consisting, on the higher side of religion, in praises of the gods and generally accompanying the sacrifice offered to them ;

“Or, on its lower side, in spells or charms, directed against hostile powers¹ and accompanying some domestic practice of a magical character.”²

After giving this definition of 'hymn', Macdonell has pointed out that hymns of the first kind, 'in which praise of one or more of the gods associated with prayer for all sorts of wordly goods, make the Ṛgveda, while hymns of the second kind are collected in the Atharva Veda. The Ṛgveda may be broadly described as an earlier collection of hymns and the Atharva Veda a later collection. This may vouchsafe for the degradation of Vedic hymn from the 'higher side of religion' to the 'lower side of religion': the purely religious hymn of the Ṛgveda in course of centuries dwindles into semi-religious and magical spell or charm of

1. We may add 'and unwilling' after 'hostile' and 'whether godly or demonical' after 'powers'.

2. E. R. E. Vol. XII, p. 50.

the Atharva Veda. And the term hymn becomes elastic enough to be applied to poems which are 'philosophical or even quite secular in character.' We find such hymns in both the collections.

From Macdonell's definition of hymn, we find, a hymn consists in the praises of gods and a spell is directed against hostile powers. This difference between 'prayer' and 'spell' is not complete, and we must look deeper for its completion. We must not neglect the fact that the Ṛgvedic hymns are 'lyrics' wherein we find the poet's hope and disappointment, struggle for life and its success, desire for worldly prosperity, together with his moral resentment, pride in ancestral glory or deeds, his philosophical discontent and keen eagerness to please the gods, all of which are perspicuously reflected. Macdonell's difference does not account for the fact that the Ṛgvedic hymns – hymns on the 'higher side of religion' – generally invoke divinities and implore them to grant protection to their worshippers against demons and evil powers, against Rākṣasas and Yātudhānas, against the Dāsas over whom they wish to have strong control or whom they try to destroy. Macdonell has noted that the Ṛgvedic hymns are 'for all sorts of worldly goods', but he does not mention anything about the protection sought against Dasyus and Dāsas, Rākṣasas and Yātudhānas. In return of their sacrifices and prayers the poet-priests expect the gods to confer upon them and their patrons rich treasures, hundreds of cows, strong sons, safety from diseases and evil powers, protection against Dasyus and Dāsas, Rākṣasas and Yātudhānas, and a long life. They are very practical and good bargainers. Their prayers indicate clearly their motive of bargaining. The nature of the words in which these prayers are couched and the

method of accomplishing the motive behind them are not mentioned in the above quoted definition.

We shall consider now the difference of language between 'prayer' and 'spell'. In India we have even today what are popularly called 'mantras', i. e., magical spells. A spell generally consists of a fixed number of words, or rather letters, which by themselves together or individually are quite unintelligible. Such spells or charms are used to remove poison of a person bit by a serpent, a scorpion, or any venomous creature. The man who uses magical spells is called a 'māntrika'. Generally he repeats his 'spells' in such a way as not to make them audible to others. Even though he be heard, the hearer can get at no meaning out of his words. The words have only a magical significance and effect. Now, a 'prayer' is quite different from a 'spell' in language and import. A prayer is a good composition which is sufficiently intelligible. As to its use, there is no secrecy about it. Its possession is by no means the monopoly of a few secretive persons. Spells or charms, on the other hand, are the monopoly of magicians who lead a secretive life. Prayers and charms are by nature whole worlds apart.

Hence we think that the so-called 'magical hymns' in the R̥gveda are not real spells or charms, nor are the hymns of the Atharva Veda real charms or spells; they are degenerated prayers. When the Vedic hymns were composed, magic existed in the land, and the lesser poet-priests could not be immune from its stray influences, may they be small or great. Also those prayers the Indo-Aryans had composed and brought with them from beyond the Hindukush were, in course of their repeated use, influenced by magic

prevalent in the masses, which were made of a large number of peoples backward in religion and culture. Hence the Āryan's compositions gradually assumed spell-like form in the later Vedic age, till at last the 'hymns' were no longer religious lyrics. The compositions of the Atharva Veda are degenerated prayers; they are hymns impregnated with magic, or sometimes magical significance is by usage ascribed to them; but, still they are intelligible and at times mark a high degree of poetic inspiration and effort. Their diction and general form of language indicate their later creation; Atharvavedic Sanskrit is remarkably different from Ṛgvedic Sanskrit, the former being more modern in form.

After noticing the difference of language, I now point out further difference between prayer and spell. As it is noticed before, the motive accounts for a partial difference only. The fundamental difference between the two lies in the method of accomplishing the motive. A genuine prayer resorts to the method of appeal or moral suasion; it is characterized by humility and reverence. On the other hand a spell has the magical method which is marked by command and constraint; Moreover it displays a spirit of self-confidence and self-sufficiency.⁸

The Ṛgvedic poet-priests appeal to the gods for many things in fervent terms which are often modest and coaxing, some-times persuasive, and at times marked by suasion. The poet-priests, moreover, are at once familiar with their gods. The Vedic worshipper addresses his gods in an unpretentious way. He piously performs his duties towards them. He sings prayers and offers oblations to them, and

3. *Philosophy of Religion* by Prof. Edwards, p. 121.

expects them to help him in return. His appeal for their help is indeed free from coercion ; it is rather a moral petition addressed by the worshipper to the worshipped, by an inferior to a superior.

We have considered above when a hymn can be called a prayer or spell, and what a 'magical hymn' really is. The R̥gvedic hymns are on the whole admirable poetic compositions characterized by the poets' pious attitude and lyrical fervour which very often dwindles in tedious repetitions and superficial personification of natural powers. However there is, as Sir. S. Rādhākṛṣṇan says, a freshness and simplicity and an inexplicable charm as of the breath of the spring or the flower of the morning about these first efforts of the human mind to comprehend and express the mystery of the world.⁴

4. *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. I, p. 66.

CHAPTER VIII

POWER OF PRAYER

(i)

The Ṛgvedic prayer, in general, accompanies sacrifice to which gods are invited to partake offerings and to confer, in return, earthly prosperity and strong sons; they are also invoked to destroy the Dāsas or to give control over them, and to give protection against demons or Rāksasas and Yātudhānas. In short, offerings and gifts in return count more in this kind of prayer, whereas there are in the Ṛgveda some prayers, e. g. I, 50 to Sūrya and VI, 71 to Savitr, VI, 64 to Uṣas, VIII, 47 to the Ādityas; etc. in which we notice no definite connection with the performance of sacrifice. These two kinds of the Ṛgvedic prayer may be called ritualistic and non-ritualistic, i. e. prayer with sacrifice and prayer without sacrifice.

The Ṛgvedic poet firmly believed in the efficacy of his prayer even without sacrifice. He had experienced the power of prayer. This power of prayer is derived from religion on a high plane, and it has nothing to do with magic as is wrongly supposed by some.

It is shown in the last chapter how prayer is different from spell in language, motive and method. The difference is still deeper. Prayer essentially differs from spell in power. The Ṛgvedic poet-priest has no doubts about the efficacy of his sacrifice as well as prayer, and we find numerous utterances in the hymns that testify to this view. The poet sings in

RV., VI, 1.1 to tell that Agni, the first inventor of prayer and worker of miracles, had given sages an invincible power which would overcome all other powers. This strength was derived from both prayer and sacrifice, and the above-mentioned verse speaks of the boundless faith the Vedic Āryan had in his religious prayer. To another poet prayer is an armour. While speaking about weapons, he very confidently declares in RV., VI, 75. 19 that prayer is his closest mail, and gods would punish him who would kill him and his kinsmen.

This power of prayer persists throughout the Ṛgveda; but in the opinion of great scholars like Oldenberg and Macdonell it is not unalloyed; in their opinion magic has encroached upon the domain of religion. Attempts are made to find traces of the notion that sacrifice exercises compulsion not only over gods but also over natural phenomena without requiring the co-operation of gods.

Again as to the actual magical contents of the Ṛgveda, it is now generally agreed that only a dozen of its 1028 hymns are 'concerned with magic,' about one of them being auspicious and the rest maleficent, But there is total want of information about magical rites mentioned in the Ṛgveda. And from the so-called 'traces of magic', to assert that magic has encroached upon religion in the Ṛgveda is nothing less than exaggeration. I have shown in the last chapter how the higher religion of the Āryan came in contact with the lower religion of the masses in the later Ṛgvedic period.

Then, can anybody say the rare 'traces of magic' gave the poet-priest the power he believed to have derived from prayer? The source of his power is quite different. He daily held communion with supernatural powers by offering

sacrifices ; and the gods were so familiar with him that they came and sat by the altar on the kusha-grass specially spread for them. This habit of holding daily communion with powers beyond did consequently develop his spiritual power of rather his will-power. He made offerings to them with his prayers and he believed that they readily answered his prayers by doing deeds of grace, succour, valour, or wonder. Then, in course of time, gradually the power behind these deeds, which the poet-priest at first ascribed to his gods, was unawares transferred by him to his prayer. And hence his developed will-power led him to use prayer for exercising control over natural phenomena or to bring about some such things as are mentioned in the hymns 'concerned with magic'. This shall be fully discussed in the chapter on 'Hymns of Mysterious Power' in Part III.

(ii)

The power derived from prayer is mystic. Its mystery or mysticism does not warrant its being magical. There is a great difference between magic and mysticism. Mysticism is vitally associated with religion and religious experiences. Worship involves an element of mysticism. The worshipper attains by his devotion to the spiritualistic stage of development which enables him to hold communion with superhuman power. Such communion is mystic. The efficacy of an earnest prayer has an element of mystery; and the efficacy of prayer is very different from the effect of magic as Prof. Tiele has pointed out.¹

Prayer is one of the three most essential elements of religion, viz. sacrifice, confession and prayer. Religion is an

1. *Elements of the Science of Religion*, Vol. II, p. 143.

intercourse, conscious and voluntary, with the mysterious power called God. This intercourse is realised by prayer. And, what is meant by prayer? Auguste Sabatier says that prayer is not a vain exercise of words, nor a mere repetition of some sacred formulae but the very movement of the soul towards and a personal contact with a mysterious power named God.²

Prayer, in short, is an instrument of intercourse with the supernatural power or God. The more earnest a prayer is, the greater its efficacy. More things are wrought by prayer than man can imagine. The greatest modern apostle of prayer, Mahatma Gandhi, believed strongly in the efficacy of prayer. His post-prayer speeches, collected in his *Delhi Diary*, are a record of the experiences of a man who believed that the evils from which man suffers can be cured only by faith in God.

Mankind is now in distress, and saner people are trying to find solace in religion. Religious animosity and colour prejudices are rampant today; tragedies are enacted all over the world. Unless men are closer and join together in a prayer to the Almighty there is no purification of hearts; there is no salvation.

A miracle is many times an answer to prayer. Hence the effect of prayer has a miraculous aspect. It helps to bring about an unnatural, i. e. ordinarily unexpected, event. Man has accumulated scientific knowledge by means of which he can control physical forces. He can create new forces by combining known forces. He combines elements or he

2. *The Varieties of Religious Experience* by William James, p. 454, Modern Library.

splits up elements to create new forces which are marvellous. The atom bomb is an instance of this. But there are limits to this. Man works scientific wonders, subject to the limitations of his reason and the order of things in nature.

But men are not prepared to allow God a greater power of creating miracles. In the world unknown God controls forces. He changes them, creates new forces, allows existing forces to interact, and thus through them He works miracles. This He does easily. "How little exercise of power on God's part would be necessary to cause rain in answer to prayer? Since man and man's actions and thoughts, and hence all his prayers, are a part of the forces of the universe. When men do not pray, the result, even in the physical world, may be different from what it would have been had we prayed."³

This power of prayer works miracles in the R̥gveda.

But prayer is certainly still greater. Since man's religious life began, he has prayed and found solace in it in times of distress and stress, in disappointment and danger, in grief and gloom. Prayer has an ennobling and encouraging effect on mind, and it works miracles where faith abounds and abides.

3. E. R. E. Vol. VIII, p. 688.

PART III

RGVEDIC MIRACLES AND HYMNS
OF MYSTERIOUS POWER

CHAPTER IX

RGVEDIC MIRACLES IN GENERAL

Having discussed miracle in Part I and the supernatural in the R̥gveda in Part II, I now propose to deal with the main theme of the thesis in this part. This chapter is intended to make a general survey of the R̥gvedic miracles, and in other chapters the miracles are grouped under different heads and discussed.

The Vedic Āryan who firmly believed in miracles lived a note-worthy life. He had an indomitable spirit. He was powerful and succeeded in his undertakings. His robust and fruitful activities were in a great measure responsible for his optimistic outlook on life and religion. Religion was indeed his daily need. To him religion was a great source of will-power and vitality.

He performed his religious rites devoutly. He performed sacrifice in season and out of season, and offered oblations to his gods whom he praised and invoked with mantras. He sincerely believed in the power of prayer and boundless was his faith.

In III, 38, 1 to 3* the poet sings of what the mighty generations of sages in the past could do for mankind; evidently his words point to the sages, might derived from gods through prayer. He tells us that there were sages who

* The numbers of the R̥gvedic hymns are given thus in this and the following chapters in this part.

framed the heaven and upheld the sky,¹ and fixed the heaven and earth and kept them apart for safety.²

The poet-priest is very conscious of his inheritance. This consciousness and the confidence reflected in the above assertions are seen in many a place in the R̥gveda. A poet sings in IV, 4.11 and announces his noble heritage. He assures us that he has words at his command, he is related to the holy sages, he would crush his powerful foe and through words he derives power from his father Gōtama. Another poet, an Āṅgiras, has proudly asserted the power of hymn by which his ancestors, the Āṅgirasas, knowing words, performed rites and found out the cows³, and with their hymns found the light⁴, and that they caused the sun to mount the sky and spread out Mother Earth⁵.

Thus we see that the mighty sages were fully conscious of their power which, they knew, was supernatural and which, they believed, resulted from prayer. They daily performed sacrifice, offered oblations with prayers and held communion with gods, and in return of their offerings they got supernatural power besides the fulfilment of their mundane desires. They claimed to have worked various miraculous deeds. They framed the heaven. They spread the earth far and wide. They upheld the heaven and thus prevented it from falling down on the earth. They held apart the heaven and the earth, lest they might come together and clash and produce a catastrophe. They caused the sun to mount the sky, otherwise there would be no light. The sages were aware that these deeds were due to the efficacy of prayer, and the

1. III, 38.2.

2. III, 38.3.

3. I, 62.2.

4. I, 72.2.

5. X, 62.3.

gods did them. They knew well that once and only once the heaven was made, once and only once the earth was formed⁶. However, they have attributed natural phenomena of creation to various gods, almost with repetition ad nauseam. Each phenomenon is miraculous. The creation of heaven, earth, sky, sun, stars, milk, mountains and rivers is all miraculous.

The Vedic Āryan's view of the creation of this universe is childlike, but not childish. Heaven, earth, sky, sun, etc. are viewed by him as living. His attitude towards these things is not moulded by scientific knowledge which is at the disposal of the modern man. To him the earth is alive. It is spread far and wide. He is afraid that the vault of heaven might fall down. He fears likewise the heaven and earth may come into a catastrophic clash. He is much interested in the ever flowing water of rivers, and wonders why they do not fill up the ocean. Hence his gods worked a miracle and made them flow for ever and ordained them not to fill up the ocean. An ordinary thing like milk roused his curiosity and he wondered how there could be white milk in a red cow, and how there could be ripe milk in a raw cow. Hence his gods created milk and worked a wonder. He attributed the miracles to the supernatural powers he worshipped, and his faith led him to believe unhesitatingly that his prayers gave him the same power which he perceived behind the miracles.

The supernatural powers worked not only cosmic miracles, but many more of other kinds also. The gods answered the prayers of the sages as well as others who

6. VI, 48.22.

prayed in danger. They ran to the help of the prayerful. The gods rescued them from the dangers of fire and water and darkness. They made the old young again and enabled them to marry again and enjoy life. They removed barrenness of women and gave them children. They made a barren cow give milk. They healed wounds without ligature. They cured diseases like leprosy. They worked a great many miracles of which many are characterized by kindness, and a few, perhaps only two, make a display of miraculous power.

The Vedic Āryan believed in these miracles, and so we must grant his belief and accept the miracles as they are.

CHAPTER X

COSMIC MIRACLES

The creation of heaven, earth, sky, mountains, rivers, sun, moon, day, night, stars is all miraculous to the Vedic Āryan.

Heaven, Earth, and Sky :—The Vedic Āryan holds various views of the miraculous creation of the heaven, earth and sky.

Varuṇa established the heaven and earth. By the law of Varuṇa the heaven and earth are held apart.¹ This is a great and wonderful deed; otherwise the heavn will fall down on the earth and a great disaster will befall mankind. The poet has expressed his wonderment thus: King Varuṇa of great might holds erect the stem of the Tree in the baseless region; its root is high above and its branches turn downward.²

Mitra and Varuṇa are also said to have jointly supported the heaven and earth³ or the heaven, earth and air.⁴

Savitṛ supports the whole world, and he fixed the earth with bonds and made firm the sky in the rafterless space.⁵ This notion is so fine, that one who reads it forgets to think of what the bonds are made or what they are.

