

## Rigvediya Ratri Sukta :

ऋग्वेदीय रात्रिसूक्त *ṛgvedīya rātrisūkta* :

This sukta occurs as mantras 1 to 8 in Rigveda, 10th Mandala, 10th Adyayay, 127th sukta.

This very deep sukta talks about Ratri, रात्रि, generally translated as the **Night**. What is Night? We have already discussed that in our Introduction, but here is something more to the meaning of that word. Night may also mean deep sleep or deep meditation (निर्विकल्प समाधि *nirvikalpa samādhī*.)

The Night is very beneficial to mankind. It gives succour to all beings, observing this World by her eyes (stars) and thus removing darkness by her own light. The darkness is called a kind of *debt*. In richa 7, *Usha*, sister of Ratri is prayed to. All these words require explanation.

### Text and Translation and Explanation :

ॐ रात्री व्यख्यदायती पुरुत्रा देव्यक्षभिः । विश्वा अधि श्रियोऽधित ॥ १ ॥

*Om rātrī vyakhyadāyatī purutrā devyakṣabhiḥ | viśvā adhi śriyo'dhita || 1 ||*

The night is coming; now that goddess by her eyes, observes many places. She has taken up all her splendour.

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<sup>4</sup>For rexample, see [I - 164- 46 - 45]

The Night has manifested. She makes me perceive this world, through my Jivatma (जीवात्मा *jīvātmā*) which is endowed with senses (stars). She comes along with all the objects of these world.

Or, we may interpret as : in deep meditation, my Atma is just an observer and has taken up its own splendour.

Or, during deep sleep, the information received during the waking state is replayed, arranged and observed.

ओर्वप्रा अमर्त्या निवतो देव्युद्धतः । ज्योतिषा बाधते तमः ॥ २ ॥

*orvaprā amartyā nivato devyudvataḥ | jyotiṣā bādhatē tamaḥ || 2 ||*

**This immortal goddess has filled completely the wide, high and low regions, by her expanse. By her own light she is driving out darkness.**

The immortal Maya has filled the three regions — दिव्, अन्तरिक्ष and पृथिवी *div, antarikṣa* and *pr̥thivī* — by herself.

Night does not mean complete darkness, there is some light due to stars etc. Not that there is no knowledge, there is some knowledge, as provided by the sense organs of this Jeeva. This limited knowledge is also useful, because it does remove total ignorance. Compare with the following mantra of Rishi दीर्घतमस् *dīrghatamas* [ऋ. सं. I - 164 - 43]:

शकमयं धूममारादपश्यं विषुवता पर एनावरेण ।

*śakamayam dhūmamārādapaśyaṃ viṣuvatā para enāvareṇa |*

*I observe near me the smoke of burning cow-dung and by that all pervading common effect, discover the cause, i.e., the fire.*

Thus the knowledge that one gains about the World around us, via one's senses, is not totally useless. It directs one's mind to the Ultimate Reality, it points the correct way. If there were no knowledge, then we would be like a stone.

This also shows the attitude of the Vedic Rishis to the human existence : it is a chance given to improve oneself.

Or, interpreting Night as Nirvikalpa Samadhi, there is knowledge about existence of one's self only. That "I" sense is also useful, because it points to the Basis, Paramatma.

निरु स्वसारमस्कृतोषसं देव्यायती । अपेद्दु हासते तमः ॥ ३ ॥

*niru svasāramaskṛtoṣasaṃ devyāyatī | apedu hāsate tamaḥ || 3 ||*

**This Night, coming here, has driven away her own sister Usha. [But subsequently] darkness will go away from here.**

Usha denotes the beginning (down) of correct knowledge about one self. It may mean beginning of Samadhi or a person reaching the "Dual mode" <sup>5</sup> where he has so much advanced in his understanding of the nature of Reality that he is simultaneously leading a "normal" life and at the same time totally disconnected internally. As examples of such persons in recent times we can mention Shri Ramana Maharshi, Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa.

On arrival of Ratri the Night, the light of pure Atma (सूर्य *sūrya*) is replaced by light of stars. Even if Usha is not there, at least some light is there, with a promise that eventually there will be Usha again.

सा नो अद्य यस्या वयं नि ते यामन्नविष्महि । वृक्षे न वसतिं वयः ॥ ४ ॥

*sā no adya yasyā vyaṃ ni te yāmannavikṣmahi | vṛkṣe na vasatiṃ vayah || 4 ||*

**On your arrival, just as birds [enter] their nests in trees and we also enter [in our homes] for rest. Such Night be today [beneficial to us.]**

This mantra shows that perhaps the interpretation of Night as Nirvikalpa Samadhi was more proper. This mantra is also an example of the principle of Reverse Analogy propounded by this author <sup>6</sup> where the roles of the two components of an analogy are reversed.

