

THE FLAME DIVINE

Jeanine Miller
M.Litt.

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*"Fire and Flame destroy the body of an Arhat,
their essence makes him immortal."*

Bodhimur Book II

THE FLAME DIVINE

"Before the soul can stand in the presence of the Masters, its feet must be washed in the blood of the heart."

(Light on the Path)

Introduction

This washing of the feet is the subtle work of the fire in us, of the burning away of all that dross which clutters up our vehicles; the work of Agni the Creator, the Preserver, the Destroyer; Agni the mysterious flame worshipped throughout Antiquity as the very expression of Deity, the mighty force at work within all things, the very life-blood of the cosmos, of which Fohat, in *The Secret Doctrine*, by H. P. Blavatsky (hereafter S.D. and H.P.B. See abbreviations p.25), is the alpha and the omega.

Why has fire, and fire alone out of the elements, been chosen as the best capable of representing the dynamic aspect of Deity by all the Ancients, at whatever epoch and to whatever race or creed they belonged? It was even equated with Deity. Thus in Deuteronomy "the Lord is a consuming fire"; thus the Parsis' sacred fire which Zoroaster is said to have brought down from heaven by the sheer power of his invocation; thus the chariot of fire and the horses of fire that took up Elijah into heaven; thus the "glory of the Lord" that appeared like a devouring fire on the top of Mount Sinai where Moses received the tablets of the law; thus the "cloven tongues as of fire" that descended upon each of the apostles as they sat in prayer and were filled each and all with the Holy Spirit; and thus above and beyond all these various expressions of a unique, divine visitation, the Flame Divine, AGNI of the VEDAS, the High-Priest of the Cosmic Order, the messenger of heaven and earth, of gods and men, the "All-knower" that "raises mortal man to highest immortality", head of heaven, earth's very centre. All these amply show that there is behind this particular identification of fire with Deity's essence, a deep spiritual truth, a great inner experience of the fire and a profound knowledge of divine action traceable to the very dawn of our human race.

The ancient Aryan knowledge of the inner meaning of the fire can be glimpsed through the symbolic and veiled presentation of Agni the Fire in the *Rig Veda*, a collection of hymns which is the occult Vedic counterpart of the Stanzas of Dzyan, which H.P.B. describes as "the very source of historical information", as "the oldest of all the known ancient records", whose "hymns which are the records written by the earliest Initiates of the Fifth (our) Race concerning the primordial teachings" may be "shown to corroborate the occult teachings in almost every respect" (S.D. IV p. 176, 177). The *Vedas* occasionally throw some light on obscure statements in *The Secret Doctrine*, but mostly The S.D. illuminates the enigmatic verses of the *Vedas*.

AGNI is dynamic life; that dynamic life that throws off form after form

but to build form after form; flame of creation that builds up the cosmos— that force that whirls the electrons, atoms, molecules and in this whirling moulds the substances and shapes the forms life assumes in its eternal activities; flame of destruction that shatters all worn out forms, that ruthless power that destroys, not life, but its habitations, that new more perfected ones may find expression; flame of purification, the sacrificial priest, high-priest of the sacrifice indeed, "immortal guest" in "mortal houses" who burns up man's fuel and drives man on to the pinnacle of perfection; flame of love, the foundation of the world, love the first "seed of consciousness" without which nothing could be! This is AGNI, the "friend" and "knower" of all births, common to all men, whom "men seek as a father with their prayers", who sits "in the cave of the heart where they find him through the power of their invocations". Many-sided power, benevolent and dangerous, creative and destructive, mysterious in his workings, far-reaching in his activities, sublime in his lofty sweeps, exalting in his uplifting, such is the most concrete and most abstract of Vedic deities, the divine Will made manifest throughout the cosmos, and through man the microcosm.

The *Rig Veda* is perhaps the only one among the world scriptures that clearly ascribes the primordial act of creation to the all-blazing contemplation of the Supreme. The word for this is *tapas* from the root *tap* to burn. The transition from the Absolute beyond being and non-being, to the Manifested Deity, described in the hymn of creation as the Overseer, occurs through the inherent creative drive of *tapas*, the inner incandescence that blazed forth from the heart of the Eternal in one mighty contemplation projecting the universe. Through *tapas* the Unmanifest becomes manifest: "Darkness there was; at first, hidden in darkness this all was undifferentiated depth. Enwrapped in voidness, that One emerged which Flame-power kindled to existence." (Rgv. X, 129.3). Ontologically, the flame-power aroused as a result of the divine contemplation represents the cosmic energy, Fohat of *The Secret Doctrine*, which propels and differentiates all things, from the beginning to the end of the cycle. This we find fully explained in *The Secret Doctrine*,¹ Psychologically, *tapas*² refers to a specific kind of inner, spiritual exertion, an intense focussing which takes place in deep meditation, a contraction to an innermost point of contemplation, and a subsequent expansion whereby the creative flame is aroused at the highest possible level of awareness, the only physiological effect of which is heat.

The Rigvedic poets in the creation hymns are using the analogy of yogic meditation to describe the divine creative act. This contraction-expansion arouses the supreme energy locked within the One personified in the Vedas in AGNI, called in *The Secret Doctrine* FOHAT. Not content with the word *tapas* which already means burning contemplation, the poet of one creation hymn qualifies the word with the participial adjective of the verb to "inflamm" so that we have the superb picture of the divine contemplation blazing to incandescent manifestation: "Universal order and truth were born of blazing *tapas*, " (Rgv. X. 190.1)

PART I

The Esoteric Tradition

Our first endeavour will be to try to understand the significance and origin of fire according to the esoteric tradition. Occultists and scientists have attempted to define fire. H.P.B., with her tongue in her cheek as often happens, gives the scientific explanation thus:

It is the effect of combustion, we are gravely answered. It is heat and light and motion, and a correlation of physical and chemical forces in general. And this scientific definition is philosophically supplemented by a theological one in Webster's dictionary, which explains fire as 'the instrument of punishment, or the punishment of the impenitent in another state' — the 'state' by the bye, being supposed to be spiritual ... (S.D. I p.179-80)

The Esoteric teachings, however, according to her, declare: "Fire is the most perfect and unadulterated reflection, in Heaven and on Earth, of the ONE FLAME. It is Life and Death, the origin and the end of every material thing. It is divine 'Substance'." (S.D. I p.180)

"The essence of fire is the life and light of the universe". (S.D. I p.73)

That One Flame at which all other fires have subsequently been ignited will ever remain a mystery to us until we can penetrate the enigma of the sacred Word in its threefold unfoldment and know the full meaning of the second letter where lies hid the secret of the Flame. We are told in *The Secret Doctrine* that "The Spirit beyond Manifested Nature is the Fiery Breath in its absolute Unity. In the Manifested Universe, it is the Central Spiritual Sun, the electric Fire of all Life. In our System it is the visible Sun, the Spirit of Nature, the terrestrial God. And in, on, and around the Earth, the fiery spirit thereof - Air, fluidic Fire; Water, liquid Fire; Earth, solid Fire. All is Fire -Ignis, in its ultimate constitution, or I, the root of which is 0 (nought) ..." (S.D.IIIp.122)

This "fiery breath" we are further told, is the *radiation* of the "Primordial Seven", those Highest Lords of Contemplation which *The Secret Doctrine* describes as the "first seven breaths of the Dragon of Wisdom" (I p.166)³ that manifested from the threefold Logos at the very dawn of the manvantara. A genealogical descent indeed! These "produce from their holy circum-gyrating breaths the fiery whirlwind" (p.166). They make of him the messenger of their will. This is FOHAT, the divine Energy, "the swift son of the divine Sons" the potential Creative Power issued from the Primordial Wisdom which becomes the propelling, active force causing the ONE to become the two and the three and so on. This is AGNI of the Vedas, also called APAM NAPAT, "Son of the Waters" both in the *Rig Veda* and in the *Avesta*, the swiftly speeding son of the waters of space: "Apam Napat, O Spitama Zarathustra, divides the waters amongst the countries in the material world in company with the mighty wind, the Glory seated in the Waters . . ." {*Zend Avesta*. Tir Yast. 6.34. S.B.E. Vol. 23, p.102)