Viṣṇu alone sustains the three-fold world, the heaven and earth.⁶ Obviously, the world is fixed in the boundless space lest it falls in unfathomable darkness below.

1. VI, 70.1; VII, 86.1; 41.10, 3. V, 62.3. 5. X, 149.1.
2. I, 24.7. 4. V. 69, 1.4. 6. I, 154.4,

Indra is said to have performed great cosmic deeds. He is the generator of the heaven and earth⁷ or spreads out the earth and supports the heaven in the supportless or beamless region.⁸ He fixed the bright realms of the sky so that they may not be driven away.⁹ He supported the earth and propped the sky.¹⁰ He holds asunder the heaven and earth as two wheels are kept apart by the axle.¹¹ He stretches out the heaven and earth¹² like a hide.¹³ Sometimes the separation and supporting of the heaven and earth are said to be the results of Indra's victory over a demon (*Vṛtra*)¹⁴ who pushed them together by means of darkness.¹⁵ And in this very vein it is said elsewhere that when he was born for the *Vṛtra* fight, *Indra* spread out the earth and fixed the sky;¹⁶ the dragon-slayer made the earth visible to the heaven when he opened a path for the streams.¹⁷ In one place *Indra* is said to have found the heaven and earth which were hidden.¹⁸

Agni is said to have stretched out the heaven and earth¹⁹ like two skins.²⁰ With his flames he supported the vault of heaven.²¹ He is said to have supported the heaven and earth with hymns.²² He kept asunder the two worlds, i.e., the heaven and earth like two skins.²³ He measured out the air and touched the vault of heaven with his greatness.²⁴

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| 7. VIII, 36.4. | 13. VIII, 6.5. | 19. III, 6.5 ; VII, 5.4. |
| 8. II, 15.2, | 14. V, 29.4, | 20. VI, 8.3. |
| 9. VIII, 14.9, | 15. VIII, 6.17. | 21, III, 5.10. |
| 10, II, 17.5. | 16. VIII, 89.5. | 22. I, 67.3, |
| 11. X, 89.4. | 17. II, 13.5. | 23. VI, 8.3. |
| 12. VIII, 3.5. | 18. VIII, 96, 16. | 24. VI, 8.2 ; 7.7. |

Bṛhaspati mightily holds asunder the ends of the earth with his roar²⁵. The earth is as it were a vast piece of cloth, and its corners are held stretched.

Sōma : The cosmic powers of gods are attributed to *Sōma*, e. g. those of Indra. *Sōma* generates the two worlds²⁶, establishes the heaven and earth, supports the heaven, and places light in the sun²⁷.

Dhātṛ creates the sun, moon, heaven, earth, and air²⁸.

Viśvakarman produced the earth and revealed the sky, and established the heaven and earth²⁹.

What the *Āngirasas* could do is related in the first chapter of this part³⁰.

The gods worked kindly these cosmic miracles. No human power could do them. By no known laws of nature and in no known ways of men the heaven, earth and sky could be supported and held apart. A poet, while addressing *Viśvakarman*, hurls a query at all men :

“What was the tree, what wood in sooth produced it, from which they fashioned out the earth and heaven? Ye thoughtful men, whereon he stood when he established all things?”³¹

The production of the world could be achieved only by supernatural powers. Hence the Vedic *Āryan* looked upon the above cosmic deeds as great kindly deeds of supernatural powers or miracles.

25. IV, 50.1. 26. IX, 90.1. 27. VI, 44. 23. 24; 47. 3,4.

28. X, 190.3 29. X, 81. 30. III, 38, 1,2,3. See pp. 91-92.

31. Griffith, the Hymns of the R̥gveda, Vol. II, X, 81.4.

Mountains : Mountains play a great part in our mythology. Science tells us there were some volcanoes which later on were extinguished and became mountains of today. The Rgvedic poet tells us of mountains which have wings and fly from place to place. We must understand and appreciate the Aryan's view of mountains; he looked upon them as living things.

Indra is said to have established the quaking mountains and plains.³²

Mountains had formerly wings. Indra clipped their wings, for they used to fly with their wings and alight wherever they liked to do so and made the earth unsteady.³³ What a terrible disaster would result if a big mountain flies away from one spot and alights on another inhabited by men! Indra saved humanity from the calamity by working a miracle.

The Sun : The sun is a great miracle. Various gods are said to have worked this miracle.

Varuna is said to have placed the sun in the sky.³⁴ He made the golden swing (i. e. the sun) shine in heaven.³⁵ He made a wide path for the sun.³⁶

Mitra and Varuna are both said to have placed the sun looking like a wonderful weapon or a graceful chariot in heaven.³⁷ The order of Mitra and Varuna is established where the steeds of the sun are loosed.³⁸

Mitra, Varuna and Aryaman open paths for the sun.³⁹

32. II, 12.2; X, 44.8.

33. IV, 54.5; II, 11.7-8; VI, 30.3.

34. V, 85.2.

35. VII, 87.5.

36. I, 24.8, VII, 87.1.

37. IV, 13.2; V, 63, 4.7.

38. V, 62.1.

39. VII, 60.4.

Otherwise, how can the sun go in the boundless expanse of the firmament ?

Dwan is said to have revealed Sūrya, Agni and Sacrifice⁴⁰.

Gods raised the sun who was hidden in the ocean.⁴¹

Many gods have individually produced the sun as is stated above. *Indrā-Visṇū* generated him as also Agni and Sacrifice⁴² and *Indrā-Varuṇau* raised him to heaven.⁴³

Dhātṛ, the creator, fashioned the sun as well as the moon, the heaven, the earth and also the midregion.⁴⁴

Āiṅgirasas caused by their rites the sun to ascend the sky and broadened out Mother Earth⁴⁵. This is an instance of the play of the supernatural power derived through prayer from gods, and this has nothing to do with magic as is surmised by some.

Indra generated the sun and the dawn and supported the heaven⁴⁶. He caused him to shine or raised him to heaven⁴⁷. Indra, mightily born, set the wheel of the sun in motion⁴⁸. When Indra killed Vṛtra, he generated the sun along with the sky and dawn⁴⁹ and placed the sun visibly in heaven⁵⁰. He gained the sun⁵¹ or found him in the darkness in which he abode⁵². Indra made a path for him⁵³.

40. VII, 80.2.

43. VIII, 82.3.

48. I, 130.9.

41. X, 72.7.

44. X, 190.3.

49. I, 32.4 ; VI, 30.5.

42. VII, 99.4.

45. X, 62.3.

50. I, 51.4 ; 52.8.

46. II, 12.7 ; III, 49.4 ; II, 19.3.

51. I, 100.6 ; III, 34.9.

47. III, 44.2 ; VIII, 89.7.

52. I, 100.8 ; III, 39.5.

53. X, 111.3.

Sōma generated or raised up the sun in the heaven.⁵⁴
Sōma caused the sun to shine on the summit of *Trita*.⁵⁵
 The gods' acts of generating and raising up the sun are attributed to *Sōma*'⁵⁶. *Sōma* produced the sun in the waters.⁵⁷

Agni established the brightness of the sun on high⁵⁸ and caused him to ascend to heaven.⁵⁹ *Indrā-Visṇū* produced *Sūrya*.⁶⁰

Uṣas has generated *Sūrya* along with sacrifice and *Agni*⁶¹ and has vacated the path for *Sūrya* to travel on.⁶²

In one hymn *Atri* is said to have found the sun when it was hidden by the demon *Svarbhānu* and to have placed him in the sky.⁶³ In the next verse,⁶⁴ however, this deed is attributed to the *Atris* collectively.

The miracle of stopping the sun :

This miracle was worked in the fight of *Kutsa* against *Śuṣṇa*. *Indra* smote *Śuṣṇa* for *Kutsa*⁶⁵, aided *Kutsa* against *Śuṣṇa*,⁶⁶ subjected *Śuṣṇa* to him,⁶⁷ or, associated with *Kutsa* and the gods, and Vanquished *Śuṣṇa*.⁶⁸ *Indra* is invoked to fight with *Kutsa* against *Śuṣṇa*⁶⁹ or to bring *Kutsa* as a slayer of *Śuṣṇa*.⁷⁰ *Indra* fights for *Kutsa* even against the gods,⁷¹ or against *Gandharva*.⁷² The conflict

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| 54. IX, 96.5 ; 107.7. | 60. VII, 99.4. | 66. I, 51.6. |
| 55. IX, 37.4. | 61. VII, 78.3. | 67. VII, 19.2. |
| 56. IX, 37.4; 85.9; | 62. I, 113.16. | 68. V, 29.9. |
| VI, 44.23. | 63. V, 40.6.8. | 69. VI, 31.3. |
| 57. IX, 42.1. | 64. V, 40.9. | 70. I, 175.4. |
| 58. X, 3.2. | 65. I, 63.3; 121.9; | 71. IV, 30.4.5. |
| 59. X, 156.4. | IV, 16.12; VI, 26.3. | 72. VIII, 1.11. |

with Śusna results in the stealing of the wheel of the sun.⁷³ For Kutsa pressed by his foes, Indra tore off one wheel of the sun⁷⁴ while the other he gave to Kutsa to drive on with.⁷⁵ And the sun was stopped from moving on. The miracle of stopping the sun⁷⁶ appears to be, in the words of Macdonell, "a transference of the myth of Indra gaining the sun of human happiness, to the reminiscence of a semi-historical battle."⁷⁷

In winning the sun Indra is said to have made a wide path for his charioteer Kutsa.⁷⁸ He is invoked to destroy the demons with Kutsa and to let the wheel of the sun move forward.⁷⁹

This marvellous deed of Indra, probably, refers to a solar eclipse. We need not, or rather should not, explain the miracle lest it melts away.

Days, Nights, Moon, Stars:

Varuṇa ordered the moon to shine brightly and to move at night in the firmament. The stars placed by him on high are visible at night and they disappear by day.⁸⁰ The moon is a delightful creation. By dint of his occult power, *Varuṇa* established mornings or days. Day, Night, the Moon and the Sun have been viewed to be miraculous creations of some god or gods. The occult power of *Varuṇa* regulates seasons, months,⁸¹ day and night.⁸²

Dhātṛ also is said to have created the moon.⁸³

73. I, 175.4; VI, 31.3.

74. IV, 30.4.

75. V, 29.10.

76. I, 121.10; X, 138.3.

77. Vedic Mythology,
p. 146.

78. VI, 20.5.

79. IV, 16.12.

80. I, 24.10.

81. I, 25.8.

82. VII, 66.4.

83. X, 190.3.

Rivers : *Varuṇa* is the regulator of waters. He caused the rivers to flow. They stream for ever according to his ordinance.⁸⁴ Seeing this nature of the rivers, the Vedic Āryan is naturally faced with the question : Why do they not fill up the ocean ? The poet has a simple answer to this difficult question. The rivers do not fill up the ocean because god *Varuṇa* has ordained them not to fill it up⁸⁵.

Indra is said to have dug out a channel for waters⁸⁶ and directed their actions downward⁸⁷. They never disobey him⁸⁸.

Rudra also makes streams flow up on the earth⁸⁹.

Sōma is associated with waters as well as rain, and as a leader of waters, he rules over rain⁹⁰.

Waters are subject to *Savitṛ*'s ordinances⁹¹; he makes them move on⁹².

Rivers or waters are a kindly creation of the gods. They go on for ever. This is due to the law or laws of the supernatural power of the gods. The rivers were viewed by the Vedic Āryan not only in wonder but with gratitude to gods for the benefits derived from them.

Rain : When a child notices rain for the first time, it is all wonder and delight to it. Thunder enhances the child's wonderment. Its curiosity and awe are roused, and it clings to its mother out of fright and asks her who makes the loud noise in the sky. The mother tells it what she had heard from her own mother in her childhood. She tells that

84. II, 28.4.

87. II, 17.5.

90. IX, 74.3.

85. V, 85.6.

88. VII, 47.3.

91. II, 38.2.

86. VII, 47.4.

89. X, 92.5.

92. III, 33.6.

the Old Woman grinds grams in heaven and that makes the great noise.

The Vedic Āryan views rain in his childlike way.

We read in one of the hymns that *Varuṇa* makes the inverted cask pour its waters on heaven, earth and air, to moisten the ground⁹³. How poetical and appealing is the notion!

Maruts are said to bring water and impel rain⁹⁴. They pour out the pail of heaven. They discharge the rain cloud through the worlds. Then it rains over dry places⁹⁵.

Brhaspati is prayed to cause the rain cloud to rain and to send the rain-charged cloud⁹⁶.

God Parjanya is said to fly around, in heaven, with a watery car, and he loosens and draws downwards the water-skin⁹⁷.

How natural it is to imagine a cask, pail, watery car, or water-skin to pour water and cause rain! Gods alone could cause rain in this way. It was a kindly act of their supernatural power.

Agni gives rain from heaven⁹⁸ and is like a water-trough in the desert⁹⁹.

Sōma creates water and causes the heaven and earth to rain¹⁰⁰. He streams rain from heaven¹⁰¹.

Once it is said that *Indra* with Vivasvat's ten fingers pours out the pail from heaven¹⁰².

93. V, 85, 3.4.

97. V, 83 7.

101. IX, 8.8 ; 49.1 ;

94. V, 58.3 etc.

98. II, 6.5.

97.17 ; 108, 9.10.

95. V, 53.6.

99. X, 4.1.

102. VIII, 72.8.

96. X, 98.18.

100. IX, 96.3.

Indeed rain is always an object of wonder. Even now it remains so when scientists are able to cause rain from an aeroplane or by making some experiment, like sprinkling ice particles on clouds that float high above the land and would otherwise pass away without giving a drop of water.

Milk : Milk is included here being a creation of gods.

Mitra and Varuṇa are said to have kine yielding refreshment and streams flowing with honey ¹⁰³ (V, 69.2).

Indra found in heaven the hidden nectar (i. e. milk) ¹⁰⁴ and honey (i. e. milk) accumulated in the ruddy cow ¹⁰⁵.

Cow's white milk is a great wonder to the Vedic Āryan. He wonders: The raw cow goes with ripe milk; all sweetness is stored in the ruddy cow, which Indra placed there for enjoyment ¹⁰⁶. Indra places ripe milk in the cows ¹⁰⁷ which are raw ¹⁰⁸, black or red ¹⁰⁹, or with spotted skin ¹¹⁰. Sometimes this miracle is ascribed to other gods also, e. g. to Varuṇa ¹¹¹ and Sōma ¹¹².

103. V. 69.2.

104. VI, 44.23

105. III 39.6.

106. III, 30.14.

107. VIII, 32.25,

108. VIII, 89.7.

112. VI, 47.4.

109. I, 62.9.

110. VIII, 93.13.

111. V, 85.2.

CHAPTER XI

MIRACLES OF HEALING AND CURING

Many gods are described to have healing and medicinal powers.

Rudra's healing powers are frequently noted. But we find no particular mention of any person or persons cured or remedies effected by him. He has a thousand remedies,¹ he commands every remedy,² and he grants them.³ His hand holds choice remedies⁴ and is restorative and healing.⁵ He is called the great physician of physicians.⁶ He is in one place sought to cure a worshipper's offspring of its ailment.⁷ Hence he has two epithets 'jalāṣa' and 'jalāṣabheṣaja'. The former epithet means 'healing' and the latter 'having healing remedies'. This 'jalāṣabheṣaja' god is pure and fierce and holds a sharp weapon in his hand.⁸ Probably his medicines are rains.⁹

Maruts are said to bring healing remedies¹⁰ in the form of waters, which bestow medicine by raining.¹¹

Sōma has medicinal powers besides his power of dispelling sin from the heart, destroying falsehood and promoting truth. He medicines all that is sick; (by his power) the blind man sees, the cripple walks.¹²

These medicinal powers are in fact ultra-mundane.

1. VII, 46.3.

5. II, 33.7.

9. V, 53.14; X, 59.9.

2. V, 42.11.

6. II, 33.4.

10. VIII, 20.23.26.

3. II, 33.12.

7. VII, 46.2.

11. V, 53.14.

4. I, 114.5.

8. VIII, 29.5

12. VIII, 79.2.

They are nothing if not supernatural. They speak of more than is said of specific remedies.

The *Aśvins* are physicians of the gods. They are noted for their great powers of healing and helping, and there are many instances of this, which I shall describe fully later on.

Indra is also described to possess medicinal, curing or healing powers.

To illustrate what is stated above in general, I give below different miracles of healing wounds, curing maladies, and making the lame walk and the blind see.