Birds denote "thoughts". Nesting in trees denote "subsiding in the network of brain cells". In samadhi the thoughts subside and we withdraw into our deepest self.

On the other hand, considering the Night as Maya, on its arrival, birds, i.e., thoughts, rest, take pleasure, in the Tree. Now tree denotes this Creation (see the Shantipath at the beginning). We, that is my Atma, also rest in the World.

May such Night be beneficial to me, by showing me the correct path.

नि ग्रामासो अविश्वत नि पद्वन्तो नि पक्षिणः । नि श्येनासञ्चिदर्थिनः ॥ ५ ॥

*ni grāmāso avikṣata ni padvanto ni pakṣiṇaḥ | ni śyenāsañchidarthinaḥ || 5 ||*

**The people of the villages, those with feet, those birds, those Shyena birds who eye [thier prey] with desire, [all have come back to their home.]**

The staright translation seems very mundane. ग्रामासः *grāmāsaḥ* – the people of village – means the routine or mundane thoughts, thoughts related to day to day living in this world;

पद्वन्तः *padvantaḥ* – those with feet – means the thoughts arising out of activity of sense organs;

पक्षिणः *pakṣiṇaḥ* – those birds – thoughts related to the emotions; and even

श्येनासः *śyenāsaḥ* – those Shyena birds – thoughts associated with invocation of सोम, i.e., those thoughts leading to meditation;

all are subsided into their respective abodes.

Even though "birds" are mentioned, Shyena birds, which throughout the Vedas is a code name for thoughts relating to Samadhi, are separately mentioned. They also desire something – the Soma, the Alpha state.

यावया वृक्यं वृकं यवय स्तेनमूर्म्ये । अथा नः सुतरा भव ॥ ६ ॥

*yāvayā vṛkyaṃ vṛkaṃ yavaya stenamūrmye | athā naḥ sutarā bhava || 6 ||*

**O Urmi, keep away from us the she-wolf, the wolf, and thief and then allow us to go beyond you.**

Urmi is another name for the Night, one who hides. May we complete successfully the period during which you, the Night, are present without being troubled by :

**wolf** sleep; if one leads a life of day to day existence only, without doing any useful work or strive for knowledge, then one is leading a life in "sleep". Vedic traditions define three kinds of human life — one of knowledge which uplifts a person to release, second that of active work as enjoined in scripture, which ultimately leads to knowledge and release and third, that of तमस् *tamas*, complete darkness, the sleep, where a person just worries about day to day living.

**she-wolf** thoughts leading to sleep; a philosophy of life which leads to life of "sleep";

**thief** disturbing thoughts, like those of anger, hate, desire, craving, etc., negative thoughts. They are called thief because they take away the balance of my mind.

The seeker further prays to the Ratri that please allow me to go beyond you, let there be Usha. Let me understand the true nature of this Creation and go beyond it.

उष मा पेपिशत्तमः कृष्णं व्यक्तमस्थित । उष ऋणेव यातय ॥ ७ ॥

*uṣa mā pepiśattamaḥ kṛṣṇaṃ vyaktamasthita | uṣa ṛṇeva yātaya || 7 ||*

**This extremely black coloured darkness, giving a layer of black colour and clearly visible darkness has come near me. O Usha, remove it like a debt.**

This mantra may be compared again with the mantra by Rishi दीर्घतमस् *dīrghatamas* mentioned earlier.

Interpreting the Night as Maya : the meaning is quite clear. The Night is clearly visible because this World seems to be very clearly visible. Every body is quite clear

that this world exists. The perception of the world is so strong that we are not ready to let go the idea of its existence in reality. It is near me, because it is accessible without any effort. You just open your eyes and the World is seen.

This mantra is also an example of Reverse Analogy. The debt is the main concept here and not the darkness. Just as to remove one's debt, one has to work and earn money, similarly to remove the "debt" that is created due to my belief in existence of this World, I must work and obtain knowledge.

Interpreting the Night as Samadhi : the seeker prays to Usha that let me go beyond Samadhi. Let me achieve the "dual mode". Accepting Samadhi as the final goal itself creates a debt. Remove this debt, because the highest stage of human development is not Samadhi, but "dual mode", what is variously described as शम्भवि मुद्रा *śāmbhavi mudrā* or विष्णुपद *viṣṇupada*.

उष ते गा इवाकरं वृणीष्व दुहितर्दिवः । रात्रि स्तोमं न जिग्युषे ॥ ८ ॥

*uṣa te gā ivākaraṃ vṛṇīṣva duhitardivah | rātri stomaṃ na jigyuṣe || 8 ||*

O goddess Night, just as a successful warrior is offered a congratulating poem, or just as cows [are given as present] similarly I have given this Stotra to you. Please accept it heartily, O daughter of Heaven.

Here Heaven represents Paramatma and Devi is called a daughter of Paramatma.