In the *Vedas* Agni is born of the waters, i.e., of the original all pervasive substance out of which the universe is moulded, later to be called *Akasha* which H.P.B. explains as the noumenon of ether (S.D.II p. 258), which in its purest form is fire (S.D. I p.151).⁴

The Secret Doctrine further states that Fohat becomes in the manifested cosmos: "that occult electric vital power which, under the Will of the Creative Logos, unites and brings together all forms, giving them the first impulse which in time becomes law." (S.D. I p.169); hence FOHAT is "the transcendental binding unity of all cosmic energies . . . the action of which resembles — on an immense scale — that of a living Force created by WILL in those phenomena where the seemingly subjective acts on the seemingly objective and propels it to action ... In his secondary aspect, Fohat is the Solar Energy, the electric vital fluid and the preserving Fourth Principle, the animal soul of Nature, so to say, or Electricity." (S.D. I p.171)

In this far reaching definition we should observe three specific manifestations of the Fire, and one peculiar characteristic: the WILL-TO-BE which is inherent to creation and every creature, a will which attracts, coheres, sustains, hence LOVE which brings together in harmony and holds all as a whole, which is the cause of LAW, i.e. the Cosmic Order; hence *Will, love, law, or will, wisdom, activity*, the first three Rays. The world order is the mirror of the harmony that exists between the essence of being and its outer expression; thus a thing will grow only in accordance with what is in its seed; the acorn can produce but an oak tree, the human embryo can develop but into a human being; all natural activities are effects of an inner harmony which is the touchstone of the Supreme Order. So the Rig Veda says: "Firmly fixed are the foundations of the Cosmic Order, shining in beauty, manifold are its beauteous forms". (Rgv. IV 23.9)

WILL, LOVE, LAW, are the three manifestations of that ultimate Creative-destructive "FIERY BREATH" — three in One, issued of the Primordial Wisdom (DZYU).⁵

H.P.B. explicitly refers to FOHAT "in his capacity of divine LOVE (Eros), the electric power of affinity and sympathy" (S.D. I p. 178) which power brings the Ray of the Absolute, or spirit, into union with the soul, thus constituting the monad in man.⁶

The peculiar characteristic of Fohat, noticed by H.P.B., is that he seems to exercise the powers and functions of a personal god and like a human being has seven principles.⁷

He is One and Seven, and on the Cosmic plane is behind all such manifestations as light, heat, sound, adhesion, etc., and is the 'spirit' of ELECTRICITY, which is the LIFE of the Universe. As an abstraction, we will call it the One Life; as an objective and evident Reality, we speak of a septenary scale of manifestation, which begins at the upper rung with the One Unknowable CAUSALITY, and ends as Omnipresent Mind and Life, immanent in every atom of matter. (S.D. I p.195-6)

We observe that the great Cosmic Powers, in the *Vedas* as indeed in all the ancient scriptures, are portrayed as both personal and impersonal. Power always has an element of intelligence which, in human thinking, endows it with a certain amount of personality. Thus the great Devas are both personal and impersonal, thus even the Cosmic Order, which to us is highly abstract and impersonal, is addressed as though an entity. Thus Agni, the Flame divine, is father, and friend and guest in houses. Yet, says *The Secret Doctrine* of Fohat "He is no personal God at all, but the emanation of those other powers behind him whom the Christians call the messengers of their God . . . and we the 'Messenger of the primordial Sons of Life and Light'." (S.D. I p.196)

To understand Fohat, as Sri Krishna Prem wisely says, "we should as usual seek first within ourselves till we find that power which brings forth, holds in being, and again withdraws, the multiform contents of our psyches. Only then shall we be able to understand the real nature of that Brahma-power which moulds the universe, and of which the Stanzas say that Fohat is the steed and thought the rider". (*Man the Measure of All Things*, 1966, p.287)

But what is Spiritual Fire? H.P.B. answers only by analogy, by giving its correspondence in alchemy, namely *hydrogen*, which is not water, though it generates it; not fire, though it manifests it; nor air, though air "may be regarded as a product of the union of water and fire": "that which hydrogen is to the elements and gases on the objective plane, its Noumenon is in the world of mental or subjective phenomena". (S.D. III p. 120)

Spiritual fire is the Atmic breath. This accounts for the fact that ultimately everything has to be burned up for only the pure can stand the pure, hence the Vedic notion that man is Agni's fuel!

H.P.B. differentiates between fire in its ultimate unmanifest origin and fire in the manifested cosmos: ". . . there are two 'Fires', and a distinction is made between them in the Occult teachings. The first, or the purely formless and invisible Fire, concealed in the Central spiritual Sun, is spoken of as triple (metaphysically); while the Fire of the Manifested Cosmos is septenary, throughout both the Universe and our Solar system". (S.D. I p.151)

The Flame divine is thus dual, triple, sevenfold, according to whether we view it from one standpoint or another. Obviously the subject is complex in the extreme and can only be summarized here. Everything is reflected and unfolded from the highest plane of cosmos to the lowest. So our earth and man are the product of three aspects of fire: electric Fire, solar Fire, and Fire produced by friction (S.D. III p.249-50)

- (1) *At the macrocosmic level: the fire of matter or fire by friction* manifests as the electric charge at the core of the atom, this being either constructive or destructive according to the use made of it. This fire represents the energy of the Third aspect of the Logos (Brahma) the Ray of activity, embodying the basic vibration of our solar system. It is the cause of rotary motion⁸ and, analogically, of the basic circular pattern underlying all forms.

- (2) *Solar Fire*, or the fire of universal mind or Mahat, Cosmic Intelligence, the basis of consciousness, is the very substance of the devas. They are universal consciousness in activity. This is symbolized in the Vedas by the Sun, Surya-Savitar, the great light and life-giver, the illuminator, the Law-maintainer. It represents the law of attraction and repulsion and constitutes the second aspect of the Logos, Love-wisdom (Vishnu) and the Second Ray. It relates life to form, spirit to matter. Both in the *Vedas* and the *Avesta*, both in the Egyptian and the Babylonian and Japanese tradition, man is descended from the Sun. He is the child of Cosmic intelligence, of the union of Heaven and Earth, Spirit and Matter, Fire and Water.
- (3) The *Supreme Fire*, the Logoic Flame divine, the Cosmic Ray of WILL (Shiva) which is the destroyer but to regenerate, hence the Purifier; it is symbolized in the Vedas by the *Lightning* which flashes forth through the darkness, which sunders the unconsciousness and makes it fruitful, illumines, destroys, releases and creates. This, as The S.D. states, is the First Logos, or *Vajradhara*, the thunderbolt-holder. (S.D. II p.295) This doctrine must have been known to all those initiated into the Greater Mysteries. We find Heraclitus making the cryptic statement: "The thunderbolt steers all things;" and also: "This Cosmic order which is the same for all, was not made by any of the gods or of mankind, but was ever and is and shall be, ever-living fire, kindled in measure and quenched in measure".

At the *microcosmic level*, we find the corresponding threefold division, the same unique manifestation at three different levels of differentiation:

- (1) At the physical, we have several manifestations of fire: the internal vitalizing fire, manifesting as latent heat, the basis of life, as active heat or prana, the energy that animates the whole being, and as *kundalini*, the serpent fire, dormant in average humanity, but which, when aroused, burns the confining etheric sheath, permeates the various psychic centres and makes of man a seer, a wise one, an illumined sage. It also relates, "to the creative spark, or germ, which fructifies and generates the human being". (S.D. III p.250)
- (2) At the emotional-mental or *kama-manasic* level, we also have several manifestations of fire: the fire of inspiration, enthusiasm, exaltation that drives man to great achievement; and its lower aspect, passion, that drives man to the lowest dregs of mankind. "Give a man an idea", said G.B. Shaw "and he will set the world ablaze". The Christian and Islamic surges over the world are two outstanding historical examples of its religious manifestation.

But why the analogy of the *kama-manasic* level with the sun? It is said that the impact of the spiritual or cosmic electric Fire upon the fire of matter gave that original spark that produced the light of consciousness, the solar blaze, *Mahat*, the Universal Soul; and thus, at the human level, *manas*, which manifests at individualization.