1. *A blind and lame sage sees and walks:*

The account of this miracle worked by *Indra* is mainly stated in II, 15.7 and IV, 19.9. II, 15.7 says: He (i.e. *Indra*) knows the hiding of (their child by) the maidens. (Therefore by *Indra's* favour) the forlorn son of the maiden manifested himself and stood up. Though his limbs were broken (śronaḥ), he stood upright and though blind, he was able to see. IV, 19.9 gives a similar story: You (i.e. *Indra*) brought forth from the hiding place, Oh Lord of the Bay Steeds, the son of a maiden, who was being eaten by ants. The blind (child) was able to see; seizing the serpent, he came out breaking the clay-pot (in which he was put). All his lambs became healed. Both the accounts given in II, 15.7 and IV, 19.9 tell that *Indra* performed three miracles, viz, (i) he brought forth the forlorn boy out of an anthill and saved him from being eaten by ants; (ii) he enabled the child to stand though it was lame; and (iii) he enabled it to see though it was blind.

Sāyaṇa's bhāṣya gives a different story in each case. He takes the person cured to be different in each case. According

to him in the case of II, 15.7 the name of the sage is Parāvṛj who is cured. One day he stood before some girls who laughed at his wretched condition, which he felt very much. The girls had indeed offended the holy man. He wished that he was free from the infirmities which had made him an object of ridicule. So he prayed to Indra who cured him of his blindness and lameness.

In his bhāṣya on IV, 19.9 Sāyaṇa says: Agru was the name of the woman who was unmarried. 'Agru' means 'unwedded'. It seems this woman had given birth to a son without marriage. She must be ashamed of this, and must have hidden the infant in an ant-hill.

But the story seems to be as follows:—The person saved and cured by Indra is one and the same, and he was the deserted son of a maiden who was unmarried. As soon as he was born, the maiden put him into a clay-pot along with the membrane and buried the pot in an ant-hill. This was quite natural as she wanted to finish the job speedily and easily, and so the hollow ant-hill served the purpose well. His limbs were broken when he was forced into the pot. In the ant-hill there lived a serpent who found on his return the place was occupied by the child. In the meanwhile the boy got back his sight by the favour of Indra (or the Aśvins) his body was healed and he broke the clay vessel in which he was put and came out of the ant-hill, seizing the serpent who had come there just then. The blind man and the maimed man at IV, 30 19; VIII, 79 2 and X, 25.11 are probably different from the above 'son of the maiden'. Perhaps VIII, 79.2 refers to Parāvṛj and the other two passages refer to the well-known story of the blind and the lame person who were able to move about with each other's help by Indra's

favour (cf. The Andhapaṅgu Nyāya and Sāṅkhya Karikā No. 21)¹³.

Whatever the name of the person healed or whatever the account of the story, one thing is certain that the instantaneous remedying of lameness and blindness is caused not in an ordinary way. No medicine is used here. The cure is effected by Indra by using his supernatural power. Hence the healing acts were Indra's miracles.

2. *Indra heals a wound without ligature*: VIII, 1.12 tells us that Indra closed up the wound without ligature before making incision in the neck. Indra is here described as one who makes whole the injured part. The same is requested of Maruts at VIII, 20.26. Indra closed the wound of some one miraculously.

3. *The Aśvins restore Kaṇva's sight*: The Aśvins are said to have ministered aid to Kaṇva when he was injured and wounded (and lost his sight) in his house¹⁴. The Aśvins helped him by restoring him his sight.¹⁵

4. *Rjraśva's sight is restored*: The Aśvins answered the prayer of Rjraśva who had become blind. Rjraśva had killed one hundred, or a hundred and one, sheep for the sake of a she-wolf. Therefore, his wicked father made him blind. Now, the she-wolf knew that the generosity of her benefactor was the cause of his miserable condition. So the she-wolf prayed to the Aśvins and told them that Rjraśva,

13. In dealing with this miracle I have used Prof. H. D. Velankar's article, "Hymns to Indra by the Vāmadevas (RV. IV, 16-32)" in the Journal of the University of Bombay, Vol. VI-Part II of May 1938.

14. VIII, 5.23. 15. I, 47.5; 112.5; 118.7; VIII, 5.25; etc, etc.

like a young lover, had killed for her one and a hundred sheep. The Aśvins answered her prayer by restoring perfect vision to Rjraśva who had become blind.¹⁶

5. *The Aśvins cured Parāvṛj of blindness and lameness*¹⁷ : The Aśvins are said to have raised him from the depths wherein he was lying, and have given fame to the halt and blind.¹⁸ It is noted above in the first miracle that he was cured by Indra. Parāvṛja is thus described as the protégé of both Indra and the Aśvins. Thus Parāvṛj was cured of his blindness and lameness by supernatural power.

6. *Indra answers Apālā's prayer* : VIII, 91.1 gives almost an abrupt account of a miracle, which Indra worked in answer to a prayer that accompanied an offering of Sōma to him, and this was not a regular sacrificial act.

According to Sāyana's bhāṣya and Brhad-devatā V.99 ff. the story of Apālā is like this : Apālā was married, but she was abandoned by her husband as no hair grew on her private parts due to some skin disease. She lived with her father who was bald-headed and who possessed a piece of land that was barren. One day Apālā found on her way a sōma stalk. She crushed it with her teeth and offered sōma juice to Indra directly from her mouth. Indra drank it and rewarded her in return by removing her father's baldness, the barrenness of his land and her disease.

But from the hymn, VIII, 91, we get rather an abrupt and mysterious account, the mystery lying in the last verse. The hymn tells that Apālā got the sōma stalk on her way to a river. She took the stalk home and desired to offer

16. I, 116.16 ; 117.17.18.

17. I, 112.8.

18. II, 13.12.

Sōma juice to Indra. She knew that Indra visited and accepted an offering of sōma juice offered not in a regular sacrifice. Verse 2 of the hymn tells that she thought of Indra and he appeared before her as a young man. Then the poet says that she would not take him for Indra and went on pressing out the juice. After much consideration she accepts the claims of the young man that he was Indra and offers to the god the sōma-juice, requesting him to grant her three favours (Verses 5 and 6). The removal of her skin disease was one of the three favours and the poet narrates this alone in Verse 7 and Apālā was cured of her disease and her skin became sun-bright.

Now the last verse of the hymn tells a part of the operation done by Indra on her. The poet says to Indra: "You gave Apālā a sun-bright skin, O Śatakṛatu, by passing her thrice through the hole of a bullock cart and that of a yoke"¹⁹.

The hole in the second case is smaller than that in the first case and in the last case it is the smallest. This verse is rather mysterious, and has the semblance of a magical operation. But it is impossible to believe that Indra performed a magical act. So one should think that the power Indra used was supernatural, and the poet sang of the act associating it perhaps with some prevalent practice.²⁰

7. *An extraordinary leg of iron*: In a race of thousand spoils, started by King Khela, the Aśvins helped

19. III, 91.7.

20. In dealing with this miracle I have used Prof. H. D. Velankar's article, 'Hymns to Indra in Mandala VIII' in Vol. XVI—Part II of the Journal of the University of Bombay, September 1947.

Viśpalā who was seeking booty, but was powerless to move, having broken her leg.²¹ We presume that Viśpalā prayed to the Aśvins for succour. Then the Aśvins gave her a leg of iron so that she might run and win the race.²²

Sāyana says that Khela was a Rajah. Viśpalā was a relative of his. She lost a leg in a battle, when Khela's family priest Agastya prayed to the Aśvins who, in answer to the prayer, gave Viśpalā an iron leg. But Vedic exgetists usually believe her to be only a mare taking part in a horserace.

This divine act of Kindness cannot be compared with the kind cruelty of modern surgery. It would be absurd to suppose that the princes of physicians knew such art of surgery in the Vedic time. Hence we must grant that the substitute leg of iron was produced without effort or loss of time, and it was not a piece that could be taken off or fitted with leather stripes, but it was created in place of the original cut off part and it could go well as a real one of flesh and blood. And herein lies the miracle worked by the Aśvins.

But the convenient question would be: If an iron leg could be produced by miracle, why a real one—of flesh and blood—was not produced? The probable answer would be: Because they wanted to rouse admiration for and faith in their miraculous powers which could make something, which is not that, do the work of that.

8. *The Aśvins cured Ghōṣā and Śyāva of leprosy:* Ghōṣā was Kaksīvat's daughter who is said to have been affected with leprosy. She was an old maiden and lived in her father's house. It seems that in agony of the malady Ghōṣā

21. I, 112, 10. 22. I, 116. 15 ; 117. 11 ; 118, 8 ; X, 39, 8.

prayed to the Aśvins and implored the noted physician gods to cure her. The Aśvins answered her prayer. They healed her and found a husband for her. It seems that Ghōṣā had remained unmarried for long as she was a leper.²³

Śyāva was a Ṛṣi whom the Āśvins cured of leprocy and enabled him to marry Rusatī.²⁴

The above instances of healing and curing are divine acts. The process of remedying is rapid and ultra-mundane. It denotes an 'active supernatural power that works cures miraculously. All these miracles are characterized by kindness of divinities who are ever ready to answer sincere prayer.

23. Sāyaṇa on I, 117.7.

24. Sāyaṇa on I, 117.8.

CHAPTER XII

RESCUE FROM FIRE AND WATER

Fire, water, wind, rain, etc. played a very important part in the life of the Vedic Āryan. He dreaded floods and conflagrations. In the land of rivers and forests this was but natural. The dread of floods is perspicuously reflected in many a verse of the Ṛgveda. Especially streams and rivers in spate were great obstacles in the way of the sages who often invoked gods to make them fordable. But there are no references to conflagrations though dangers of fire and scorching heat are recorded, and we read of lives in danger, saved miraculously by deities.

1. *Indra stopped a great stream for the sake of Vayyā and Turvīti*: He answered their prayer and checked the rising rivers and made the floods easy to cross¹. In II, 13.12 we find that Indra held the surging floods of a river to enable Vayyā to go across easily. At I, 61.11 we find Indra made a ford for Turvīti.

2. *The Aśvins save Bhujyu*: Bhujyu, the son of Tugra, was stranded in the ocean (samudre). He was cast headlong in the waters of the deep ocean by his father². The simile at I, 116.3 (i. e. Tugra abandoned him as a dying man does his wealth) suggests that the father was compelled to abandon his son, while VII, 68.7 would show that Bhujyu's friends had betrayed and drowned him in the ocean. It is probable that the father was helpless, being overpowered by Bhujyu's friends and could not save him though he was

1. IV, 19.6. 2. I, 116.3 ; 117, 14.15 ; 182, 5.6.

nearby. Bhujyu in such a terrible plight must have prayed to the Aśvins. For we find, the Aśvins ran to his help. They went in their strong and well-equipped car amidst the waters³. They carried him off in their chariot swift as thought. For him they made an animated ship with a hundred wings to fly amidst the floods and they fled easily out of the mighty surge⁴.

Elsewhere a miser who was a devotee of the Aśvins is said to have saved Bhujyu's life. This miser was perhaps one of the betraying friends, who at the last moment (i. e. when he knew that Bhujyu also prayed to the same deity i. e. the Aśvins whom he had worshipped) deserted them and ran to Bhujyu's rescue.

3. *Rescue of Rebha aud Vandana* : The Aśvins are said to have raised Rebha from the waters in which he was imprisoned and bound hand and foot⁵. The Aśvins raised Rebha, like Sōma in a ladle, who, for ten days and ten nights, lay in the waters, suffering sore affliction from being wounded, cruelly fettered and immersed⁶.

Vile men had sunk Rebha in water like a horse. The Aśvins rescued him with their wondrous powers⁷ and saved him from tyranny⁸. Rebha came out alive, but his condition was serious. When the Aśvins brought him, he was almost dead⁹.

The Aśvins raised Vandana from the grave. We read that Vandana was buried under ground in a dangerous grave. The Aśvins delivered Vandana like a hidden treasure. They

3. VII, 68.7.

4. I, 158.3 ; 116.3-5 ;
182.5.

5. I, 112.5.

6. I, 116.24.

7. I, 117.4 ; 118.6.

8. I, 119.6.

9. X, 39.9.

brought forth Vandana like fair gold that is buried, like one who slumbered in Destruction's bosom, like the sun dwelling in darkness,¹⁰ and they extended his life.¹¹ They restored his body like a car, worn out with the length of days. From earth they brought the sage to life in a miraculous manner.¹²

4. *Fire was made cool*: Atri was cast in a burning pit. The Ásvins saved his life by working a miracle. Atri and his companions got in the fiery pit by the guiles of the malignant Dasyus.¹³ It was a dangerous pit full of burning fire¹⁴ and Atri was cast down into it, which scorched him.¹⁵ The Ásvins warded off the scorching heat first by sending down frost or cold.¹⁶ They made the fierce heat be very 'sweet'¹⁷ and the fiery pit a comfortable place for him.¹⁸ Then, the Ásvins gave nourishing food, which was wonderful, to Atri and his followers, and finally took him with his companions safely out of the chasm.¹⁹ Thus it is that the twin gods rescued Atri from distress and darkness.²⁰ About this Atri probably, a poet says: He was worn with age, but the gods made him free as a horse to win the goal. They brought him, as it were, newly born to the earth, and thus they showed him their most miraculons power.²¹

Agni is also said to have rescued Atri from heat.²² It is likely that Agni saved his protégé from fire through the intervention of the Ásvins.

This Atri is probably the same person as Saptavadhri whom we find in V, 78.5.6, VIII 73.8.9. and X, 39.9. But

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| 10. I, 116.11; 117.5. | 15. I, 118.7. | 18. X, 39.9. |
| 11. I, 119.6. | 16. I, 112.7; 116.8; | 19. I, 116.8; 118.7; |
| 12. I, 119.7. | 119 6; 118.4 ; | VII, 68.5. |
| 13. I, 112.7; 117.3; | VIII, 73.3.8 ; | 20. VII, 71.5. |
| VIII, 73.3; X, 39.8. | X, 39.9. | 21. X, 143.1-3. |
| 14. I, 117.3. | 17. I, 180.4, | 22. X, 80.3, |

Saptavadhri is supposed by some to be a different person. From V, 78,5 we know that he was cast in a (hollow) tree, or rather in the hollow of a tree. He invokes the Aśvins to free him from the bonds. From V, 78.6 we find that the affrighted sage wept and wailed for help, and the Aśvins with their wondrous powers, rent up the tree and shattered it, and they brought him out of the trenchant fire. Thus they saved Saptavadhri from fire²³.

5. *Br̥haspati saves Trita*: Trita Āptya is described as burried in a well (kūpe). He prayed to the gods for help. Br̥haspati heard him and relieved him of his distress²⁴.

6. *Indra saves Kutsa*: The Ṛṣi Kutsa was sunk in a pit. He invoked Indra to help him²⁵. Indra immediately ran to his help and bore him away from the dangerous pit. This is perhaps the same Kutsa for whom Indra stole the wheel of Sūrya's chariot and who was borne by Indra with the steeds of Wind for attacking his foe Śuṣṇa²⁶.

From the above miracles we perceive a noteworthy fact that vile men took revenge on their enemies by throwing them in caverns or pits or hollows of trees full of water or fire. Or, in the case of hollows of trees they used to set fire to the roots of the trees. In the pits great heat was produced by setting fire to the grass and leaves, grown and dried and accumulated in them. The lives of those who were thrown in such caverns or pits or hollows of trees were in grave danger, and so their safe escape was all a miracle.

23. VIII, 73,9; X, 39,9.

24. I, 105,17; X 8,7.

25. I. 106,6.

26. I, 175,4; IV, 16,11,12;

V, 29,9,10; VIII, 1,11;

X, 49, 3,4.

CHAPTER XIII

REJUVENATION AND REMOVAL OF BARRENNESS

We find Chyavāna, Kali, Kakṣīvat, etc. were rejuvenated by gods. We cannot, in the light of history and culture, think of this rejuvenation by the gods in terms of the modern medical science, which claims success in rejuvenating at the hands of Dr. Vornoff and others. It was, indeed, caused in Vedic times by supernatural powers which the Vedic Āryans believed, and we should better grant their belief and accept the miracles of rejuvenation.

1. *The Aśvins made Chyavāna young again*: The Aśvins restored to youth the ancient sage Chyavāna who was weak and worn with age.¹ They stripped the skin off his body, as if it were a mail² and conferred on him lasting youth and beauty.³ When Chyavāna was made young again, he stirred the longing of young maidens for him.⁴ The Aśvins are said to have made him lord of youthful maidens.⁵ The Aśvins heard the cry of Chyavāna and ran to his help. As Chyavāna had offered oblation to them, they conferred youth on him and a body which enjoyed their constant protection.⁶

The story of Chyavāna is narrated in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa at length; the details slightly differ, but the miracle of rejuvenation is not wanting there.

1. I, 117.13; 118.6; V, 74.5; X, 39.4; etc.

2. I, 116.10.

3. VII, 68.6.

4. V, 74.5.

5. I, 116.10.

6. VII, 68.6.

2. *Kali becomes young again*: When Kali was growing old, the Aśvins gave him the vigour of his young days,⁷ and they befriended him when he had taken a wife.⁸

3. *Kakṣīvat is rejuvenated*: The great seer Kakṣīvat, who was a hundred winters old,⁹ is said to be rejuvenated by the Aśvins, who restored him to youth and strength like a repaired car.¹⁰ Indra conferred upon this old sage the youthful Vṛchayā when he praised the god and offered him sōma.¹¹

4. *The Ṛbhus rejuvenated their parents*¹² who were aged and lying like mouldering posts.¹³ They became famous among the gods, for they made their aged parents young again so that they could walk at will.¹⁴

The Ṛbhus were artists or skilful men, they were not physicians. They rejuvenated their parents in the supernatural way, i. e., they worked a miracle by making them young again.

Miracles of Removing Barrenness

Like rejuvenation, the removal of barrenness was effected by the gods by dint of their supernatural powers. The Aśvins were known as physicians, but we dare not ascribe the cures to any medicines or surgical skill and we find, in fact, no mention of anything that would support, or even suggest, the existence of any medicine they used to effect the cures, viz, rejuvenation and removal of barrenness. The following are the instances of removal of barrenness :—

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| 7. X, 39.8. | 8. I, 112.15. | 9. IX, 74.8. |
| 10. X, 143.1. | 11. I, 51.13. | 12. I, 20.4; 111.1; IV, 35.5. |
| 13. I, 110.8; IV, 33.3. | | 14. IV, 36.3. |

1. *A Eunuch's wife gets a son*: The Aśvins gave a son called Śyāva¹⁵ or Hiranyahasta to the wife of a Eunuch.¹⁶ Ordinarily it is impossible to expect a Eunuch's wife to bear a child. Perhaps Vadhrimatī was the significant name of the woman, 'vadhri' meaning a eunuch. The Aśvins worked a miracle by giving her a child or enabling her to give birth to a child.

2. *A barren cow yields milk*: The Aśvins wanted to help Śayu Atri and so made his barren emaciated cow yield milk.¹⁷ In his sore affliction they caused his cow to swell with milk.¹⁸ They deposited in the raw cow the first milk of the milch-cow, matured within her.¹⁹ More light is thrown on this event in another place. In answer to his prayer the Aśvins made the barren cow swell with milk, as rivers swell with waters, for Śayu who was famishing with hunger like a wolf.²⁰ The miracle was worked without loss of time as soon as Śayu's prayer was heard by the gods.

15. X, 65.12. 16. I, 116.13; 117.24; VI, 62.7; X, 39.7; 65.12.
 17. I, 116.22; 117.20. 18. I, 118.8; 119.6.
 19. I, 180.3; VI, 62.7. 20. VII, 68.8; X, 39.13.

CHAPTER XIV

MISCELLANEOUS MIRACLES

Miracles which could not be included in the preceding chapters are given below. They are miscellaneous.

1. *Agni saves Śunaḥśepa's life* : Śunaḥśepa was the son of a father who was very cruel. He sold Śunaḥśepa for a thousand cows to a man who wanted the boy to be offered as a victim in a sacrifice. No one prevented the evil design, and the sacrificer bound Śunaḥśepa to the sacrificial post. Everything was ready and Śunaḥśepa was to be offered as a beast in a few minutes, when the poor boy prayed to Agni who ran to his rescue and saved him. A poet lauds this deed of Agni thus : 'Thou from the stake didst loose even Śunaḥśepa bound for thousand, for he prayed with fervour'.¹

This story is retold in the Brāhmanas and as a reference to human-sacrifice it has attracted the attention of critics of history and culture.

2. *The miracle of Dadhyak's head* : The legend of Dadhyak's head as given by Sāyana is very interesting as well as amazing. According to it Indra, having taught Pravargyavidyā and Madhuvidyā to Dadhyak, threatened that he would cut off his head if he ever taught them to any one. The Aśvins, however, prevailed upon him to teach them the prohibited knowledge, and removed his (human) head

1. V, 2.7.

from him, replacing it by a horse's head, through which the sage taught them the two vidyās. Indra knew this and cut off the head which disclosed the knowledge. The Aśvins then restored the human head to its proper place.

Now what we know from the R̥gveda : The Aśvins gave a horse's head to Dadhyak, the son of Atharvan. He then told them where the mead of Tvaṣṭṛ was². Of course, he spoke these words with his horse's head³. The twin gods had gained his confidence and promised him safety from Indra's wrath, when the horse's head (of Dadhyak) gave out the secret⁴.

Indra is also connected with this incident in another way. For it is said that, when seeking the head of the horse hidden in the mountains, he found it in the Śaryanāvāt and slew with the bones of Dadhyak ninety-nine Vṛtras⁵.

It is impossible to know the mystery of Dadhyak's head. How did the Aśvins give him a horse's head? How could Dadhyak speak with the horse's head? Why did they select a horse's head? Has it any bearing on the name 'Aśvin'? How did the Aśvins replace the original head of Dadhyak?

The gods' deed was all a miracle.

3. *Prayer is answered by causing rain*: In I, 112.11 the Aśvins are invoked to come whereby the cloud shed sweet fluid for a merchant called Dīrghaśravas, son of Uṣij. (The 'sweet fluid' was, probably, not 'rain' but a ready nourishment like milk).

4. *The Aśvins lifted up a well and set it obliquely high with its bottom turned upwards and to open*

2. I, 117.22. 3. I, 116.12. 4. I, 119.9. 5. I, 84.13.14.

downwards: Then streams flowed forth for the thirsty folks of Gōtama, like rain to bring forth thousand-fold abundance⁶.

They performed a similar miracle for Śara Ārchatka by bringing up water from a deep well⁷.

5. *Wine pours forth from the hoof of a horse*: The Aśvins bestowed favours on Kaksīvat of the family of Pajra and once they caused for him a hundred jars of wine, or of honey, to flow from a strong horse's hoof⁸.

6. *A cow is made out of a hide*: The Ṛbhus are said to have fashioned a cow out of a hide for uniting her calf with her,⁹ or extracted her out of a hide¹⁰. She was a nectar-yielding cow¹¹, and was all stimulating and omniform¹². The Ṛbhus guarded her dead skeleton for a year; throughout the year they added flesh and lustre to her body.¹³ This cow was made for Brhaspati¹⁴.

Here as well as in the miracle of rescuing a quail from misery, i.e., from the jaws of a wolf¹⁵, we notice divine kindness for beings other than men.

In the twentieth century it is no miracle that science can cause a machine-cow to eat and chew food, and give milk. But in the old old times of the Veda how miraculous was the deed of the Ṛbhus who created a cow almost out of a hide and made her give milk!

6. I, 85.11 ; 116.9.

9. I, 110, 8.

12. IV, 33.8.

7. I, 116.22.

10. I, 161.7.

13. IV, 33.4.

8. I, 116, 7 ; 117.6.

11. I, 20.3.

14. I, 161.6.

15. I, 118.8 ; 116.14.

7. *The Ṛbhus make one cup into four*: God Tvaṣṭṛ had newly wrought the drinking cup of the gods. It was made of illustrious wood (chamasō mahākulō)¹⁶. The gods sent their envoy Agni to the Ṛbhus and through him they commissioned the Ṛbhus to turn the one chalice into four, promising them as a reward a share in the sacrifice together with the gods¹⁷.

The Ṛbhus said that they would do so after they had made a courser, a chariot and a cow¹⁸. Then the Ṛbhus measured the chalice, which had a wide mouth, with a rod as if it were a field¹⁹. Then the eldest of them said, 'Let us make two cups out of this'; the younger said, 'Let us make three'; the youngest said, 'Let us make four'²⁰. Tvaṣṭṛ approved this²¹. The Ṛbhus as craftsmen made, by dexterity and skill, the single chalice into four²². When Tvaṣṭṛ looked on the four cups resplendent as the day, he became envious²³, and (out of shame) he concealed himself among consorts of the gods²⁴. But he criticised the Ṛbhus. He said that the Ṛbhus had reviled the chalice of the gods and so they should be slain. But the Ṛbhus assumed new names when sōma was shed and under these new names they were received by the maidens²⁵. The miracle of the single cup has a reference to the moon's orb with its four main phases according to scholars.

However great be the skill of the Ṛbhus, it was, indeed,

16. I, 161.1 ; 110.3 ; IV, 35. 2-4.

17. I, 162.2.3.

18. I, 161.3.

19. I, 110.5.

20. IV, 33.5.

21. IV, 33.5.

22. IV, 35, 2.5 ; 36.4.

23. IV, 33.6

24. I, 161.4.

25. I, 161.5.

their occult power that enabled them to make one wooden chalice into four.²⁶

8. *Aśvins' donkey wins a thousand in a race*: The Aśvins' car is drawn by a single ass.²⁷ That stallion ass of theirs won a thousand in a race.²⁸ The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (4, 7-9) tells that the Aśvins won a race in a car drawn by asses at the time of the marriage of Sōma and Sūryā. The victory was certainly a miracle performed by the gods.

26. It is interesting to note here an instance of a miracle exactly opposed to this. While telling from what Buddha took his food, E. J. Thomas notes: "The Jātaka says that the gods first offered four sapphire bowls which Buddha refused. Then he took the four stone ones, which fitted together and became one" (The life of Buddha as Legend and History, p. 86).

27. I, 34, 9 ; 116, 2 ; VIII, 74,7. 28. I, 116,2.

CHAPTER XV

MIRACLES WORKED BY SAGES

So far we have described and discussed divine miracles. Now some miracles wrought by sages are to be dealt with in this chapter.

In the first chapter of this part, it is noted how the great sages were conscious of their rich and powerful heritage, and how they talked of great results achieved by them through the supernatural power derived from prayer.

Viśvāmitra performs a miracle.

III, 33 describes the wonderful power of the great Viśvāmitra, the author of the Gāyatrī Mantra, viz, his leading the Bharatas safely across the unfordable confluence of the Vipāś and Śutudrī.

The Bharatas had attacked and plundered their enemies and were returning home with their loot. The two Rivers were in spate and it was practically impossible to cross them. The sage Viśvāmitra made an appeal to the Rivers in glowing terms to help them. Especially the last stanza is noteworthy, which in course of generations came to be a spell as mentioned in Kauśika Gr̥hya Sūtra (77, 15) and Śankhyāyana Gr̥hya Sūtra (I, 15, 20).

From stanzas 1 to 3 we find that the Rivers could not stop flowing because they were doing what the gods had ordained them to do. So they asked the sage to say quickly what he wished to tell them (St.4). In St. 5 the sage requests

them to stop a while and receive his sōma-offering and the hymn which he desired to offer them. In St.6 the Rivers tell him that they flowed in obedience to Indra and Savitī and had to flow continuously. The sage then cleverly pointed out to them that Indra had freed them by killing Ahi and other demons, and they had the liberty to go on as well as to stop (St.7). Then (St.8) the Rivers are much pleased with Viśvāmitra, but they tell him that if they stop flowing at the request of a mere man, men would look down upon them. So they ask him to repeat his praises of their free movement, which might be sung by future generations. In the next stanza, the sage implores the Rivers to take into account the fact that he had come from a very long distance, and he and his followers were hopeful of their favour. Then St.10 tells that at last the Rivers were moved by the ardent entreaties of the sage and allowed him to cross the waters safely with all his paraphernalia. The sage requested them to stop till he had reached the yonder bank with all the Bharatas and then to flow again (St.11 and 12.)

The above detailed account of the original sparkling dialogue proves beyond doubt that Viśvāmitra performed with prayer a miracle by stopping the rivers in spate; and the miraculous incident passed from generation to generation till at last it lost all its historical and miraculous significance and attained in part the status of a magical spell. Thus the last stanza came to be used as a spell.

Vasiṣṭh works a miracle with Indra's help.

VII, 18 narrates a similar miracle. It was worked by Vasiṣṭha through his prayer to Indra. Perhaps he at first tried like Viśvāmitra to make the river Paruṣṇī fordable. He did not actually fail in his attempt to work the miracle,

but feeling less confident of success, he enlisted divine help and worked the miracle.

The hymn gives an account of a successful battle fought by Sudās and his escape from the calamity that befell him soon after the conclusion of the battle. Sudās had a small but brave band of warriors, called Bharatas. He was once attacked by the combined armies of ten powerful kings who outnumbered their enemies. Sudās was now cornered by them on the bank of the rapidly flowing Paruṣṇī. Sudās knew at once that to resist was to court disaster, and without delay he thought of escaping to the other bank of the river. But the water of the river was deep. So his family priest Vasiṣṭha prayed to Indra and requested the god to make the waters shallow so that Sudās with his confederates might easily ford the river. Indra granted the request. But as soon as the enemies of Sudās noticed his escape, some of the ten kings entered the river in pursuit of their enemies. But as soon as Sudās with his army had crossed the river, Indra sent a big flood which swept away most of the enemies of Sudās, and those who reached the bank were put to death by Sudās and his men.

Atri rescues the Sun from Svarbhānu.

We have one more human miracle. V, 40 records a wonderful deed of Atri, viz, the rescue of the sun from the demon Svarbhānu. The last five stanzas of the hymn describe how the miracle occurred.

Svarbhānu concealed the sun in darkness from all sides. This was a great amazement to all beings and they did not know what to do without light. Just then, Indra began to attack the demon's wiles from heaven. Seeing it, Atri ran from the earth to the god's help. Atri with his power

pulled the sun out of the enmassed darkness. The sun then ran to Atri out of the demon's fear. He identified Atri with Mitra and requested him and King Varuṇa to save him from Svarbhānu. Indra had by this time finished the demon from above, and then Atri, with Indra's help, placed the sun in the heaven.

This is according to the poet a unique feat performed by a sage and only the Atris were capable of such deeds. Atri saved the sun from the demon's wiles with his supernatural power.

It is not clear from the hymn why it is regarded by many as a spell.

But the miracle can be explained. The incident was the occurrence of a solar eclipse. Svarbhānu is a name of Rāhu, the personified ascending node. However the Vedic Āryans did not know of eclipses as we know them today, and, therefore, in their eyes Atri's deed was nothing short of a miracle.

CHAPTER XVI

HYMNS OF MYSTERIOUS POWER

It is noted more than once in the previous pages that the Vedic Āryan had a confirmed belief in the power of prayer. He believed very sincerely that he derived supernatural power through prayer and sacrifice.

We find, however, that Macdonell and other Sanskrit scholars have pointed out many Ṛgvedic hymns to be 'magical' or 'concerned with magic'. But none of them has given any account of magical rites which accompanied these hymns. Macdonell has emphatically asserted that "as to any magical rites connected with sacrifice, the Ṛgveda gives no information".¹

The assumption that there are sporadic verses and whole hymns connected with magic is based on the study of and references to the Ṛgvedic hymns in the Brāhmanas and Sūtras. Especially the Brāhmanas are the most misleading of the later Vedic works. They supply information about the sacrificial ritual, full of explanations and stories and episodes which are almost invariably fanciful and concocted for the occasion. Scholars have dug deep in the heaps of such slippery material and collected details to support their views about the so-called magical hymns. They have offered to point out the magical notions and observances which, they think, permeate through the sacrificial ceremony.

1. E. R. E., Vol. VIII. p. 312.

The so-called 'magical hymns' are in my opinion far from being so, the non-divine power or powers therein referred to being mysterious. The Sūtras, especially the Gr̥hyasūtras, mark a phase of the Vedic literature wherein the sponsors of the theory of 'magical hymns' try to get a firm stand and full support for their views. The Gr̥hyasūtras give a detailed account of the Āryan's daily life with many customs and beliefs. These Sūtra accounts are saturated with mysterious beliefs and practices; and the Sūtras are often used as a torch-light to discover 'magic' in the vast and unfathomable regions of the Ṛgvedic poetry, and in the light of the references direct or otherwise many Ṛgvedic verses are explained as magical.

When we consider the views about the 'magical hymns' in the light of history and culture, we find, firstly, that two things are either not noticed or deliberately avoided, viz, (i) The time-gap between the Ṛgveda and the later Vedic literature, and (ii) the results of the inevitable conflicts which the Rigvedic culture had with the culture or cultures of the Non-Aryans, or of those people who had been the earlier inhabitants of the land, whatever be their name, Dāsa or Dasyu. Hundreds of years had passed between the Ṛgveda, which was all but scattered verses in use, and the later vedic works that aimed at collection or exposition. The time-gap has much to account for the 'magical' notions and interpretations. The higher, fresh and heroic culture of the Ṛgvedic Āryan degenerated in course of time on account of its contact with lesser cultures of the non-Āryans. Again there was certainly some damage done to the tradition, and hence we find in the Brāhmaṇas fanciful etymologies of words. We should, therefore, believe in the Brāhmaṇas' 'magical' explanation—as discovered by the sponsors of the theory of

'magical' hymns—of the Ṛgvedic verses as little as we do in their etymologies. It is well known that the Ṛgvedic 'hymns concerned with magic' are very few and late, and whatever so-called magic influence is traced in the Ṛigveda is mostly found in the tenth mandala.