Manas in the human being, is a sun unto all the lower vehicles. And *manas* here means not only the conscious, thinking principle, but also the feeling, aspiring aspect of it. On this our physical plane it is the illuminating principle. Without *manas* man is an idiot.

- (3) Thirdly we have atomic or pure spiritual fire, the Monadic Flame divine which brings about the eventual destruction of the form; of which flame only the mystic has an inkling, of which H.P.B. says: "The Atman alone warms the inner man" (S.D. III p.119) "Water could regenerate the body of matter; fire alone that of the inner Spiritual man". (S.D. IV p.137) When these three essential fires or aspects of the One Fire blend completely to become but one Flame here on earth, then has the human being accomplished his pilgrimage on earth and passed through the gates of the 5th Initiation to liberation from the thrall of matter.

We have thus a gradually forming picture of the fire, life-sap of all things, hidden in the "waters" as the *Vedas* sing, hidden in the rock, in the trees, in the plants, in animals and humans; this fire can only be brought to manifestation through friction; this, at the human level, means conflict, strife, the interaction of opposites; of male and female, matter and spirit, of light and darkness, of conscious and unconscious, of Heaven and Earth; through the eternal law of becoming which underlies the core of conflict, of constant adjustment, movement, unfoldment, transformation, is hidden the perpetual sacrifice of the divine life, transcendent and immanent, perpetually immolating itself, becoming other than itself in the myriad faceted mirror of Itself, which is the universe, that the universe, in its infinite variety, may be.

PART II

The Vedic Tradition

In the Vedas, the Fire manifesting at three different levels is the threefold AGNI,⁹ the Lord of beings with seven sons, the ruler of the fire elementals and devas. This flame power that is said to "quicken the waters' seed" (Rgv. VIII 44.16) unites the macrocosm and the microcosm, nature and nature's child, man, in their essential being.

I am light threefold, measurer of the region (Rgv. III 26.1)

Thou, Agni, through the days brightly shining, thou sovereign Lord of men, art born pure; born of the waters, and of the stone, and of the forest trees and of the herbs (Rgv. I 67.5)

He who grows mightily in herbs, within each fruitful mother and each babe she bears, wise, life of all men, in the waters' home (Rgv. I.67.5)

He ... is germ of waters, germ of woods, germ of all things that both move and move not (Rgv. I 70.2)

From the *Atharva Veda*, called the Veda of the people, we have a splendid hymn to the Earth, where Agni is sung as that fire that makes all things one.¹⁰ Thanks to his hidden activity, all things are brought out of the nurturing darkness of earth into the full light of day and maturity. For Agni is "the home to which the kine return, whom the fleet-foot coursers seek", (Rgv. V 6.1) the hearth to which men are enjoined to "lead all their ways" (I 66.5), the "hidden cave" wherein he sits waiting to manifest to man. Sri Aurobindo remarks that "Agni's mission is . . . to raise up the soul struggling in nature from obscurity to the light . . . Agni is the seer-will in the universe, unerring in all its works". (*On the Veda*, 1966, p.400-1)

One senses that a great plan is behind this constant quickening of creation, what in the *Rig Veda* comes out as joy, Agni's roaring, all-devouring and all fostering and purifying life, something referred to in the Christian scriptures as the redemption of all creation, in other words, the bringing up of all forms moulded of matter, of atoms, to perfection — to be the perfected chalice wherein is poured the divine life. St Paul expressed this truth thus "For we know that the whole creation groaneth in the pangs of childbirth until this hour" — until "the creation itself would be set free from the thralldom of decay to enjoy the liberty that comes with the glory of the children of God". (N.T. Epistle to the Romans VIII 16.24)¹¹

Agni in the *Vedas* is both eternal and recreated in each manifestation, age-old and ever youthful, beyond birth and repeatedly born again, is all consuming and all redemptive, is threefold in essence, manifests in the three levels of Vedic cosmogony and has seven offspring. His threefold essence¹² may be envisaged as light, flame, heat; electricity, radiance, motion; will, desire, action; it is referred to in various guises and is in one hymn called the "three brothers" who personify the whole gamut of Vedic triads. His seven sons are themselves the prototype of all Vedic heptads - the seven Rivers, or seven creative hosts ever descending and ascending, or the seven ancient rishis; all described as the seven horses or heads, or tongues of Agni. His seven tongues are mind, understanding and the five senses whose counterpart are the five elements of the Ancients.

H.P.B. states that "the primitive names of the gods are all connected with fire . . . and the three chief Vedic gods are AGNI, VAYU, SURYA fire, air and the sun, three occult degrees of fire", and points out that "in Occultism, to 'kindle a fire' is synonymous to evoking one of the three great Fire powers, or to 'call on God' ". (S.D. III p. 123)

The Rishis expressed the cosmic aspect of Agni in certain poetic images, hinting at the age-old idea of the spirit's descent into matter, of the incandescent dart falling into the waters of space, the abyss of the deep: Agni, "the son of the Waters, has occupied the lap of the reclining waves, himself upright, lightning clad". (Rgv. II 35.9) This shows the fire descending in a vertical line into the waters, into the substance out of which all things are fashioned, the Great Deep of Genesis, the Mother aspect, the horizontal line; the vertical and the horizontal line forming the cross of manifestation: "Deep in the ocean lies the bolt, with waters compassed round about; and in continuous onward flow the floods their tribute bring to it." (Rgv. VIII 89.9) Compare

these verses with the Stanzas of Dzyan: "Darkness radiates light and light drops one solitary ray into the waters, into the Mother deep". (S.D. I p.133. Stanza 3:3) So the *Vedas* show us how deep in the ocean of mundane existence is immersed the fire of the Spirit, fettered and hidden, confined and crippled, yet the king to whom all creation pays homage.

Kundalini Fire

Although the word *kundalini* does not appear in the Rig Veda, nevertheless direct and indirect references to the discovery and actual arousal of such a dynamic power can be found in several addresses to Agni and point to the antiquity of such a knowledge^{1,3} Kundalini in Indian philosophy, is the power or *Shakti* of Shiva, the transcendent Consciousness (*cit*). Whereas Shiva is changeless, the static aspect of Consciousness, *Kundalini-Shakti* is the kinetic, active aspect of the same transcendent reality.

Fohat, or cosmic electricity, *Prana* or solar energy, and *Kundalini*, or cosmic fire, are aspects of the Flame divine. Kundalini is that tremendous, resistless, cosmic force which manifests as liquid fire, a fire quite distinct from electricity and from prana. Its centre is in the depths of the earth; in the human being it is at the base of the spine, at the etheric level. Its outer layers energize the whole body and as they mingle with the pranic currents form the personal magnetism of each human being. Its inner layers lie quiescent, coiled up at the base of the spine, like a serpent, hence its name — the "serpent fire". As the kundalini and the pranic currents blend and as the former rises up the spinal column, bathing all the *Chakras* and vitalizing them, man awakens to a new dimension of his being and eventually to complete control of his nature. But only the pure in mind and heart are successful. If kundalini should be aroused prematurely, if the emphasis of the life is on the lower instincts, technically on the centres below the diaphragm, then the inner fire will flow downward, overstimulate the sex impulse, open up the lower astral and lead to disastrous consequences. Should the kundalini fire rise upwards, the protecting etheric web that acts as a filter between the various planes of consciousness is burnt away, and as a result the human being is able to pass consciously from the physical plane of awareness to the astral, to the mental and finally to the spiritual. When the brow Chakra is vitalized, the "third eye" is awakened. Man's insight is able to range over all the planes of manifestation.