The 'hymns concerned with magic' are in fact 'hymns of mysterious power'. In them the poet sings with the force of his will and the composition is characteristic of lyrical fervour. The poet aims at deliverance from dangers of flood, poison, or death. The hymns are addressed to gods, to imaginary powers, or to deified objects like grass, water, birds, etc., but evidently the bard sings with the sanction of higher powers behind him.

The verses of these hymns are repeated to attain the desired object, but no sacrificial rite is said to accompany the singing or recitation of these verses to propitiate any power, divine or imaginary. The very idea of repetition of these mantras to achieve a desired object and their having no sacrificial purpose are in the opinion of the sponsors of the theory of 'magical hymns' sufficient evidence to dub them 'magical hymns.'

However plausible the above evidence may appear, it is certainly based on a superficial parallelism between magical incantations and prayers (or rather hymns) which are not accompanied by any kind of sacrificial act. The element of repetition is, indeed, common to both the kinds of mantra-composition. But incantations are meaningless groups of words, whereas prayers have a meaning. Moreover we should note the lyrical intensity and polished diction which mark the prayers with sacrifice. In the Ṛgvedic hymns faith is evident in the speaker's own powers of

will secured by his pious acts of sacrifice to the great deities, while in magical incantations, the particular words and formulas are supposed to have an uncanny powers over evil spirits which are compelled to bring about the desired result.

Prayers need not necessarily be accompanied by any sacrifice. The Gāyatrī prayer is an instance of such composition. Macdonell considers even the Gāyatrī Mantra from magical point of view.² To him its repetition is mechanical and its significance and purpose magical. The Gāyatrī mantra is the most sacred stanza to Savitr and its muttering forms a very vital part of the daily worship offered by a Brahmin. It has been regarded so for ages long, from remote times to the present day. No sacrificial rite accompanied this prayer; no oblation, no offering of sōma juice, was made while it was said or muttered. This prayer known as Sandhyā was offered three times a day — in the morning, at noon and in the evening. But generally it has been offered during the morning and evening twilights. Nowadays it is offered at any one convenient time, mostly in the morning. And this Sandhyā prayer, accompanied by no rite, has, no doubt, come down to us from the Ṛigvedic times.

We must clearly bear in mind the distinction between the magician and the Vedic bard. The magician is conscious of his mastery over the evil spirits through the medium of the spell. He always stands in fear of harm or destruction at the hands of his masters if he makes any mistakes in the utterance of the spells or in the rites accompanying them. He is mechanical in the use of his

2. E. R. E, Vol. VIII, pp. 320-321.

material and has no use for his imagination or art. The Vedic bard, on the other hand, is a wholly different stuff. He is more like a fondled child who has established his great influence over the deity by his skilful composition and worship. His coercion of the deity is based on the deity's deep love for him, while the evil spirits work for the magician out of fear of him. In short, the deity is supposed to obey the Vedic bard out of love of him due to his devotion and offering, but it is imagined that the evil spirits obey the magician through their fear of the power of the spell. In the case of the magician, he derives his powers from the spells, while the bard derives his power from the hymn and sacrifice which are backed up by the deity's love. Even in the Brāhmaṇas, where every detail of an act has a magical significance, there is no fear consequent on a breach from the deity. The magician's formula consists of words and letters which may or may not be relevant to the context, but a Vedic hymn has always a relevant meaning. Even in the Atharva Veda we do not find stark magic in the real sense of the term. The hymns are a forceful composition having a relevant sense, and the spirits inhabiting the herbs and stones are either flattered and cajoled, as is generally the case, or threatened on the strength derived from greater deities who are there to back up the bard. For this reason the resemblance between the magician and the Vedic bard, even in the days of the Atharva Veda, is more apparent than real. The very word 'mantra' is derived from the root 'man' to think and is associated with thinking and not with blind utterance.

Now we shall examine the contents of the hymns of mysterious power, which in the hands of later generations had the fate of being called 'mantras' (i. e. spells) in the Sūtra literature. We do not know anything about the

results achieved by their original singers except from what purāvidas are recorded to have said by the scholiast like Sāyana. The mysterious and miraculous element in them certainly expects some tangible results were experienced by those who used them.

The following are the more important among the hymns of mysterious power in the Ṛgveda :—

I, 187, 191; II, 42, 43; III, 53 (21-24); IV, 57; V, 78; VI, 28, 47 (26-31), 75; VII, 50, 55, 103; X, 58, 59, 60, 84, 85 (28-30), 97, 145, 159, 162, 163, 166, 183.

I, 187 is addressed to Food, deified. The devatā is Food. Sāyana has given its traditional use. One should receive whatever food comes to him by repeating this hymn, so that he will not contract any disease due to food and even poison (if it be in it) would turn out to be nectar. If one happens to drink poison, he should repeat this hymn as an antidote. Though Food is addressed here, it is not Food that is all powerful to save one affected with poison or disease. The spirit of great gods resides in Food. The poet has addressed Food thus : त्वे पितो महानां देवानां मनो हितम् (st. 6). This hymn well bears testimony to the Āryan's pious habit of registering divine sanction for all mysterious powers of efficacy attributed to things other than divine. Here there is no coercion, but address in supplication, cajoling and flattering to gain favour from the deified object.

I, 191 is called ' Viṣaghnōpaniṣad ', and Sāyana calls verses 10 to 16 ' Viṣanirharanyupaniṣad '. His remark ' उपनिषदिति रहस्यमित्यर्थः ' in his bhāṣya points out the mysterious nature of the hymn. He has pointed out that Agastya had used the Upaniṣad to cure himself of poison with

which, he thought, he was affected. It seems that the hymn must have proved efficacious to Agastya, and since then it must have come to be used with the intention of similar cure.

The singer or poet is stung by some unseen venomous insect and is infected with poison. He addresses Water, Grass and the Sun, which as deified objects are the deities of the hymn. The verses 10 to 16 clearly show the vigorous will-power of the poet-sage. He says: I hang the poison in the sun; this little bird hath swallowed up all poison; fire has eaten it up; so ninety rivers and ninety-one peahens have carried away the venom; I crush the insect and its venom becomes ineffective.

It is quite natural that this hymn, characterized by a fine expression of the poisoned man's feelings, wishful thinking and will-power (of course derived from faith in the deity's love for the speaker), should in later times come to pass as an effective charm. When we consider the devatās of this hymn we are sure to conclude that this hymn had no magical colour in the real sense of the term. There is the display of the devout singer's power derived from his faith in a god or gods and it is quite different from the magician's power over evil spirits—the power of coercion.

II, 42 and 43 are addressed to a bird. Their devatā is a Bird, or rather Indra in the guise of a bird called 'kapiñjala' (kapiñjalarūpīndrah). The name Kapiñjala does not occur in the body of the hymns. The Ṛṣi of the hymn is Gṛtsamada, the seer of good (maṅgala-draṣṭā). The hymns should be muttered on hearing repeated cries of birds, which are not pleasant.

II, 42 calls upon the bird to bring good tidings and happy fortune, and to see that no calamity befalls the singer.

II, 43 is also an earnest prayer to the bird to be kindly towards the singer.

From the above account we can say that as the devatā is Indra in the guise of a bird, the original purpose of the hymns was that of an address to a Vedic god. But later on the hymns came to be used as a sort of charm to deal with augury.

III, 53 (21-24) is addressed by Viśvāmitra to Indra. Sāyaṇa tells us that Viśvāmitra had a pupil called Sudās who was a royal sage. This King happened to become an enemy of Vasiṣṭha on account of some reason. So Viśvāmitra cursed Vasiṣṭha with these verses to safeguard the interest of his royal pupil. These stanzas (21 to 24) are curses and the Vasisthas do not, even now, hear them according to Durga on Nirukta, 4.14.

Though the stanzas are in the form of curses we must not forget the fact that Viśvāmitra's tone in them is neither imperative nor independent of divine help. He implores the god Indra to crush the enemy. He relies on his god by enlisting his help for the destruction of his pupil's enemies. He does not pretend to a magician's power which is imperative and unconcerned with any divine help.

IV, 57 is muttered as a mantra while ploughing a field. Āśvalāyana Gr. Sūtra (2-10; 9-11) have stated the use. Sāyaṇa says that with this hymn one should offer a sacrifice and mutter it while ploughing a field. The st. 6 and 7 refer to Seetā or the Furrow, and there the bard invokes Indra to make the furrow deep and thereby to help crops to grow rich.

The hymn has many deities; gods like Pūṣan and Indra (st.7) and god Parjanya (st.8) are remembered and engaged to help the act. The Kṣetrapati, the deity of st. 1 to 3, is addressed as a god. This shows the poet's anxiety to enlist divine power for growing rich crops is upper-most in his mind. So the hymn was originally designed as a prayer and was free from any colour of charm or magic.

V, 78 is styled as ' garbhasrāviṇyupaniṣad '. The verses from 5 to 9 give a vivid description of what the Aśvins are called upon to do to cause a safe delivery. This act of the Aśvins is a wonderful exploit and to the poet it is nothing short of a miracle. In st. 6 the Aśvins are requested to use their miraculous power (i. e. māyā) to make the child's birth smooth and safe, and to see to this that the living babe comes forth from the living dame. This is in effect a request for a deity's favour and not a magical spell.

This 'Upaniṣad' speaks of the Vedic Āryan's knowledge of maternity.

Sāyaṇa has something to say about this hymn. Ancient chroniclers tell a story: The sons of the brothers of Saptavadhri did not allow the sage to have intercourse with his wife (for some unknown reason). So they shut him up every night in a cane-box which they locked and sealed. They opened the box every morning and set the sage free. The sage submitted to them. But he could soon get rid of the difficulty. He prayed to the Aśvins and invoked them to help him. They granted his wish by enabling him to get out of the box and go to his wife. But this was allowed on the condition that he should return without fail at day-break and lie in the box as before.

The above story is interesting but it helps us little to understand the hymn or the 'Upaniṣad' in it.

Prof. H. D. Velankar offers an illuminating criticism of the hymn, V, 78. In his learned article he has conclusively proved that Saptavadhri and Vadhrimatī of the hymn were husband and wife. Saptavadhri invites the Aśvins to accept sōma at his sacrifice. He recounts the help he had received from the gods and compares himself with Vadhrimatī who had also got help from them at the time of her difficult delivery. The poet, i. e. Saptavadhri himself, then has the delivery incident in his mind and tries to reconstruct the words of command which the Aśvins must have used then. Prof. Velankar says further, "I construe vv. 7-9 as the words of command of the Aśvinā to the Mūḍha Garbha of Vadhrimatī. They are neither aśis as Geldner thinks, nor a prayer as Bunack would construe. The imperative form in v. 8 shows that the stanzas are an appeal to the Garbha alone and not to the Aśvinā or any other deity. Thus in short, the hymn is an invitation to the Aśvinā to a sōma sacrifice by Saptavadhri who, on that occasion, gratefully remembers the help which he and his wife got from them, when they were in need of it. It would seem also from our hymn that Vadhrimatī was the first to receive the help of the Aśvinā and probably, encouraged by her example, her husband Saptavadhri Atri also invoked it for himself and the same was extended to him as we know."³

The above criticism confirms the miraculous and mysterious nature of the hymn. Saptavadhri is the famous Atri who was saved by the Aśvins from the fiery pit (ṛbīsa) where he was tormented by heat and enveloped in darkness.⁴

3. The story of Saptavadhri and Vadhrimatī, pp. 548-549, in A Volume of Studies in Indology, presented to Prof. P. V. Kane, M. A., LL. M. 4. I, 112.7; 117.3; VIII, 75.3; X, 39.9.

This is confirmed by Prof. Velankar in the above mentioned article.⁵ One easily knows now why Saptavadhri so gratefully remembers the Aśvins.

VI, 28 is addressed to Cows and Indra who are its devatās. According to Āśvalāyana⁶ it is to be used while attending to cows (returned from the pasture).

Cows are vitally connected with sacrifice, and the bard looks upon them as deities. He says in st. 5 that to him cows seem to be Bhaga, Indra, the first potion of sōma, and he invokes Indra and Rudra's dart to protect them from evil men.

The purpose and spirit of the hymn are those of a pure prayer and there is no reason why it should come to pass as a magical spell.

VI, 47 (26-31) : The verses 26 to 28 are addressed to the Ratha or war chariot, 29 and 30 to the Dundubhi or war-drum, and 31 to the war-drum and Indra. Āśvalāyana Gr. Sū., 5-20 attach occult significance to these stanzas.

But we find that the chariot and the drum are addressed as divine things. The chariot is called 'deva' in st. 28. There the bard says to the chariot : you are Indra's bolt, the vangurd of the Maruts, the child of Mitra, and the 'nābhi' of Varuṇa. In st. 29 the drum is implored to drive away the enemy in accordance with Indra and other gods. So it is obvious that the power ascribed to the chariot and drum for securing victory in the battle is backed up by deities and the poet's faith in them. In the light of these things we can hardly consider the verses magical.

5. P. 549.

6. Ā. Gr. Sū., 2-10-7.

VI. 75 is akin to the above verses about the chariot and drum. This is a war hymn. *Āśvalāyana* (Gr. Sū., 3-5) prescribes it as a set of mantras to equip the king with the armour, bow, arrows, etc. for the battle and to mutter it during the course of the battle also to repel an attack.

The deities of the hymn are Chariot, Horses, Bow, Arrows, Armour, Whip, etc. and *Sōma*, *Varuṇa*, *Dyāvāpṛthivī*, *Brāhmaṇa* and *Pitr*.

The objects and instruments of war are addressed as deities and implored to crush the king's enemy in the war. But the bard is not satisfied with this much; he remembers, invokes and enlists the aid of gods, manes and the *Brāhmaṇa* who are the abodes of spiritual power. (The manes are the dead sages). *Brahmaṇaspati*, *Aditi*, *Varuṇa*, *Pūṣan*, etc. are to help the king to gain victory in the battle. And we find in the last verse a noteworthy thought. The bard with full confidence in his power declares: "Whosoever, would kill us, whether he be a stranger or one of us, all gods should crush (*dhūrvantu*) him. *My closest mail is prayer.*" From this we get a clear idea of the bard's faith in the divine favour and his prayer that enlists it.

VII, 50 has various deities—*Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, *Agni*, *Viśvedevas* and *Nadī* or River. Each stanza of the hymn is to be repeated as an antidote to the disease or poison which it mentions. This is the inevitable fate that befell the hymn as it is a prayer to gods to bring about cures. From the contents we are sure that the bard does not exert any imperative power of a magician to effect the cures, but he invokes gods and depends on their help and favour for the fulfilment of his desire.

VII, 55 is intended to induce sleep to the inmates of a house, who are suffering from insomnia. The deities are

Vāstōspati and Indra. Vāstōspati, the genius or tutelary deity of the house, is addressed in the first stanza and Indra in the rest of the hymn, i. e., in st. 2 to 8.

It is a sleep charm (but unlike AV., IV, 7 where the poet addresses an imaginary power and sleep, personified in one stanza). Here the poet's anxiety is derived from the grace of Indra and there is not the slightest suggestion of coercion of any spirit for achieving the desired object.

Tradition has got something to say about this hymn. Sāyaṇa has cited it from the Brhaddevatā. He says: Vasiṣṭha came to Varuṇa's house by night and desired to sleep there. The barking watch-dog was about to catch hold of him when he appeased the animal by muttering this hymn. Sāyaṇa tells another story also. It is this: Vasiṣṭha had passed three days without eating anything. On the fourth day he entered at night the house of Varuṇa to steal some food. There he went to the store-house (kōṣṭāgāra) where a watch-dog was on guard. The dog at once set upon Vasiṣṭha who immediately put it to sleep by muttering verses of this hymn.

Thus we can see what the hymn was meant for lost its importance and the hymn at last came to pass as a spell.

VII, 103 is in praise of Frogs that are its devatās. Sāyaṇa remarks in his bhāṣya that one desirous of rain should recite this hymn. He quotes also the comment of the Nirukta which states that Vasiṣṭha desiring rain praised Parjanya, frogs responded to him and he praised the frogs in return. This is the traditional view of the hymn.

Western scholars like Max Muller and Geldner hold a different view. Max Muller thinks that it is a satire. "The hymn...which is called a panegyric of the frogs, is clearly

a satire on the priests".⁷ But this view is not generally shared by scholars. Prof. H. D. Velankar remarks in this case in his (unpublished) note on this hymn thus: "The last line (of this hymn) is identified with RV., III., 53.7 d and is supposed to have been mischievously borrowed by the poet to indulge in a satire against the Viśvāmitras, by Western scholars led by Max Muller and Geldner. But Oldenberg and Macdonell think that this view is not correct." Then after referring to the traditional view of the hymn he says, "There appears to be nothing disparaging either to the frogs or to the sacrificing priests in the whole of the hymn. On the other hand these are flattering references to both, especially in verses 1, 2 (they are compared with cows), 5, 7 (non-failure to observe a particular day of sacrifice), 8-10."

Thus the hymn is a pure panegyric of Parjanya and Frogs which are mysteriously associated with rain and hence are honoured in all earnestness as harbingers of rain.

X, 58 and 60 (7-12) are prayers for preservation of life and do not suggest any coercion of an evil spirit into service.

X, 58 urges the spirit or 'manas' to come back from the various persons and places it has visited, viz, Yama, Heaven, Earth, the Four Quarters, Waters and Plants, Sun and Dawn, High, Mountains, all inanimate and animate things, unknown and unseen regions, all that is and is to be.

The hymn is mainly philosophic and it has a mystic touch here and there. Its lyrical fervour and will-power, and the fact that 'Manas' is its devatā make it a powerful hymn that appealed to the poet in the makers of the Rigveda-Samhitā.

7. A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 494.

X, 60 is a peculiar hymn with a number of devatās. Rajah Asamāti is the deity of st.1-4, Indra of the fifth stanza, the Rajah again of the sixth, Jīva (or life) of the next four verses, and Hasta (or the hand) of the last one.

The verses from 7 to 12 are very important from our point of view. It is here that the hymn has the appearance of a spell. In connection with these verses Sāyana has quoted from the Brhaddevatā words which mean as follows : They (i. e. the sages of the hymn) then praised Agni with two verses. Agni who was praised came. Having come, he asked, 'With what desire do you come to me?' They said, "We desire to get back the life of Subandhu'. Then Agni said that he had preserved the life of Subandhu, and said, 'Live,' and he, praised by the Gaupāyanas, went to heaven.

In the verses 7 to 12 the brothers of Subandhu have addressed their supplication to Agni to restore him to life, and he has come accordingly, being as it were his parent and begetter. Another interpretation explains the words अयं माता अयं पिता etc. literally as 'Subandhu, your father, mother and son have come to mourn your death.'

The interpretation or meaning of अयं माता अयं पिता etc. may be a knotty point, but the fact remains that Agni answered the prayer of Subandhu's brothers and brought him to life. Thus it is clear that originally the hymn had quite a different motive; it had no magical significance at all.

X, 59 : The first four verses of this hymn were sung by the three brothers of Subandhu to appease Nirṛti who causes death. Nirṛti is the devatā of these verses. Sōma also is the devatā of the fourth verse. The rest of the hymn has many other devatās. The whole purport of the hymn is to appease Nirṛti and consequently various deities

are jointly addressed to help in the matter. Here the poet's faith in divine aid is quite apparent, and the whole hymn is just a prayer.

X, 84 has 'manyu' for its devatā. Manyu or anger is deified and is addressed to crush the enemies of the singer. Manyu is invoked to help in mighty battles and confer spoils on the singer and his friends. Here we find in the last verse that Manyu is addressed along with Varuṇa to fulfil the singer's above mentioned desire. This hymn is a pure prayer and has not even the slightest shade of magic.

X, 85 (28-30) refers to Kṛtyā who is a female fiend. From verses 26 to 30 it is apparent that the bard earnestly desires the newly wedded girl's welfare, and the verses have the form of blessing or aśīrvāda. Gods like Pūṣan and the Āśvins are engaged to conduct and lead the girl to her husband's house. Here Kṛtyā, who is the agent of evil, is driven off by the bard with the force of his will-power backed up by his faith in the deities,

X, 97 is in praise of Herbs. Herbs are the deities of this hymn. In st. 4 they are called goddesses and mothers of the bard. In st. 15 they are 'Bṛhaspatiprasūta' i. e. issued or urged on by Bṛhaspati. St. 19 tells that their king is Sōma. Thus the hymn clearly establishes the relation of the herbs with gods.

This hymn is used to effect cure from fever etc. Sāyana remarks to this effect by referring to the Āśvalāyana Gr. Su., 6-9.

The bard has a strong faith in the efficacy of herbs in general, but his faith is derived from his confirmed notion that the herbs are kith and kin, as it were, with gods; their efficacious power is derived from the deities.

X, 145 is called 'Sapatnībādhanam (Upaniṣad)'. Its devatā is Indrānī. It is directed against rival wives. Āpastamba says that a wife who wishes to get rid of a rival must repeat this hymn silently three times on going to bed, and then embrace her husband.

The tone of address in this hymn can be noticed in the harangue of a co-wife of to-day even, directed against her rival. The first stanza refers to a herb of the most efficacious power that quells the rival wife for ever and gives back the husband for oneself. This herb, however, is significantly called 'devajūta' in verse 2. The herb is believed to be efficacious because of the favour of the gods and the hymn itself is supposed to be mysteriously effective.

X, 159 is a song of triumph over rivals. Its devatā is Śachī. It marks the exultation of Śachī, the wife of Indra, over her rival wives. 'Śachī' means also an 'act' or 'exploit', and so the hymn is also in praise of Indra's glorious deed. This second consideration must have weighed more in the minds of the framers of the Saṃhitā who included it in the collection.

X, 162 and 183 aim at warding off dangers to children.

X, 162 is meant for the prevention of abortion with the favour of Agni. St. 1 and 2 are directed against diseases, and 3 and 4 against evil spirits, which attack women who are going to be mothers soon.

In the very first stanza of this hymn Agni is invoked to drive away the malady or evil power which destroys progeny.

This hymn is addressed to Agni. It is a poet's expression of the thoughts prevailing among the Vedic Āryans

of the day when there was dreadful infant mortality. This hymn as well as X, 183 bears a clear mark of the poet's will-power and faith derived from a deity's favour, and both are fervent prayers that appeal to divinity.

X, 163 is directed against a disease called *Yakṣmā*. The speaker makes an appeal to no god, but evidently is confident of mysterious power in himself, not derived from the mantra itself but from some great deity. The hymn has a fully relevant meaning and aims at driving the malady from the sufferer's body, limb by limb, from top to toe. It cannot be regarded as a magical formula by any stretch of imagination.

X, 166 is named as '*Sapatnanāśanam*', meaning 'destruction of rivals'. The deity praised for favouring the bard is Indra; *Vāchaspati* and *Viśvakarman* also are referred to. Hence this hymn is a prayer and not a magical spell.

The hymn denotes the poet's strong will-power which has spurred him to sing with confidence and strength with which he wishes to crush his enemies. But we must remember that his faith and will-power are derived from the love and favour of the deity.

We have examined above the hymns of mysterious power by noting their contents and what tradition says as to their origin and use. In every one of these we find that the bard is not a magician. He does not seek to coerce the deity into obeying him but desires to gain his end through faith in his own will-power secured by the favour and love of the deity. There is the mysterious and miraculous element in all of them, but not the magical.

PART IV
DECLINE OF THE MIRACULOUS

CHAPTER XVII

DECLINE OF THE SUPERNATURAL AND THE MIRACULOUS.

In this part I intend to show only cursorily how the Ṛgvedic supernatural declines, and consequently the miraculous degenerates, in later Vedic literature, especially in the Atharva Veda and the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

Now, before dealing with the main topic, I must reiterate and point out briefly the import of some pertinent things.

The Ṛgveda marks the close of one period of Vedic culture and the other Saṃhitās and later Vedic works display a world of culture dissimilar in many respects. Eminent scholars like M. Winternitz have well supported this point of view with cogent argument and detailed discussion of geographical, historical, and cultural aspects of the subject and have pointed out some definite things as to the dates and cultures of the periods, in which the original hymns of the Ṛgveda were composed by the poet-seers, in which these hymns were collected and grouped and put together in book-form, and in which, lastly, some hymns began to be put to use other than the sacred one. By the time the Vedāṅgas had taken shape of books, the whole of Northern as well as Southern India had not only come under the sway of the Brahmanic religion and culture, but Brahmanism had undergone some cultural and religious changes as a result of the Northern Āryans' coming in close contact and conflict with the older inhabitants of the land, especially those of the south.

This is borne out by many things, e.g. the mention of gods' images in the Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra literature. In the R̥gveda there is not even the faintest trace of idols or images of any kind. Idol-worship was totally unknown to the R̥gvedic Āryan. The Atharva Veda abounds in references to amulets and effigies. Hence, there must be a very wide time-gap between the stage of religion with no idol-worship and the later stage of religion in which idol-worship made its entry and got itself established. While remarking on the contents of the Ṣadviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, Max Muller says, "This Brāhmaṇa together with the Adbhuta Brāhmaṇa must be of a very modern date. It mentions not only temples (devāyatanāni) but images of gods (devatā-pratimāḥ) which are said to laugh, to cry, to sing, to dance, to burst, to sweat, and to twinkle." ¹ The Kauśika Sūtra with regard to AV., I, 19 says that the hymn is employed "when images of gods dance, shake, laugh, sing, or indulge in other freaks." ²

Baudhāyana and Apastamba, two great authors of Sūtra literature, were Southerners. This fact shows the extent of the Vedic culture and religion.

The Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra literatures are separated from the R̥gveda Samhitā by centuries. As to the Atharva Veda, this collection of hymns was made and recognised as a Veda at a very late date. It contains hymns, the originals of many of which must have fallen in the hands of degraded Brahmanic priests who had heard, from tradition, of the

1. A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, p. 348.

2. Kauś Gr. Sū. 105. 1.-अथ यत्रैतत्तद्देवतानि नृत्यन्ति च्योतन्ति हसन्ति गायन्ति वान्यानि वा रूपाणि कुर्वन्ति य आमुरा मनुष्या मा नो विद्वन्नमो देववयेभ्य इत्यभयैर्जुहुयात् ।

divine and miraculous power of the Ṛgvedic deities and sages, and who on the pretence of ancestral inheritance, posed to possess some mysterious power, and, in addition, herbs and amulets with efficacious effects that almost amounted to magic. This class of priests indulged freely in magical practices common with the non-Aryan inhabitants of the vast country. They employed the originally sacred hymns, which tradition had left in their hands, and changed, to suit their low purpose, the solemn and divine nature of the original compositions by spurious additions of imprecations, charms, etc.

Thus unlike the Ṛgvedic poet-priests, the composers and users of Atharvanic hymns got opportunities to address powers other than divine. The Ṛgvedic hymns are addressed to great gods and the priests never resort to magic for achieving their desired objects. The Atharva Veda is full of metrical spells used for achieving desired ends. We find in the Atharva Veda that sacrifice is not performed only to please gods and get their favours, but it is intended consciously to control natural course of things and to bring about results by the use of mysterious or magical powers.

The Brāhmanas also display the above trend of sacrificial matters in their explanations and details of the ritual. In the Upaniṣads mysticism takes the place of the mysterious and the magical of the Brāhmanas. We would be far from truth if we attribute magical practices to the mystic sages of the Upaniṣads. There is no magic in the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads are mystic or mysterious in their vital discussions. Then come the Sūtras dealing with all the spheres of life, private as well as public. They give an account of the various uses of Vedic mantras; these accounts

point to the magical beliefs and practices prevailing in the life of the day

The causes of this long development from the supernatural and the miraculous of the R̥gveda to the mysterious and the magical of the Atharva Veda and the Br̥hmana and Sūtra literatures are very many. The R̥gvedic poet-priest felt the divine presence at the sacrifice, realised very tangible results which he believed were due to his sacrifice and prayer. This belief of the R̥gvedic day shifted ground and gradually tended towards the mysterious and the magical. The mechanical performance of sacrifice became more and more important than deities and hymns—the ritual became complicated, ceremonious, mysterious, and anxious to achieve ends more speedily than even with magic. But the priests could not fully alienate themselves from the traditional practices; the function changed but the old form remained steady even under new impacts of low cultures. The sacrificial hymn became a mixture of prayer and spell. The sacrifice was there, but deities were thrown into background, the mixed hymn was sung and the priest held himself and his rituals, herbs and amulets all powerful. Hence we find that the so-called magic in the later Vedic literature is rarely stark magic. This is the point of view with which I shall make a brief survey of the Atharva Veda and the Śatapatha Br̥hmana, the most representative of the Br̥hmanas, and show the decline of the R̥gvedic supernatural and miraculous.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ATHARVA VEDA

In spite of the equivocal declaration that the Atharva Veda is a book of metrical spells, it is primarily a sacred text. It contains a good deal of material common to the Ṛgveda and Yajurveda. Its hymns are intended to appease, bless, cure or curse. Hence it is called 'sāntikapauṣṭikā-bhichārikapratipādika'.

The religion of the Atharva Veda is popular in its outlook and purpose. The priest here is not merely a priest. The Atharvan is a physician and magician. He descends from the ancient family of Atharvan, Aṅgiras, Bhṛgu. The Veda is named after these great sages. It is called Atharva Veda, Atharvāṅgiras Veda, Bhṛgvaṅgiras Veda, etc.

The Atharvans are the ancient priests of fire, who perform sacrifices and propagate the religion of sacrifice. They derive their power through hymns or spells and magical rites. In this Veda 'brahman' means 'power' derived from magical acts; and this power is produced by the utterance of mantras or formulas. Its effects are 'miraculous'. The priest-magician utilises this power to bring about results that can be described as magical or medicinal. VI, 133.3.* tells us that 'brahman' sharpens the speech, act and mind of the magician-priest and so he can

* The numbers of the hymns of the Atharva Veda are given thus in this chapter.

transfer the power to an object like the girdle. In short we can say that the multifarious activity of the Atharvan is produced by this brahman. This brahman signifies magical power. It is derived from the performance of savanas and yajñas. It is behind all deities. Lastly it is supposed to be the power that creates and controls this universe.

But it is quite clear that this power of the Atharvan is a mixed one. It is different from the spiritual power of the Ṛgvedic seer. The Atharvan is not on a par with the Ṛgvedic priest who said his prayers to gods who worked miraculous deeds for him, and who derived great will-power through his prayers.

The hymns in this Veda are addressed to deities and deified objects, and they may be classified as follows:—

1. Bhaiṣajyāni—prayers and spells for the cure of diseases ;
2. Ayuṣyāni—prayers for health and long life ;
3. Pauṣṭikani—hymns for prosperity, success and happiness ;
4. Mṛgārasūktāni—and prāyaścittāni—hymns for blessing and protection, and for expiation ;
5. Hymns for restoration of harmony in the family ;
6. Strīkarmāni—spells about marriage, love, etc. pertaining to woman and rivalry in love ;
7. Abhichārakāni—imprecations and exorcisms against demons, wizards, etc ;
8. Rājakarmāni—spells to serve kings in war and state affairs ;

9. Āprisūktāni—songs and spells for sacrificial purposes ;

10. Cosmogonic hymns ;

11. Theosophic hymns, etc., etc.

The above classification indicates the vast extent and variety of the subjects of the Veda.

My intention here is not to consider this Veda in parts but as one, undivided, whole work. For, though this book of hymns is encumbered with magic, one does not fail to notice two things, viz., the priest's anxiety to establish and announce his relation with deities, and the spirit of prayer that at times is uppermost in prayers addressed to Varuṇa and Mother Earth and in the theosophic and cosmogonic hymns.

The hymns, prayers, songs or spells, whatever be their name, are addressed to gods, demons, imaginary powers and personified objects like diseases, plants, herbs, amulets, water and fire. They touch upon almost all the spheres of man's life, and in them religion and magic mingle, if necessary, to produce desired results.

One thing is clearly seen in all but a few hymns, that the priest has not forsaken his gods of yore. He has created new gods like Rōhita. He courts their favour, but he does not depend on them; he has assumed mysterious power akin to magic.

It is defensive as well as offensive magic. But there is not stark or black magic in the majority of the hymns. The Kṛtyā or witchcraft works both ways, offensive and defensive.

The Atharvan is not afraid of evil spirits and piśāchas that they would attack him if his 'mantra' fails. But he is

afraid of the Rakṣas who would spoil the performance of his sacrifice. The Atharvan uses his power, plants and herbs, amulets, etc. to drive away the evil ones. He ascribes some mysterious power to the objects he uses. His power is mainly magical and his acts are those of a magician.

I note below the various deities and personified objects that the Atharvan has addressed in this Veda.

Among the deities addressed are Agni, Āngiras, Āngirasa, Atithi, Atri, Ātharvan, Ātharvaṇa, Aditi, Apāna, Apsarasas, Amāvāsyā, Āyus, Arāti, Aryaman, Aśvins, Āditya, Āpaḥ, Āshāpāla, Indra, Uṣas, Ṛbhus, Kaṇva, Kavi, Kaśyapa, Kāma, Kāla, Gandharva, Chandra, Chandramas, Jariman, Trāyamānā, Tvaṣṭṛ, Tviṣī, Diti, Devajanas, Devas, Dhanapati, Dhatr, Nakṣatras, Navagvas, Nirṛti, Paśupati, Parjanya, Pāpman, Pitṛs, Puruṣa, Pūṣan, Pṛthivī, Paurṇimāsī, Biskilā, Bṛhaspati, Brahmachārī, Brahmanaspati, Bhūmi, Bhargu, Manyu, Marut, Mitra, Medhā, Mṛtyu, Yama, Rātri, Rudra, Rōhita, Varuṇa, Varcas, Vāc, Vācaspati, Vāta, Vāyu, Vastōṣpati, Vidyut, Virāj, Vivasvat, Viśvakarman, Viśvajit, Viśvedevas, Viṣṇu, Vedamātā, Vena, Vrātya, Sabhā, Samiti, Sarasvat, Sarasvatī, Savitr, Sinīvāli, Sūrya, Sōma, Sūṣā, Sūṣaṇā, Skambha, Smara, Svapna, etc.