The ambivalence of the kundalini energy, its life and death giving power, is hinted at in the earlier works on Hatha Yoga, the *Goraksa-Shataka* where the word itself is used: "Above the 'bulb' the kundali power, eight times coiled, is said to lead the foolish to bondage and to grant emancipation for the yogins". (58)

In the *Rig Veda*, Agni in his manifold manifestations is the mighty energy, the healer and the killer at the root of all things, including man: "Thou, Agni, art highest vital power" (Rgv. II 1.12) and "Agni, the knower, procures heroic might, procures vigour, enhancing it for immortality". (Rgv. III 25.2) He is the treasure found far away (Rgv. III 9.5), in heaven (Rgv. I 143.2), but

also deeply hidden (Rgv. I. 141.3) or crouching in the "cave", holding dynamic might in his hand (Rgv. I. 67.2). The idea of churning up the fire, as evidenced in many Rigvedic hymns, could be taken as examples of the Vedic method of kindling fire, but it may also have an inner meaning; for fire is mentioned as being produced by means of "deep thought".

Concentration, patience, steadiness, are part of that will-power which has to be exerted to arouse or "bring forth" Agni. Agni's concealment, churning, and the goal expressed as "ambrosia" or as "striving for immortality" attest to an early knowledge of the inner fire which made the seers designate it as the "ruler of thought" (Rgv. IV 6.1), and as that power which can be "aroused by thought", and "enhanced by songs" (Rgv. VIII 44.19). "Cleaving through the rock", "pounding the unbendable" and "churning", are Vedic expressions that point to the significance of Agni's action of bringing forth out of the rock-like nature of that which the fire must overcome, the treasure locked in matter, or entombed in the physical body. Agni, as the supreme agent in matter and in man, raises the potential immortality of man to actual immortality, i.e., to unlimited consciousness and boundless freedom. The very emphasis on concealment, and on power not merely necessary to draw forth the fire, but actually conferred by Agni on his devotees, granting them that energy which strives after immortality (Rgv. III 25.2) should indicate that there is in question not something purely physical or imaginary, but a very potent force hidden deep in the human being — the kundalini, dynamic energy that grants vision, insight and immortality.

Agni is said to have been "churned up" from the "lotus flower" (Rgv. VI 16.13), i.e., the heart *Chakra* by means of practices of austerity. His hiding place often described as a *cave* is the innermost centre whence emerges the visionary thought which enlightens and makes the seer what he is. From the depth of the cave Agni is begged to draw out or release the inspired vision lying latent therein (Rgv. IV. 11.2).

Meditating in their hearts the Rishis found the effectual words that strike the right keynote, that through their vibratory power evoke a response from the hidden centre where Agni is lying at rest. We have here a combination of *concentration* and *sounding* of the required note which in turn result in arousing the fire — or discovering "Agni crouched in the cavern". "Those who understand", i.e., the wise "knowers", stimulate Agni "by means of thought" (Rgv. VIII 44.19), i.e., concentration. "So let our songs", continues the verse, i.e., let the power of the word or sound, "enhance thee O Agni". The vibratory power inherent in sound arouses and stimulates the flame divine which in turn makes the gods manifest, i.e., reveals the divine regents of the universe. Thus is established the way of communication between mortals and the immortals. So H.P.B. tells us: "The Magic of the ancient priests consisted in addressing their Gods in their own language . . . composed of Sounds, not words; of sounds, numbers and figures. He who knows how to blend the three, will call forth the response of the super-intending power". (S.D. IIp.185)

The interdependence, the bi-unity of *Word* and *Fire* may strike us as odd,

but one enigmatic Rigvedic verse touches upon this mystery: "Most excellent Agni . . . shining forth in the eternal syllable, in thy mother's womb . . . deliver the child-bearing *Brahman* that radiates in heaven" (Rgv. VI. 16.35). The syllable is the embryo that becomes the full "word of power", *Brahman* in the Vedic sense of *Brahman*, the ritually potent formula which was soon to be equated with OM. The *Word is fire*.

Let us recall H.P.B.'s statement that *Akasha* is the noumenon of ether which in its purest form is fire (S.D. I p.298), that "*Akasha* has one quality . . . sound" (S.D. II p.151)¹⁴ and compare it with the *Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana*; "First was this *Akasha*, this same is still here; this *Akasha* is the word, from *Akasha* proceeds the Word". That word that speaks from *Akasha* is said to have been "squeezed" and from its "juice" the three-fold universe is created; whose juice is the gods, whose juice is the triple Veda; whose juice is the three utterances;¹⁵ whose juice is OM (Jaim.Up.Br. I. 23 ff).

The Word is creative. The Word is destructive. The Word is the impelling force that gives form to matter and order to chaos; that gives rhythm to motion, the rhythmic dance of Shiva. But increase its intensity and its resonating force will over-stimulate the form and shatter it; the creative dance becomes the destructive dance.¹⁶ Cosmos dissolves back into chaos. All is one.

Solar Fire

This same fire that we have viewed as the flame in the hearth, in nature and in the human heart, also manifests in the sun as solar fire, the life and light-giving principle of cosmos. The sun in the *Vedas*, embodiment of the Universal Soul, Mahat, is "the soul of all that moves and moves not" (Rgv. I 115.1) and was ever the symbol of illumination, of intellectual enlightenment that made man a rational, understanding, purposeful and creative being.

"Living fire", we are told in *The Secret Doctrine*, was needed "to construct a thinking man", "that fire which gives the human mind its self-perception and self-consciousness or Manas". (S.D. III. p. 111) Animal man, both in the Moon chain and in this Earth chain, "aspired" and Spirit responded: the fire of matter, permeated by the spark of mind working through the instinct like yeast, was stimulated by external agencies, viz. on this earth by the Lords of the Flame, and the contact between the lower and the higher Fires or the two poles of Fire, produced individualization, activated the Fire of Manas, awoke self-reflective consciousness. "Man" the thinker was truly born. "The Sons of Mahat are the quickeners of the human plant. They are . . . the spark that vivifies the human animal" (S.D. III. p.111). Stimulation through the application of electrical polarity is typical of our earth evolution.

The fire of Manas manifests as that spark of instant understanding that allows the child to grasp what is presented to it whether as objects or words, and later as that drive to achievement, hence purpose, impelling the form or vehicles in a certain direction along a destined path, slowly burning out all obstacles. It is thus a reflection, on its own plane, of Atmic fire, the Will

Divine, and is eventually to be transmuted into Atmic fire when there will be nothing left but the Atman blazing to incandescent Realization. This faculty of acquiring knowledge and developing understanding parallels the opening up of physical sight. The fire of Mind illumined animal man in Lemurian days at the time that physical sight was being perfected.¹⁷ Hence the very close relationship that the Ancients, Egyptians, Indians, Greeks, etc., always established between the "eye" or sight, and the "mind", and the "eye" and the "sun". The English words "sight" and "insight" and "perceive" show the closest relationship between sight and understanding. Manas is the coordinator, the bridge and the separator.

The sun, Surya, in the *Vedas*, is the organ of perception which the gods have evolved, by means of which they view manifested existence. He is the very essence of the gods' vision and omniscience. From the throne of Surya, Mitra and Varuna behold the infinite and the finite, the good and the evil deeds of men: "Through the Gods' intelligence was that Eye first created" (Rgv.VII.76.1) and "The brilliant presence of the Gods has risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni; the soul of all that moves and moves not. . ." (Rgv.I.115.1)

Surya is the manifestation of vision, of insight, the personification of divine knowledge, the deity whose all-illuminating gaze makes of the spiritual powers that generate it the all-seeing, all-knowing and all-wise gods that the *Vedas* portray.

As the living embodiment of the light of illumination, the sun is the goal of human life, in one sense. Through the *Rig Veda* Surya appears the great treasure to be won and his hiding and his seeking form part of a recurring theme.

"Three generations indeed have gone into the beyond.
Others have entered into the presence of the Sun" (Rgv.
VIII.101.14)

"From my Father have I received the perception of Truth; I
was born even like a Sun." (Rgv.VIII.6.10)

"During the fourth degree of prayer, Atri found the Sun (till
then) immersed in darkness." (Rgv.V.40.6)

To the sun aspect of the Fire the Rishis turned again and again and to this we owe them one of the most beautiful invocations framed by man, the celebrated *Gayatri* mantra which has become the 6th Ray mantra for our race: "Let us meditate upon that celestial splendour, the Solar Lord; so may he pierce through us and inspire our prayers".

Agni, the hidden flame present in the night of the soul, hidden in the cave of the heart, Agni that same flame now transfigured into the splendour of the rising sun on the soul's awakening, both are one and that one is that "firm", that "loftier light", "set up for men to look upon" - "I honour as the face of lofty Agni in heaven the bright and holy light of Surya" (Rgv.I.73.8) that inner light whose flash illuminates our minds and like the sun sets it ablaze;

then in the silence "Mine ears unclose to hear, mine eyes to see him; the light that harbours in my spirit broadens". (Rgv.VI.9.6)

So on Agni, the "very wise", men are enjoined to "meditate", for he is the "knower" "of gracious intelligence and unerring insight, charioteer of lofty Order". No wonder that to him goes that most ancient of human cries: "Shine forth auspiciously upon us that we may reach wise understanding" (Rgv.VII.3.10) and "From thee O Agni, inspired-wisdom, from thee intuitions, from thee accomplished utterances are generated." (Rgv.VI.1.3a)

To Agni's ministry is ascribed the very subtle role of inner illumination. His action is to "bring to birth within the heart a thought as light" (Rgv.III.26.8) causing the inspired thought to come to consciousness which is then shaped into a song. Born in the heart, seen as light, expressed as song, with Agni as both its arouser and its purifier, it is then offered to the gods. The result of kindling the flame of aspiration-inspiration-ecstasy, seems to have been that vision of transcendence which translated itself into a hymn of intuitive perception which is offered up in the sacrifice to be renewed and received again. "Agni, to thee we bring with our song this offering shaped in our heart" (Rgv. VI.16.47). For Agni "The one ocean, the foundation of riches, of many births, shines forth from our heart." (Rgv.X.5.1)

Sacrificial Fire

More than all that, Agni's sacrificial action marks him out as the great uniter, he who links the manifest and the unmanifest, heaven and earth, gods and men. He embodies the vast law in his very function of receiving, assimilating or burning, of giving and returning the essence of the gift (in the sacrificial ritual), describing thereby the full circle of life. To understand his essential action in the ritual of linking, purifying, offering and returning, is to catch a glimpse of the Vedic meaning of the sacrifice, that which links heaven and earth in one sacred act performed by man and that which epitomizes the whole cosmic process. In such an act all forces work together towards a harmonious end. The deathless "oblation-bearer" who, by means of "vision", "brings together", i.e., joins vision and offering, man and gods, heaven and earth, ritual and cosmic order, "offers" man's visionary thought as he ascends and descends, he, "vehicle of the Transcendent"! Visible expression of the invisible! As vehicle he steps down the power of the Transcendent to within the reach of the worshipper; as vehicle he transmutes man's offering that it may be purified and acceptable to the gods. In encompassing all worlds he is the dynamic charioteer of that which lies beyond these worlds. As the intermediary between heaven and earth, he, the "inspired high-priest", enters into the houses of men as the "guest", bringing about the means of communication between the visible and the invisible.

It is constantly stressed that Agni accomplishes his task among humans according to the dictates of the universal law. True to his inherent being, he performs that immemorial task of burning, transmuting and offering; of destroying and creating, linking the poles of manifestation through his very being and sacred activity. His very function of offering to the gods man's

sacrificial food embodies in itself the law of give and take. In thus consuming man's fuel so that only the essence can reach the gods he proves himself the "true sacrificer", the one archetypal priest on whom all priesthood is modelled: "Whatever worship we thus perpetually offer to every god, in thee Agni, is that oblation presented." (Rgv. 1.26.6)

This creative work of Agni who burns the dross of every offering is described in terms of "human offering" "making him an axe for the sake of radiance". This axe-like sharpening of what is offered may be interpreted as the burning up of the unwanted part of the offering which is mixed up with the essence, leaving the latter intact, that which is worthy to be received by the gods but also of man's own inner burning. This is symbolic of the change and transmutation that should take place within man before he can hope to "enter the divine harmony" to integrate himself. By means of Agni, man harnesses the ritual for purposes of reflecting the cosmic order and coming to terms with both the vision of it and the living in accordance with it. This is Agni's task as the cosmic priest, and by reflection, it is that of the human priest. The insistence upon the understanding, insight and wisdom which Agni incarnates and imparts to man is an indication of the Rishis' own inherent wisdom.

The work of the flame divine gives man that radiance of countenance, that spiritual exaltation called in Sanskrit *tejas* so that *tapas* and *tejas* are in a sense related, one emphasizing the process, the other the manifestation. Those who are "sun-eyed", i.e. illumined, are radiant and with Agni as their tongue, are called "flame-tongued" (*agnijihvah*), they can pronounce the words of power.

So when the seers declared that "in choosing Agni men choose one who has the wisdom of a seer" (Rgv.V.1 1.4), who "holds all knowledge in his grasp", who is sought out as a "refuge", "father", as "providence", they give us a glimpse of the profound significance Agni had in their eyes. Seership, wisdom, will, characteristics to which man is heir, the gifts of the spirit, are identified with Agni's gifts. Fire of insight, fire of wisdom and illumination, this is Agni, Agni in us, the probing light of intelligence, of deepening understanding, of sacrificial love. "He who desires the light of knowledge desires the gift of a priest of fire" (Zamyad Yast 8.53. S.B.E. 23 p.299) says the Zend Avesta. That priest is Agni in us. The Promethean gift of fire, is the opening of man's spiritual perception (S.D.IV. p.92).

PART III

The Experience of the Fire

But let us look more closely at this very core of our being which, like the hearth in the home that from immemorial times was the very centre of the household, is the living, sacred fire, the point of gravitation, of offering, of renewal of life, of irradiation. This centre varies according to the stage of the individual's evolution, but it is there, somewhere, whether at the level of the

navel or the psychic level, at the heart or buddhic level, or at the brow or atmic. Everything is on fire within us. This is well brought out in the Fire Sermon of the Lord Buddha: "And with what are these on fire? With the fire of passion, say I, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation, with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair are they on fire. . . The body is on fire. . . the mind is on fire. . . Mind-consciousness is on fire; impressions received by the mind are on fire; and whatever sensation, pleasant, unpleasant, or indifferent originate in dependence on impressions received by the mind, that also is on fire!" To arouse a higher aspect of fire requires contemplative exertion, discipline, austerity, self-sacrifice, *tapas* the inner incandescence.

There are attested different kinds of manifestation of the inner flame, what we might call the darker and the lighter side of fire. To the former belong all those manifestations of wrath, fury, jealousy, passion, fits of temper, hatred, and so on. To the latter, all those expressions of inspiration, exaltation, ecstasy, self-sacrifice, love. As Lama Govinda explains "that emotion which in its lowest form is like a straw-fire, nourished by a momentary enthusiasm and blind urges, . . . in its highest form. . . is the flame of inspiration, nourished by spiritual insight, by true vision, by direct knowledge and inner certainty. Both have the nature of fire. . ." Emotion is thus not an altogether reprehensible side of our nature, it has its uses but like everything else should be under control. In contrast to the intellectual understanding which establishes a subject-object relationship and thereby remains outside the object, emotion alone allows us to be "seized" by the irresistible force of truth"; it is a "moving towards or with the subject of our contemplation, until we have caught up with its movement, until we have become one with it and are able to experience it from within, in its intrinsic nature, in its particular rhythm. To be moved is an act of spiritual participation. . . [that] finally leads to the inner unification, the great synthesis of all spiritual, mental, emotional, and bodily qualities of man: the state of completeness. In this highest state the warmth of emotion is transmuted into the flame of inspiration."¹⁸

Among certain rites of initiation in warrior cults we find the heat of fury aroused by the fire of matter causing the hero, e.g., the Celtic Cuchulainn, to grow so hot that he had to be plunged in three successive vats of cold water — the first one having exploded, the second boiling up and only the third remaining endurable. Highly exaggerated, there is always an underlying grain of truth in these ancient stories. To this fire that seems to grant magical powers to the human being is ascribed some of the so-called miracles of yogis who appear to flaunt the known physical laws.