These deities are associated with deified objects. I shall illustrate later this point. I mention below first the medicinal and magical objects that are addressed:—

Ajaśṛṅgī, Apāmārga, Abhivarta, Arundhatī, Arka, Arjunakāṇḍa, Aśvattha, Asīknī, Aṣṭṛta, Ābayu, Āsurī, Uttānaparna, Audumbara, Kuṣṭha, Kesavardhanī, Gugh or Gulgulu, Chīpudru, Jīvantī, Jīvalā, Jaṅgiḍa, Jalāṣa, Talāśā, Tila, Tuṣṭikā, Darbha, Daśavrkṣa, Nitatnī, Nyastikā, Paribasta, Pātā, Pippalī, Putudru, Pṛṣniparnī, Baja, Fāla,

Madhu, Madhulā, Mekhalā, Yava, Rōhini, Lāksbā, Varāṇa, Varāṇāvati, Viṣāṇa Viṣāṇikā, Vrihi, Śaṅkha, Śatavāra, Śamī, Śara, Sīsa, Sakhī, Sahasrakāṇḍa, and the plant that helps to recover virility, the plant to grow hair, a herb to make one impotent, Śatavāra amulet, Astrīta amulet, Parihasta amulet, the war drum made of a forest tree, Amulet of gold, Triple amulet (of gold, silver and copper), Āñjana (ointment), etc.

Harmful objects that are addressed : Kṛmis, Serpents, Poisons, Upajīkās (ants).

The dhamanis or veins of the body are addressed to stop the flow of blood.

There are some more objects : Kṛtyā (witchcraft in the form of a doll), Armour, Dice, Arbudi, Nyarbudi, Trisandhi, Vajra, Śālā, Madhukaśā, a King, Sītā, Aśmavarman, Brahmajāyā, Brahmagavī, Śyena, Rats, Locuts, Vājin (horse), Tiger, Wolf, Thief, Bull. All these are addressed in the hymns.

The long lists are given to indicate the wide scope of the priest's address.

A general survey of the hymns assures that the Atharvan has not broken away from the priests' traditional relations with gods. He eagerly associates them with his mantras in which his mood varies from invocation and supplication to commanding influence. I shall now illustrate this point.

In the charm, V, 22, against Takman or fever the Atharvan begins thus :—

“ May Agni drive Takman away from here, may Sōma, the press-stone, and Varuṇa, of tried skill; may the altar, the straw (upon the altar), and the brightly flaming

faggots (drive him away;) Away to naught shall go the hateful power: ”*

Here from his invocation for godly support the priest comes to assume his command in the end.

In a charm against discharges from the body, the priest sings in II, 3. 6 —

“ May the waters afford us welfare, may the herbs be propitious to us! Indra’s bolt shall beat off the Rakṣas, far (from us) shall fly the arrows cast by the Rakṣas.”

Like Indra’s bolt Parjanya is remembered thus—

“ We know the father of the arrow, Parjanya, of hundredfold power. With this (charm) may I render comfortable the body...”¹

The Atharvan is conscious of his power. He declares the sources of it. He says in V, 13. 1—

“ Varuṇa, the sage of heaven, verily lends (power) to me. With mighty charms do I dissolve thy poison...” The words indicate the divine as well as magical source of his power.

He is, however, anxious to register divine sanction behind his power and behind the power of his plants, herbs, amulets, ointments, etc. In VI, 96.1 he assures us thus—

“The many plants of hundred-fold aspect, whose king is Sōma, which have been begotten by Br̥haspati, shall free us from calamity.”

* Here and elsewhere Bloomfield’s translation is quoted.

1. I, 3. 1.

And in II, 36.2 he assures a woman.—

“Agreeable to Sōma, agreeable to Brahmā, arranged by Aryaman, with unfailing certainty of god Dhatṛ, do I bestow upon thee the good fortune, the acquisition of a husband.”

He traces the miraculous power of his plants and herbs to the divine source. He sings of the Apāmārga plant thus:—

“When of yore, in the beginning, the gods drove out the Asuras with thee, then, plant, thou wast begotten as apāmārga (‘wiping out’).”²

He glorifies a talisman made of the wood of Sraktya tree thus:—

“With this talisman Indra slew Vṛtra; with it, he, full of device, destroyed the Asuras; with it he conquered both the heaven and earth, with it he conquered the regions of space.”³

Here are his praises of an amulet of Khadira wood:

“The amulet which Bṛhaspati tied for the gods, destructive of the Asuras, that has come to me together with sap and lustre”⁴

The above utterances may be tall talks, but they clearly show the priest’s anxiety to maintain relations with his old gods. Moreover we notice the boldness with which the Atharvan deifies plants, herbs, etc. and attributes mysterious power to them. The plants are deities. Gods dwell in them. Their power produces miraculous results. But this power of the Atharvan is very different from the spiritual power of the R̥gvedic priest, and these miraculous effects are

2. IV, 19. 4.

3. VIII, 5. 3.

4. X, 6.22.

far from being miraculous deeds of gods. The Atharvan's power has the semblance of divinity, and a very thin line exists between it and magical and medicinal power.

This very degradation of the priestly power helped the Atharvan to propagate the religion of sacrifice in the vast area of India that then came under the sway of Āryan culture. The Atharvan could extend his religious activity from the Himalayas in the north to the Vindhya mountains in the south, from the land of the five rivers in the west to the forests and marshy land of Bengal in the east. This sacrificial religion held its sway in the villages where lived a mixed population. The village communities found this religion useful in private as well as public life. The Āryans faced then the conflict of non-Aryan culture with their own. The Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas of the Āryan stock had become by now very powerful. Therefore the priestly class or Brahmins had to struggle to gain supremacy over them. The Atharva Veda refers to the success got by the Atharvan by using magic against some haughty Kṣatriyas who were much puffed up⁵. Hence the Atharvan is very anxious to retain the old weapons, i. e., the deities, in his religious armoury and has equipped himself with additional new powers, magical and medicinal.

The priest-craft has become now most impressive in the eyes of the population. But one does not fail to notice the real nature of the Atharvan's power and religion. His transition from belief in a god or gods to self-confidence of a magician is often apparent, e.g. II, 12 is a prayer to Indra and other gods, but as it proceeds, it becomes gradually surcharged with a magical vein with a desire to crush the

5. V, 19. 1.2.

enemy; nay, the poet forgets the god's power and poses to assume supernatural power himself.

Whereas IV, 16, addressed to Varuṇa, is an instance of a sublime prayer 'degraded to serve as an introduction to an imprecation.' While criticising it, Roth remarks that "there is no other hymn in the entire Vedic literature which presents divine omniscience in terms so emphatic."⁶

This Veda contains many prayers, e. g. II, 28; III, 11 and 31; VII, 53. These are prayers for long and healthy life. VIII, 1 and 2 are for avoiding fatal dangers. In these and such other prayers we find Indra, Agni, Savitṛ, Bṛhaspati, Mitra, Varuṇa, Vāyu, the Aśvins, Bhāga, Sōma, Maruts, Mātariśvan, Ādityas, Vasus, etc. are invoked to confer blessings.

My object in noting down these things is to indicate the degree and nature of the supernatural element in the Atharva Veda; the discussion or study of the magical and medicinal elements is made only subservient to this end.

We have seen above how divine sublimity in the hymns very often dwindles into a magician's imprecations. In many hymns, it seems that fragments of some older hymns have been used to deck out charms for sorcery. Such is especially the case with cosmogonic and theosophic hymns, e. g. Hymns to Earth (XII, 1), Sun (XI, 5), Prāṇa (XI, 4), Kāma (IX, 2), Kāla (XIX, 53 and 54), the Aśvins (IX, 1) etc.

Now I note down instances that indicate the nature of the divine or miraculous power ascribed to mundane things.

6. Quoted by Bloomfield in *Hymns of the Atharva Veda*, S. B. E. Series, Vol. XLII, p. 389.

Objects of terror are apostrophised. Takman (fever) is addressed as a god in I, 25; V, 22; VI, 20; VII, 16; etc. This yellow-coloured god is prayed to spare the life of the patient. Agni begets him.⁷ He is the son of King Varuṇa (also).⁸ Powers like Agni, Sōma, the pressing-stones, Varuṇa, the sacrificial altar, the barhis and samidhs are invoked to drive him away.⁹ This deadly and ravaging disease is looked upon with awe and reverence as a god. Yakṣmā or consumption is prayed to free man from pain in the joints and cough; and bile, cough and wind are ordered to leave him and go to forests and mountains.¹⁰ Many more diseases are addressed and prayed to leave the patient, e. g. Jāyānya,¹¹ Balāsa,¹² Kaśā,¹³ the Apacits or Gaṇdamālā, etc. The Apacits are invoked to accept the oblation offered with devotion.¹⁴ They are prayed not to kill the heroes.¹⁵ The sores caused by them are invoked to fall off easily and disappear.¹⁶

Mysterious power is attributed to plants and herbs. There are amulets made of wood of trees as well as of metals. The purpose these things serve is medicinal, and all plants, herbs, amulets, ointments, etc. are supposed to be potent with power to cure diseases and they are addressed as divinities. The Atharvan is anxious to establish the relation of these mundane things with deities. The herbs have Sōma as their king¹⁷. They belong to all gods¹⁸. Plants are described as divinities¹⁹. They have in them power (sahaḥ), force (vīrya) and might (bala)²⁰.

7. I, 25. 1.

8. I, 25. 3.

9. V. 22. 1,

10. I, 12. 3

11. VII, 76. 3-5.

12. VI, 14.

13. VI, 105.

14. VI, 83 4.

15. VI. 83.2.

16. VII, 76.

17. XIV, 1.17.

18. VIII, 7.4

19. VIII, 7.3.

20. VIII, 7.5.

They are auspicious and are descended from the Āngirasas.²¹
The plants are intelligent and understand the spells
of the Atharvan.²²

I shall note here the medicinal purpose served by some
of the plants, herbs and amulets. Śara—Parjanya is its father
and Pṛthivi its mother²³. This has also Mitra, Varuṇa,
Sūrya or Chandra as its father²⁴. It is used to let out
retained urine and against constipation. Aśīknī—This is
called Rāmā, Rajanī, Kṛṣṇā also. It is used as a cure
against white leprosy²⁵. Āsurī or Śyāmā—This is a cure
against white leprosy²⁶. According to Sāyana its parents
are Bhūmi and Dyaus²⁷. Talāśā—This is the most efficacious
of all herbs²⁸. Putudru—It is the body of Angi; it cures
diseases, it cures a dying person²⁹. Sabasrakāṇḍa—This
plant is used against curses and is said to be born of gods³⁰.
Pṛṣniparnī—This is a goddess who devours demons called
Kaṇvas that prey upon the embryo of women³¹. Pātā—Indra
is said to have put this on his arm and defeated the
Asuras³². The Kuṣṭha plant helps one to win the love of
a woman³³. A plant is described as restoring lost virility.
Varuṇa used it first³⁴. This plant is the sap of waters. It
is the first born of trees and is the brother of Soma. Varuṇa or
Varuṇāvati—This plant has nectar in it and removes poison
in the body³⁵. It is described as a divine tree. Apāmārga—
This is the prince of remedies and has a thousand powers³⁶.
It was obtained by Suparna or the Divine Eagle³⁷. It

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| 21. VIII, 7. | 22. VIII, 7.7. | 23. I, 2.1. | 24. I, 3. 1-5. |
| 25. I, 23. | 26. I, 24. | 27. The Bhāṣya on I, 24.3. | |
| 28. VI, 15.1. | 29. VIII, 2.28. | 30. II, 7.1-2. | 31. II, 25. |
| 32. II, 27. | 33. II, 30. | 34. IV, | |
| 35. IV, 7. | 36. IV, 17.1. | 37. V, 14.1. | |

is blessed by Kaṇwa, a Brahmin³⁸. Its name indicates its use of warding off dangers, attacks, fears, etc. The plant conquers enemies, removes sins and repels curses³⁹. It is variously described. It ensures success even at the dice and has the power of curing diseases and repelling witchcraft. Sadampuṣpā—Its divine power enables the wearer of its amulet to see through sky and atmosphere and on earth⁴⁰. It descends from the Divine Eagle. Agni or the thousand eyed god is prayed to with the amulet of this plant in the right hand of the magician—priest. It is addressed as a god of a thousand eyes⁴¹. Ajaśṛṅgi—With the help of this plant the Atharvans, Kaśyapa, Kaṇva, and Agastya destroyed the Rakṣasas⁴². IV, 37 describes it as having pointed horns with which it drives off or destroys the Apsarasas, piśachas, etc. It drives away the demons even with its smell. Kuṣṭha—This is the child of Jīvantī and Jivalā⁴³. XIX, 39 describes it as a protecting god. It was begotten by Śambhu Angiras, Ādityas and all gods. The hymn V, 4 also describes it as born of gods and having divine power to cure diseases. Lākṣā—This plant is the sister of gods⁴⁴. It cures wounds. Arundhatī—This gives life. It protects cows from the missiles of Rudra⁴⁵. Nitatnī—This plant is a goddess, born on the divine Earth⁴⁶. This all-healing herb helps hair to grow on the head. VI, 137 describes another plant of similar efficacy.

Various amulets are described to have magical and medicinal efficacy. The Parna amulet⁴⁷ has the vigour of gods and is dear to them. Indra gives it and Varuṇa controls it. It helps the wearer of it to gain wealth, domain and

38. IV, 19.2.

39. IV, 17.2.

40. IV, 20,

41. IV, 20.5.

42. IV, 37.1.

43. XIX, 39.3.

44. V, 5.

45. VI, 59.

46. VI, 136.

47. III, 5.

sovereignty. It gives long life. The amulet is addressed to give the priest power over all classes of people below him—kings, ministers, chariot-makers, smiths, and the leaders of the village. The Sraktya amulet is described in II, 11 as Kṛtyā to counteract another witchcraft. With this Indra killed Vṛtra and defeated the Asuras. Besides Indra, Agni, Sōma, Bṛhaspati and Savitṛ are associated with it⁴⁸. VIII, 5. 21 tells that Indra deposits manliness in this amulet and gods enter it to enable the wearer of it to live a life of a hundred autumns. The amulet is divine and has miraculous efficacy. To Darbha and its amulet are attributed great powers⁴⁹. Aśvattha is said to have the power to drive enemies with the help of Indra, Mitra and Varuṇa⁵⁰. Varuṇa—This amulet of the Varuṇa tree enabled gods to ward off the attacks of the Asuras⁵¹. X, 3. 3 says the amulet has a thousand eyes and is a panacea of golden colour. Fāla—This amulet is born of gods⁵². Gods, fathers and men dwell on it. Agni, Sōma and Sūrya wear it. It was created by Prajāpati. This was worn by the Āngirasas who devastated the cities of the Asuras. Gods are associated with this amulet in an imposing way. An Amulet of Gold—one Śatānīka is said to have obtained a long life of a hundred years by means of an amulet of gold⁵³. It is described as the first born force of gods and no demon or piśācha can overcome it. The Triplet Amulet of gold, silver and copper⁵⁴—He who wears it gets wealth from Ādityas, prosperity from Agni and heroism from Indra⁵⁵. The Amulet of Shell or Śaṅkha⁵⁶ protects one from the

48. VIII, 5.

49. XIX, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33.

50. III, 6. 1, 2.

51. X, 2.

52. X, 6. 31.

53. I, 35. 1.

54. V, 28; XIX, 27.

55. V, 28. 1.

56. IV, 10.

missiles of gods and Asuras. The Amulet of Lead is associated with three gods; Varuṇa blesses it, Agni favours it and Indra bestows it. It is used against demons and evil spirits.

The Atharva Veda tells how men were in constant fear of serpents that bit men and injected deadly poison in the body. Serpents are praised by the Atharvan. He looked upon them with awe and almost deified them. Serpents such as Asita, Tirascirājī, Babhru, Svaja and Devajanas (or gods among serpents) are given a special meed of praise.

I have given above a cursory account of the plants, herbs, amulets, etc. with the intention of showing how the Atharvan is anxious to associate the deified objects with gods. He attributes divine or mysterious or magical power to the objects, and while using them he does not fail to announce that there is divine sanction behind his powerful spells. He uses his spells to ensure success in the various spheres of the life around him. He has charms to gain or rouse love, to bring about marriage, to prevent miscarriage, to secure easy parturition, to deprive one of virility, to secure harmony in a family, to win influence in an assembly, to bring success, wealth and glory to a king, to secure safety from dangers, defilement, and diseases of various kinds, etc., etc. But in all this priestly activity one seldom fails to notice that there is an obvious lack of the ancient spiritual glory that the Ṛgvedic priest could obtain through his prayers to gods. The Atharvan's achievements are neither purely divine nor fully miraculous, because the power that brings them about is a mixture of the miraculous and the magical.