Wrath in the Vedas is a personified power, called *manyu*, a raging fierceness that gives the warrior superhuman force, but it is a potency quite accordant with that ardour (*tapas*) by means of which the contemplation of the Supreme bore fruit and the universe was manifested, and the sage was able to vision the cosmic order. Glowing like fire to which it is closely akin, *wrath* or *manyu* is compared to Indra's destructive thunderbolt of which it has the killing power. We touch here certain numinous qualities of the fire in

both its creative and destructive energetic aspects, twin powers of the one all-blazing Energy which Vedic man distinguished as *tapas*, creative fervour, and *manyu*, destructive potency, yet creative when allied to *tapas*, of which certain powerful radiances as well as vital energy are the offshoot. When it allies itself to mental power or skilfulness it becomes an irresistible creative energy which distinguishes the great gods such as the Lords of the Cosmic Order. By their fiery energy of wrath, their blazing one-pointedness, they are said to have extricated the cosmos from the chaos, the order from the disorder.

What is that strange expression, inconceivable to the rational mind, viz. the wrath of God? Such anthropomorphic projections of what appears as the irrational side of human nature abound in the *Vedas*, the *Puranas*, the Old Testament, the New Testament. How can God, either as the Absolute or as the Demiurge or even as the Atman, be offended, wrathful, jealous, indignant, vehement, vengeful? These seem human passions projected on the Deity, but ones which, notwithstanding the rational mind's refusal to admit them, hide profound truths of the human psyche's reaction to the strange manifestation of its hidden fount of energy. That the wrong-doer, or the seeker after truth or God, is pursued by the voice of conscience or guilt, or is full of inferiority feelings which, under certain conditions, may culminate in a complete breakdown or warping of the mind or personality; that the human being, who turns his back to his inner light, scorns, ignores, represses the pull of that half of himself that demands recognition and is the seat of so much inspiration and spiritual insight as well as the storehouse of man's past, both good and evil, until relentlessly pursued by this incomprehensible half of himself, that will not let go in spite of all repression, falls a prey to madness; or that those strange uncanny aspects of divine visitations experienced in certain encounters with the numinous, fill the heart with sudden awe, dread, terror, burning heat; these are all attested facts of the psychological life of human beings and account for that most extraordinary infliction of irrational traits upon the Deity which we meet with in all the scriptures - all different aspects of that fire that whips us ever onwards: "For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God" (Ex.20.5) And St. Paul said "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men . . ." (Romans 1.18)

It is not that God is jealous, but that the Divine in us will relentlessly bring us back to Itself and finally will brook no other turning away from IT, no other worship: for two cannot walk together on the razor-edged path, one must go. No wonder that at contact with that all-compelling energy, that all-burning, "dread-ful", devastating, relentless flame, the worshipper ascribes wrath, fury, jealousy to his Deity! As St. Paul exclaimed "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. X.31)

The other side of the fire of wrath or passion, is the fire of love. Here we espy similar symptoms as earlier recounted, e.g., St. Catherine of Genoa was again and again reported to be all aflame and in that state to cause water to boil by merely touching it. Many of the Christian saints mention this burning first as a purification, then as an ecstasy — as being totally consumed "boiling

and burning in the fire which is God", as says St. John of the Cross: "O living flame of love how tenderly you force to my soul's inmost core your fiery probe!" (Poems, Penguin, 1960) Is not the one-pointed mind thus sharpened through the heart's desire, like an arrow tipped with fire that flies straight to its target?

Richard Rolle, the hermit of Hampole (1290-1349) has given us a detailed description of his own experience of the inner fire, and indeed like the Rishis of ancient India, refers to the "song" of the soul thus burnt with love: heat, song and sweetness, for him, sum up the experience of the fire. And it is that fire that burns the soul unto God: ". . . the heart that truly receives the fire of the Holy Ghost is burned all wholly and turns as it were into fire; and it leads it into that form that is likest to God" (*Incendium Amoris* ch.XVII)

Jacob Boehme experienced it, and as a result wrote his great vision of the cosmos in "Aurora" wherein he joins hands with the ancient Vedic bards;¹⁹ and so have many others, Christian saints such as Gregory the Great, Augustine, St. Theresa, to name but a few, Sufi saints and Hindus whose experience is too well documented to warrant examination here. The very means that enabled the Vedic Rishis to vision and formulate what they had seen in one grandiose panorama of unfolding life and cosmic order, — basis of all subsequent religious philosophies — the practice of *tapas*, is well attested. Certain of our own members have experienced the onslaught of the serpent fire, its ravaging and devastating effects upon the unpurified mind, its revealing insight and finally its agonizing, purifying and exalting illumination. For that fire burns away all our conditioning, it rarefies the etheric web, it activates the chakras, it grants that insight into the very core of our being without which man is but either animal man or intellectual man, but not divine man. To this fire H.P.B. refers in *The Voice of the Silence*: "let the fiery power retire into the inmost chamber, the chamber of the Heart and the abode of the World's Mother." In a note she explains: "The 'Power' and the 'World-Mother' are names given to Kundalini — one of the mystic 'Yogi powers'. It is Buddhi considered as an active instead of a passive principle (which it is generally, when regarded only as the vehicle or casket of the Supreme Spirit, Atma). It is an electro-spiritual force, a creative power which when aroused into action can as easily kill as it can create." (Fragment 1.) *Fohat, kundalini, buddhi*: three expressions of the one FLAME DIVINE: "The supreme energy resides in the Buddhi; latent — when wedded to Atman alone, active and irresistible when galvanized by the essence of manas". . . (*The Mahatma Letters* 1924 ed. p. 341)

But we are afraid of the fire, afraid of burning our ultimate possession, this pigmy self; afraid of the realization that there is in truth no such thing as a separate I; afraid of accepting that there is no other I but God; God alone is this innermost I. To accept this, to say yes, or "amen" or "om" to the Lord, completely, irrevocably, means utter surrender, the letting go of this self that rears its head in one way or another at every turn of the spiral stairway; and utter surrender means to be left with nothing save that impalpable no-thing

which we cannot conceive, to be left with nothing save the divine flame that burns up everything!

PART IV

Atmic Fire

This examination of fire both macrocosmic and microcosmic, is perhaps as near to any explanation and vision of fire and its action, both cosmic and human, as one may hope to get for such an elusive subject. It may leave us unsatisfied, for the fundamental meaning of fire, that which holds within itself the opposites of life and death, creation and destruction, the will-to-be and not-to-be, the origin and the end of all, somehow still eludes us. No definition or explanation can give it; no words can paint it; for not before the whole nature of man has been tried upon the bedrock of experience, the "burning-ground"²⁰ — the depths and the heights — "not until it is held by the divine fragment which has created it . . . not until the whole nature has yielded and become subject unto its Higher Self" (*Light on the Path*) can man touch and know, yield to and merge into the essence of that flame spirit which is the very core of his own soul as that of the cosmos; for "That thou art".

The knowledge of the tree of life, the penetration into the mysteries of life and death, means trial by fire. To know is to have learned in the raw, and to have learned is to have been tried, and to try! Nothing can give us real knowledge except life itself and our evolving a right attitude to its trials, our right assimilation of experience, our right acceptance of what befalls us. Knowledge means power, but power means fire in both senses of *trial by fire* and *wielding of fire* for specific purposes. The crucial questions that surge in the consciousness of every committed person as to life and our relationship to all, demand an answer not in so many words, but in acts, in the very blood of life, in the very burning of that divine flame that is slowly turning us back to our home. As Rumi, the Sufi poet once said: "If your knowledge of fire has been ascertained from words alone, seek to be cooked by fire! There is no intuitive certainty until you burn; if you desire that certainty, sit down in the fire!" (Math. II. 858) For words and philosophy will not take us one step further into the arena of truth, but only the flaming sword that turns every way, leaving no corner of our being untouched. Those who study the grand, ageless truths with their minds and not with their hearts, theoretically, and not with the very fire and blood of life, will never experience the inner knowledge born of the burning ground, will never know in truth the abysmal depth of the human soul. If we would guide others we have to make the knowledge of the fire our very own, to accept to be burnt, to be cooked by fire. But how many dare to make the plunge into the abyss of self-naughting? Each step upon the way back to the Source is a deeper plunge into the fire, into the consciousness of the Atman, until the ultimate mystery of the Spirit, that which wills the form to be, that which holds it together and that which shatters it, is revealed.

For this we have to accept the burning ground, accept Agni that dwells in our hearts as the "one ocean, the foundation of riches, who shines forth from the hidden cave" (Rgv. X.5.1) who is both the "vehicle of the Transcendent" and our instrument of purification.

Purification does not mean merely the purifying of the outer physical shell, but that of the inner man, of the emotions, of the mind, its thoughts, aims, decisions, drives, motives, the seat of ambition, pride, selfishness. It means the cultivation of the silence of thought as was enjoined by the Lord Buddha, for then what is unwanted falls away of itself and the disciplines take care of themselves. Only in the silence can the Voice of the Eternal in us speak and be heard. Every effort does mean being burnt up, casting our fuel upon the altar of life, casting the "I" into the sacrificial fire. This is the real, the true, the only sacrifice; slowly surrendering this pigmy ego that we have built up with so much care to the flame-spirit. This is the work of the fire. Then will the soul be able to say, as in the *Rig Veda*: "Ready is thy filter Lord of Prayer; supreme, thou pervadest each and every limb. A cold, unripened vessel cannot receive this; only vessels made ready, can!" (Rgv. IX. 83.1) Only when "mature" can we stand the impact of the spiritual fire and the ecstasy of Agni's gift, the nectar of bliss. Hence only vessels or vehicles made ready through purification which is maturity, are fit to receive this gift, the fire of the spirit, the at-one-ment with the Atman.

St. John the Baptist proclaimed: "He that cometh after me is mightier than I. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. . . He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (N.T. Matt. 3.11 & 12) H.P.B. commenting on this observed: "Water could regenerate the body of matter, fire alone that of the inner man" (S.D. IV. p.137, note 1). What is that unquenchable fire? The fire of longing, the fire of aspiration, the fire that urges you onwards always, the feminine aspect of love; it can be personified as the Eternal Feminine, or the Madonna, or the *anima*; it gnaws as it burns, it tears away, it uplifts and it shatters, but to start all over again until we turn completely to the Inner Ruler Immortal. An all-compelling energy, an all burning love, an irresistible urge, dread-ful, devastating, sweeps us forward relentlessly. It was that blazing fire of love that appeared to St. Paul as the vision of Christ and struck him blind for three whole days. Love is fire, love the dynamo; at the earthly level combustion, in the spiritual heights, love, yet that burning abyss of self-gift wherein the beloved is lost in the Beloved. It is the supreme act of life, the supreme offering of Deity!

"Why persecutest thou me" asked the vision of the Christ to St. Paul on the way to Damascus. Everyone of us has done so and keeps doing so every day, every moment.

Kahlil Gibran expressed the action of this flame of love in unforgettable verses:

"For even as love crowns you so shall he crucify you. Even as he is for your growth so is he for your pruning.

Even as he ascends to your height and caresses your tenderest branches that quiver in the sun, so shall he descend to your roots and shake them in their clinging to the earth. Like sheaves of corn he gathers you unto himself. He threshes you to make you naked. He sifts you to free you from your husks. He grinds you to whiteness. He kneads you until you are pliant; And then he assigns you to his sacred fire, that you may become sacred bread for God's sacred feast."

(*The Prophet*, p. 9)

This is life, the process of living. What is the result of this burning ground, this devouring flame, this purification? We are told in the Gospels that after six days — six days of preparation — Jesus took three of his disciples into "a high mountain apart" and he "was transfigured before them and his face did shine as the sun and his raiment was white as the light". (N.T. Matt. XVII. 1)

The kindled flame of spirit glowed so powerfully that it was perceptible even at the physical level; for the personality, soul and spirit vibrated in unison and flashed forth as the divine glory: the three fires, of matter, soul and spirit, fused in one glorious conflagration. Divinity was made visible by the effulgent radiance, the solar splendour. And the three disciples fell upon their faces, overawed at the Presence.

This is the stupendous moment when the mystic realizes that God is verily a "consuming fire", that "the Impersonal Self" is verily "fire" (S.D.IV. p.210) that all things are bathed in that ocean of quickening, transcendent flame, that all will be burnt up in it to emerge transfigured, redeemed. "The fire tries his work, of what sort it is, and he passes through the flame". He passes unscathed because only the pure, only the fire can stand the fire!

And he understands those words of St. Paul that "the Lord . . . shall be revealed from heaven ... in flaming fire". (2 Thes. 1.7, 8)

For beyond the solar splendour is hidden a still more effulgent reality of which it is but the mirror, however wondrous to behold, which the *Vedas* symbolized by the lightning flash, the flame that for ever recedes as *Light on the Path* terms it, that something beyond even consciousness itself, that something which heralds the dynamic Lord of Creation, preservation and destruction, the Will divine. Agni's lightning flash is said to "whirl down from the lofty . . . realm of the Sun. Beyond this realm there is another glory". (Rgv.X.27.21) This glory is the very essence of this threefold fire, the knowledge of which made the Rishis equate the inner and the outer, man and cosmos: "He who is in the fire, and he who is here in the heart, and he who is yonder in the sun - he is one." (*Maitri Up.16.17*) This is atmic vision, knowledge, power. As one of our ex-members has expressed: "We have looked on at the transfiguration, but have not attempted to become actively transfigured. But that must some day happen to us, and only after the trans-

figuration can we dare to climb Mount Golgotha. Only when we have achieved expression of divinity in and through the lower personal nature shall we have attained to that of worth and value which can be permitted, under the divine plan to be crucified. This is a forgotten truth."²¹

We are indeed still immeasurably far from capable of being admitted to such a revelation; yet the hour of death, or the hour of illumination may come at any moment; for there will surely come a time when through the power of the flame divine in our heart we shall kindle the fire of the spirit; when transformed through and into the fire we shall know absolutely that from the furthest stars right down to our own innermost, our heart of hearts, throbs the same dynamic pulse, the fire of creation, the warmth of preservation, the bolt of regeneration, the spirit that maketh all things new. Let us make our own the great secret of the Fire, that we may be able to penetrate into its fundamental meaning, be transmuted by it and be its transmitters; and sing of our own knowledge with the *Yajur Veda*:

"I have known this mighty Purusha refulgent as the sun beyond darkness. Only by knowing Him do we overcome death; no other way is there to go." (*Yajur Veda*. 31.18)

Abbreviations in Text

The Secret Doctrine	
Adyar Edition throughout.....	S.D.
Helena Petrovna Blavatsky	H.P.B.
The Rig Veda	Rgv."
Upanishad.....	Up.
Sacred Books of the East	S.B.E.
Mathnavi	Math.
St. Matthew New Testament.....	Matt.N.T.
New Testament	N.T.
Exodus	Ex.
Hebrews.....	Hcb.

NOTES

The Adyar Edition of *The Secret Doctrine*, Volumes 1 -6 is used throughout this book. The quotation from the Bodhimur 11 on Page 2 is quoted by H.P.B. in the S.D. Vol 1 page 73.