Lastly, I quote a short but superb prayer which tradition has put to magical use with a view to cure a person

suffering from leprosy⁵⁷. Bloomfield's excellent translation of the hymn is as follows :—

AV., VII, 83.

1. "The golden chamber, King Varuṇa, is built on waters ! Thence the King that maintains the laws shall loosen all the shackles !

2. "From every habitation (of thine), O King Varuṇa, from where do thou free us ! In that we have said, 'Ye Waters, Ye Cows;' in that we have said, 'O Varuṇa, from this (sin), O Varuṇa, free us !'

3. "Lift from us, O Varuṇa, the uppermost fetter, take down the nethermost, loosen the middlemost ! Then shall we, O Āditya, in thy law, exempt from guilt, live in freedom !

4. "Looseu from us, O Varuṇa, all fetters, the uppermost, the nethermost, and those imposed by Varuṇa ! Evil dreams and misfortune drive away from us; then may we go to the world of the pious !"⁵⁸

One fails to find any reference made to the deadly disease in the body of this hymn. What a tragedy that such hymns should degenerate and become medicinal charms !

Thus I have shown in passing how the supernatural in the Ṛgveda ceased to predominate the Atharva Veda, and how hymnology became the handmaid of the medicine-man-cum-priest's craft which is so akin to magic.

57. Kauś, Gr. Sū., 127.4.

58. Hymns of the Atharva Veda, S. B. E. Series, XLII, p. 12.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ŚATAPATHA BRĀHMAṆA

Now I pass on to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa which is far the best representative of sacrificial literature of the Brahmanic sacerdotal order. The Brāhmaṇas, no doubt, belong to a period of Indian history, when the priestly class has become conscious of its social position and vies with the ruling class to secure power and prestige, which their ancestors could enjoy in the good old days of the Ṛgveda; and the priest has succeeded in creating a highly artificial and laborious system of sacrificial ceremonies, and with it he wins his desired object.

The Ṛgvedic hymns mark a confirmed belief in the full efficacy of offerings and prayers. This devout nature of the Ṛgvedic religion prevailed among those who used the Veda and the society respected the priests; nay, it looked upon them as their spiritual guides and guardians.

Eggeling has well pointed out the priest's position in the society. He says, "His superior culture and habitual communion with the divine rulers of the destinies of man would naturally entitle him to a place of honour by the side of the chiefs of clans, or the rulers of kingdoms, who would not fail to avail themselves of his spiritual services, in order to secure the favour of the gods for their war-like expeditions or political undertakings. Nor did the Vedic bard fail to urge his claims on the considerations and generosity of those in the enjoyment of power and wealth. He often dwells on the supernatural virtues of his

compositions and their mysterious efficacy in drawing down divine blessings on the pious worshippers”¹.

The memories of this high social status had passed from one generation of priests to another, and priests of later generations posed to inherit the same spritual power, and expected the same honour and confidence from the other classes of the society, especially from the ruling class.

The Ṛgvedic priest believed in the efficacy of prayer, and he tried, and often succeeded in his effort, to influence the divine powers to come to his help when he was in danger or to fulfil his desires. With rare exceptions, we hardly find there a priest assuming supernatural power himself; he prayed to the gods and they answered his prayers. But in this Brāhmaṇa we notice a strange state of affairs. Here even the gods depend for help on the priestly prayers. The priest has made a tool of the prayer, and with it he pretends to effect results ultramundane and mundane, all and sundry. If he wants rain to fall, he says his prayers and offers oblations, and then it rains! No divinity is required to cause rain here whereas the Ṛgvedic priest depended on his gods. For example I, 5, 3.11* states :

“ He then pronounces the offering prayer to the Ids. The Ids (prayers), doubtless, are the rains; they are the rains, inasmuch as the vile, crawling (vermin) which shrink during the summer and winter, then (in the rainy season) move about in quest of food, as it were praising (id) the rains. Therefore the Ids are the rains. The gods, at that time, appropriated the rains, and deprived their rivals of their

1. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, S.B.E. Series, Vol. XII, Introduction, p. xi.

* Such numbers in this chapter indicate passages in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa.

rains; and now this one also appropriates the rains, and deprives his rivals of the rains : This is the reason why he pronounces the offering prayer to the Ids. ”²

Similarly I, 8, 3. 12 says : “ Should he desire rain let him take up (the prastara), with this text (Vaj. S. II, 16 d), ‘ Be ye in harmony with each other, O Heaven and Earth ! ’ for when Heaven and Earth are in harmony with each other, then indeed it rains; for this reason he says, ‘ Be in harmony with each other, O Heaven and Earth ! ’ ... ” In this very place the priest further says, “ May Mitra and Varuṇa favour thee with rain ! ” But the power to rain is ascribed not so much to the gods but to the Ids or prayers.

This Brāhmaṇa, like other Brāhmaṇas, has the semblance of mysterious power of the Ṛgveda and is throughout surcharged with notions which border on the magical.

Mysterious powers, supernatural or magical, are ascribed to almost everything that the sacrificial rites consist of; the mantras, the metres in which they are composed, the utensils like spoons, pressing stones, water, fire, oblations are all endowed with some or other mysterious power which is certainly not the Ṛgvedic supernatural or miraculous power.

We find in this Brāhmaṇa that prayer is all powerful. Prayers in different metres have different degrees of efficacy. In IX, 2, 3.5 we read : “ As to that Indra, he is that Apratiratha (irresistible hymn); and as to that Bṛhaspati, he is the Brahman (priest). Thus, when the Brahman mutters the Apratiratha (hymn), he (the Sacrificer), having the

2. Here and elsewhere in this chapter Eggeling’s translation is given.

Asuras, the mischievous fiends, chased away in the south, by Indra and Bṛhaspati, performs this sacrifice in the place free from danger and devilry. This is why the Brahman utters the Apratiratha”.

The above is an instance of a prayer beneficial to oneself, but prayers could be used for one's enemy even. “Thus”, read IX, 5, 2.3, “when he reverently stands by (the altar) with this (hymn), everything is thereby made good for him that, knowing or unknowing, he either does in excess or does not carry to the end, in this building of the altar—in short, whatever was not secured for him. And whatever wish there is in that anuṣṭubh verse, that he secures even now; and moreover, he thereby keeps the fiends, the Rākṣasas, from his sacred work, and they do not wreck him, whilst uttering imprecations. Wherefore one who knows this may readily build a fire-altar even for an enemy, for he is able to gain the better of him.”

So great is the pretension of the priest. He asserts that he derives supernatural power from his prayer. He gives curious reasons about the special names of prayers.

XII, 8, 3.26 notes such names as follows :

“And as to why (these hymns) are called ‘bracers’ (saṃśāna = sharpeners or sharpenings), it is because by means of these sāmans the gods braced Indra up to energy, or vital power; in like manner do the officiating priests, by means of these sāmans, brace the sacrificer up to energy or vital power. ‘Saṃśravase, viśravase, satyaśravase, śravase—’ these are the sāmans; they protect him in these worlds. There are four finales, for there are four quarters: they thus establish him in all the quarters. All (the priests) join in

the finale: with one mind they thus bestow excellence upon him.”

Thus we find how the prayer is supposed to be a potent power and how it is utilised to gain power for oneself or others.

To the recitation of verses of prayers are ascribed miraculous results, effected not by gods but by man. We find in I, 3, 5.7:

“Fifteen Sāmidhenī verses result (from this repetition of the first and last of the eleven verses). The fifteen-versed chant, doubtless, is the thunderbolt, and the thunderbolt means strength; so that he thereby converts the sāmīdhenīs into strength; hence if we shall hate any one, he may crush him with his great toes at the time when these (verses) are recited. By saying, ‘I here crush so and so!’ he crushed him with that thundrbolt”.

Much virtue is bestowed upon the method of recitation. Repetition conduces to mysterious power with which the mantra is thereby invested. I, 3, 5.16 assures us in this matter as follows:

“He recities them in a continuous, uncorrupted way: thereby he makes the days and nights of the year continuous, and in a continuous, uninterrupted way revolve these days and nights of the year. And in this way he gives no access to the spiteful enemy; but access he would indeed give, if he were to recite them discontinuously: he therefore recites in a continuous, uninterrupted way.”

Here is the tallest talk of priestly power of prayer:

“With ‘O śrāvaya!’ the gods send forth the east wind, with “Astu śrausaṭ!” they caused the clouds to flow together; with ‘Yaja’ (they) sent forth the lightning; with ‘ye

yajāmahe (we who pray)’, the thunder; with vaṣat-call they caused it to rain”.³

Like prayers or whole hymns, single syllables or words are said to have some great mysterious power e. g. Ka, Vaṣat, Hin, Hin and Ōm, Iha and Bṛhat.

Ka—I, 1, 1.13 describes: “ He brings it forward with those mysterious words (Vāg. S. I. 1.6); ‘who (or Prajāpati) joins (or yokes) thee (to the fire)? He joins thee. For what (or, for Prajāpati) does he join thee? For that (or him) he joins thee!’ For Prajāpati is undefined (mysterious)—”. *Ka* has an ambiguous meaning, hence a great mystery surrounds the word.

Vaṣat is referred to above in the case of rain. This is a powerful word. I, 6, 3.28 states:

“ By means of that low-voiced offering the gods stealing near slew, with that thunderbolt, the Vaṣat-call, whichever they wished of the Asuras; and so does this one, by stealing near by means of that low-voiced offering, slay with that thunderbolt, the Vaṣat-call, the wicked, spiteful enemy. This is why he performs the low-voiced offering.”

Here the priest relies for the destruction of his enemies on his own power derived from the method of reciting the mantras whereas the Ṛgvedic priest sang his prayers and invoked a god or gods to help him in this respect. The Atharvan has his charms, bracelets and amulets to crush his enemy and the priest in this Brāhmaṇa presumes to derive mysterious power from his method of recitation of mantras.

3. I, 5, 2.18.

Hii—II, 2, 4.11 and 12 ascribe mysterious power to this syllable thus—“They then said, ‘We come after our father Prajāpati! Let us then create what shall come after us!’ Having enclosed (a piece of ground), they sang praises with the Gāyatrī stanza without the ‘Hiñ’, and that (with) which they enclosed was the ocean; and this earth was the praising ground (astava).”

“When they had sung praises they went out towards the east, saying, ‘we (will) go back thither!’ The gods came upon a cow which had sprung into existence. Looking at them, she uttered the sound ‘Hiñ. The gods perceived that this was the ‘Hiñ’ of the sāman (melodious sacrificial chant); for therefore (their song was) without the ‘Hiñ’, but after that it was the ‘real’ sāman. And as this same sound ‘Hiñ’ of the sāman was in the cow, therefore the latter affords the means of subsistence, and so does he afford the means of subsistence whosoever thus knows that ‘Hiñ’ of the sāman in the cow.”

“*Hii and Ōm*—I, 4, 1.1 speaks of these two together—

“He recites after uttering (the syllable) ‘Hiñ!’ Sacrifice, they say, is not (performed) without the sāman; and neither is the sāman chanted without ‘Hiñ’ having been uttered. By his uttering ‘Hiñ!’ the peculiar nature (rūpam) of the word ‘Hiñ’ is produced (in the sacrifice); and by the sacred syllable (Ōm) it assumes the nature of the sāman. By uttering ‘Ōm! Ōm!’ this his entire sacrifice becomes endowed with sāman.”

Iha and Br̥hat—IV, 3, 3.1 says, “He presses out (the sōma juice) with ‘Iha! Iha!’ (hither) whereby he draws Indra nigh; and with ‘Br̥hat! Br̥hat!’ (great) whereby he draws Indra nigh.”

Similarly metres are endowed with great mysterious power. XII, 2, 3.1 notes this as follows :—

“ ... for the Bṛhatī consists of thirty-six syllables, and by means of the Bṛhatī the gods strove to reach heaven, and by the Bṛhatī they did gain heaven; and in like manner does this one, by means of the Bṛhatī, now strive to reach heaven, and thereby gain heaven; he who knows this secures for himself whatever wish there is in the Bṛhatī.”

Similarly almost all other metres are highly lauded for possessing so effective a power in themselves. This power helps the gods even! The Triṣṭubh, Anuṣṭubh, Jagatī etc. are extolled thus—

“ They (the invitatory and offering formulas) are both triṣṭubh verses; for the sviṣṭakṛt is, as it were, the residue (or site, vastu) of the sacrifice, and the residue (or, a vacant site) is without energy. Now the triṣṭubh means manly power, energy; hence he thereby imparts manly power, energy to the residue, the sviṣṭakṛt. This is why they are both triṣṭubh verses ”⁴.

Now the Anuṣṭubh: “ Or they are both anuṣṭubh verses. The anuṣṭubh is residue (or site, vastu), and the sviṣṭakṛt also is residue. And, verily, one who knows this, and whose (invitatory and offering formulas) are two anuṣṭubh verses, his homestead (vastu) is prosperous, and he himself prospers in regard to progeny and cattle ”⁵

Metres in general are described in I, 8, 2.8 and they are said to convey the sacrifice to the gods. The Gāyatrī, the smallest metre, is described in I, 8, 2.10 thus :

4. I, 73.17, 5. I, 7, 3.18.

“In the first place he makes offerings to the Barhis (sacrificial grass-covering). Though the smallest metre, the gāyatrī is yoked first of the metres; and this on account of its strength, since, having become a falcon, it carried off the sōma from heaven. They consider it unseemly, however, that the gāyatrī, being the smallest metre, should be yoked first of the metres; and the gods accordingly arranged the metres here, as the after offerings, so as it ought to be ‘lest there should be a confusion’.”

I, 9, 3.12 relates how some metres helped Viṣṇu to take the three steps: “And in this way also (he may stride): ‘In the sky Viṣṇu strode by means of the jagatī metre; excluded therefore is he who hates us and whom we hate!’ In the air Viṣṇu strode by means of the triṣṭubh metre; excluded therefore is he who hates us and whom we hate!’ On the earth Viṣṇu strode by means of the gāyatrī metre: excluded therefore is he who hates us and whom we hate!’ with the texts (Vāg. S. II, 25 d, e).....”

Water and fire are said to be able to drive away evil spirits. This habit of ascribing power to things sacrificial is carried on almost ad nauseam. The wooden sword ‘sphyā’ is thunderbolt and is likened to Indra’s right arm.⁶ The sacrificial spoons are used to burn the Rākṣasas!⁷

The mysterious power reaches its climax in the building of the fire-altar, the whole lay-out of the construction and the brick-structure of which is soaked, as it were, in the Agni-Prajāpati mystery. The altar is a great symbol of mysterious power.

6. I, 2, 4.3,

7. I, 3, 1.4.

The shape of the fire-altar is that of a big bird, probably that of an eagle or a falcon which faces the east, the gate of heaven. Prajāpati is represented in this form, but not so always. Because Prajāpati is often described to have human features as in the Puruṣa-Sūkta.

Here in the Brāhmaṇa the all-powerful sacrificer or sacrifice is identified with Prajāpati. This leads to the identification of Prajāpati with the All-Powerful, Supreme Spirit. Prajāpati is sacrifice itself. Prajāpati sacrifices his own body limb by limb. Eggeling remarks about this in the following words: "By offering his own self in sacrifice Prajāpati becomes dismembered; and all these separated limbs and faculties of his come to form the universe — all that exists, from the gods and Asuras (the children of Father Prajāpati) down to the worm, the blade of grass, and the smallest particle of inert matter."⁸ Hence the necessity of the continuous performance of sacrifice to restore the dismembered body of Prajāpati again and again and renew the universe. This is an effort to maintain the uninterrupted cycle of creation and destruction going on in the universe.

Without going further into the details of the Agni-Prajāpati mystery as it is not my intention here, I quote once more Eggeling's words to sum up the point:

"As the practical application of the Agni-Prajāpati mystery to the sacrificial ritual consists mainly in the creation of the Fire-altar and the ceremonies connected with the fire-pan, which fell almost entirely within

8. Satapatha Brāhmaṇa: English Translation by Eggeting, S. B. E. Series, Vol. XLIII, Introduction, p. xvii.

the province of the Adhvaryu priest, it is naturally in his text books, in the Yajurveda, that the mystic theory has become fully elaborated, yet, though the two other classes of priests, the Hōtr̥s and Udgātr̥s, take, upon the whole, a comparatively subsidiary part in the year's performance symbolising the reconstruction of the Lord of Creatures, they have found another solemn opportunity, subsequently to the completion of the Fire-altar, for making up for any short-comings in this respect, viz., the Mahāvratā or Great Rite."⁹

There is thus in this Brāhmaṇa a queer mixture of the pseudo-supernatural, the mysterious and the magical. The supernatural and the miraculous of the Ṛgveda are here on a rapid decline, and finally disappear in the mist of magical notions and practices in the Gṛhyasūtras and such other works.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. xxiv-xxv.

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