1. Compare *The Secret Doctrine I*: "Fohat, running along the seven principles of Akasha, acts upon manifested Substance, or the One Element . . . and by differentiating it into various centres of energy, sets in motion the law of Cosmic Evolution, which, in obedience to the Ideation of the Universal Mind, brings into existence all the various states of being in the manifested Solar System." (p.1 70)
2. As Lama Govinda says in his *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*:
"Tapas is here the creative principle, which acts upon matter as well as upon mind. With regard to matter it is the forming, organizing, order-creating principle. . . In the spiritual realm, however, it is that force which lifts us beyond the created, beyond that which has become, originated, taken form. It lifts us beyond the boundaries of our narrow individuality and of our self-created world. It dissolves and transforms all that which has 'frozen' into rigid form", (p. 161)
3. See also S.D.II: "The divine, purely Adi-Buddhic Monad manifests as the universal Buddhi, the Maha-Buddhi, or Mahat, in Hindu philosophies, the spiritual, omniscient and omnipotent Root of divine Intelligence, the highest *anima mundi* or the Logos. This descends 'like a flame spreading from the eternal Fire, immovable, without increase or decrease, ever the same to the end' of the cycle of existence, and becomes Universal Life on the Mundane Plane. From this Plane of conscious Life shoot out like seven fiery tongues, the Sons of Light, the Logoi of Life; then the Dhyani-Buddhas of contemplation, the concrete forms of their formless Fathers. . ."etc! (p.296)
Sri Krishna Prem describes these Seven as the "Inner Seven archetypal powers" (*Man the Measure of All Things*. 1966. p.287)
4. See *The Secret Doctrine*: "'Waters' and 'Water' stand as the symbol for Akasha, the 'Primordial Ocean of Space', on which Narayana, the self-born Spirit, moves reclining on that which is its progeny." (II. p.1 77) "
Bear in mind that the Vedic and Avestaic name of Fohat is Apam-Napat. In the *Avesta* he stands between the Fire-yazatas and the Water-yazatas. The literal meaning is 'Son of the Waters', but these 'Waters' are not the liquid we know, but Aether - the Fiery Waters of Space. Fohat is the 'Son of Aether' in its highest aspect, Akasha, the Mother-Father of the primitive Seven, and of Sound or the Logos. Fohat is the Light of the Logos." (III. p.399 note 4)
5. See S.D. I, p.166-9 ;stanza 5.2.
"Dzyu becomes Fohat" . . . "Dzyu is the one real (magical Knowledge) or

6. "Compassion - says *The Voice of the Silence* - is no attribute. It is the law of laws - eternal harmony Alaya's SELF; a shoreless universal essence, the light of everlasting Right, and fitness of all things, the law of love eternal." (Fragment III. The Seven Portals, 3 00. p .211 of 1953 reprint). To this Sri Krishna Prem comments: "In other words, compassion is the effect of the underlying Unity which manifests in the world of separation as attraction, fellow-feeling and sympathy." (*Man the Measure of All Things*, p.291)
- Compare *Man the Measure* : "With his first three strides he separates the three times past, present and future, and he manifests the three modes of consciousness, waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The five strides can then be referred to the five Elements of antiquity which are the sensible modes of objectivity, and the seven strides to the sevenfold structure pattern. It is as though he strides through the Inner Seven gathering up their abstract formulae and impressing them upon the fluid energies of the Outer Seven. He then starts again from the Outer Seven and manifests their 'writings' as the structure of the sensible worlds." (p. 288-9)
- Compare *Man the Measure* : Fohat's "circular errands result in the organization of vortical systems round each point-like centre in the Universal Mind, converting their homogeneous unity into a number of separate entities linked with each other as the parts of a manifold. Thus by the action of Fohat takes place the 'entification' of the primal oneness, the conversion of its pervading unity into a number of separate points of view; points of view which may be regarded as suns, as human individualities, or as atoms. On whatever scale they are taken, the effect of the circular action of Fohat is to cut off or veil their inner unity, and to replace it by an outer connectedness in which each of them acts upon and is acted upon by all the others in an external manner." (p.289 — 90. See also p. 296 and 297.)
- See also *Treatise on Cosmic Fire* by A. Bailey. "Only as he is recognized as Fohat, the energy of matter, as wisdom, the nature of the Ego and its motivation, and as essential unity, can any due conception be arrived at as to his nature, or being." (p.603. See also p. 604 and ff.)
- See also S.D. II. p. 296 where the Flame that spreads out from the eternal Fire and the seven fiery tongues that shoot out of it are referred to. Also *The Theosophist* Vol VII, p.196.
Atharva Veda XII. 1.
"Within the earth there lies the fire, and in plants,
and waters carry it; fire is in stones.
Deep within men is fire;
fire in the cattle, fire in the steeds. (19)
The same fire that burns in the heavens; the
mid-realm belongs to this fire divine. Men kindle
this fire that bears the oblation. (20)
- Compare T. Dobzhansky *The Biology of Ultimate Concern* (London, 1967): "Men's minds are reluctant to recognize that evolution has a precise orientation and a privileged axis. This is the cardinal postulate of the Teilhardian synthesis. Evolution, human and biological and cosmic, is not simply a lot of whirl and flutter going nowhere in particular . . . human evolution is an extension of biological evolution . . . man's ultimate concern, and his individual meaning and dignity are atoms of the meaning of the whole cosmos." (p. 116)
- The Vishnu Purana names Agni's "three sons" as *Suchi* or solar fire, *Pavamana* or fire produced by friction and *Pavaka*, the lightning or electric fire (I.x). These three are the ramifications of one Agni who in turn is an emanation from the Supreme One, See S.D.II p.245; III p.250 and *The Theosophist* Vol, VII p.196.
- 12.

13. Expressions such as the "wind's steed", the "wind's friend", used as epithets of the ascetic, or descriptions as that "he endures the fire", are pointers to a certain body of knowledge concerning powers latent in man, though they do not demonstrate how far that science had been developed. The word *kundali* or *kundalini* derived from the verbal root *kund* to encircle means literally "the one who is coiled up", like the serpent.
14. See *The Secret Doctrine*:
 "Akasha, the Astral Light, can be defined in a few words; it is the Universal Soul, the Matrix of the Universe, the Mysterium Magnum from which all that exists is born by separation or differentiation. It is the cause of existence; it fills all the infinite Space, is Space itself, in one sense, or both its sixth and seventh principles." (S.D. IV. p. 81)
 Compare *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*:
 "Akasha the one element in nature . . . outside which there can be no nature since it is nature itself, and which as the akasha pervades our solar system, every atom being part of itself, pervades throughout space and is space in fact . . ." (p. 63)
The Secret Doctrine:
 "The whole range of physical phenomena proceeds from the Primary of Ether — Akasha, as dual-natured Akasha proceeds from undifferentiated Chaos, so-called, the latter being the primary aspect of Mulaprakriti, the Root-Matter and the first abstract Idea one can form of Parabrahman. . ." The real Aether of Space . . . has its seven "principles" as all the rest of Nature has, and where there was no Ether there would be *no sound*, as it is the vibrating sounding-board in Nature in all its seven differentiations." (II. p. 260) "
 The Ancients associated sound or speech with the Ether of Space of which sound is the characteristic." (III. p. 115. cf. II. p. 258; I. p. 336)
15. *Bhuh, bhuvah, svahah*, uttered before the *Gayatri*, referring to the three levels of the universe.
16. Compare Hosea (O.T.): "I have slain them by the words of my mouth" (6.5) Jeremiah (O.T.): "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord" (23.29); "But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones . . ." (20.9)
17. *Hearing* developed in the first Round and the first Root-Race of that Round; *touch* in the second Round and the second Root-Race of that Round; *sight* in the third Round and the third Root-Race of that Round; all corresponding to ether, air and fire.
18. Lama A. Govinda. *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, 1969, p.161, 162.
 Compare also C. Jung: "Conflict engenders fire, the fire of affects and emotions, and like every other fire it has two aspects, that of combustion and that of creating light. On the one hand, emotion is the alchemical fire whose warmth brings everything into existence and whose heat burns all superfluities to ashes. But on the other hand, emotion is the moment when steel meets flint and a spark is struck forth, for emotion is the chief source of consciousness. There is no change from darkness to light or from inertia to movement without emotion." (Psychological aspects of the Mother archetype. C.W. 9. pt. 1. par. 179)
19. Compare *Aurora* : "The light, or the heart of heat ... is a power of life. .. (but) heat containeth also a fierceness or wrath (die Grimmigkeit, 'fury') which burneth, consumeth and spoileth". (*London*, tr. by J. Sparrow, ch. 1.5-8)
20. In the *Avesta* Fire is generally characterized as an instrument of ordeal - a future ordeal whereby the Fire will separate the good from the evil. It is also considered the instrument of truth or justice *Asha* from which it derives its power, (see Yast 43.9) To worship *Asha* offerings are made to the Fire of the Lord. There are three ways of classifying fires, the third classification, found also in the *Avesta* (Y. 17.11) and the Bundahisn, presupposes a doctrine of the universal presence of fire.
21. *From Bethlehem to Calvary* . A. Bailey 1961. p. 275-6.