

VISION, MISSION AND TRANSMISSION

India has been described as Ārṣabhūmi, the land of ṛṣis (seers). We have in our land, from time immemorial, ascetics who experienced ecstasy through meditation, silence and asceticism. They were also observers of rigorous vows. They were known by various names, related to their style of life. Thus some of them were called *Vrātyās* wandering mendicants, *Yatis* - practising penance as against *ṛṣis* who were householder-sages of the Vedic times. We confine our studies mainly to the *ṛṣis* of R̥g Veda and Atharva Veda. In these sources they are called by different names such as *ṛṣi*, *kavi*, *manīṣi* etc. *Kavi* is a poet and *manīṣi* is a saint. “*Kavirmanīṣi paribhuḥ*, defines Iśāvāsya upanishad 8. Śaṅkara commented on it saying *kaviḥ krantadarsi sarvadṛk* - *Kaviḥ* is one who sees the Reality through the fleeting appearances and he has the cosmic vision. *Manīṣi* is *manasaiṣita sarvajña īśvaraḥ*: *manīṣi* has omniscience and lordly power.

Ṛṣis are so called because they see the Vedic hymns. Yaska in his *Nirukta* mentions: Upamanyu, who defined the word *ṛṣi* as being derived from seeing, for the *ṛṣi* saw the hymns.¹ Vāmana in his *Kāvya prakāśa* - Commentary (BORI Ed. 1965, 5) says that in order to show the importance of the poetic creation it is compared with the creation of Brahmā.²

Seers are Powerful and Contemplative

Seers are persons whose words are true (RV 3. 54. 4); they know the secrets of gods in their souls (RV 10. 71. 1); they transcend space and time (RV 1. 113. 11; AV 12. 1. 1); their words will resound through all the ages (RV 3. 33. 8). They have a message to all people of all vocations. He is a sage-poet (*kavi*), inspired person (*viprā*), maker

1. *Evam uccāvacaṁ abhiprāyayī ṛṣīṇām mantradr̥ṣṭāyo bhavanti*, (Nir. 73); *ṛṣīḥ darśanāt* (Nir. 2.11).

2. *Kavivāṇnirmīteḥ sarvotkṛṣṭatvam pratipādayitum etatpratiyogibhūtāyāḥ Brahmā śṛṣṭeḥ svarūpam pradarśayati niyatīśaktyeti*.

(*karthā*), brilliant in mental powers (*manīṣi*), highest intellect (*dhira*) etc. They are united in their vocation and purpose; they are inspired poets and prophets and they are endowed with visions of the spirit and mind and physical visions too.

Contemplative activity was a requirement of life itself as a spiritual adventure. Anyone who could create something is a *kavi*. The Rg Vedic gods are *kavis* because they would create. Visvakarman is a *kavi* and the artisans are also *kavis*. Whoever contemplates and discovers something new and reveals it is a poet. All *ṛṣis* are poets because they are contemplators and revealers of new things. Every revelation is preceded by contemplation either in art or in science, practical or theoretical, and the revelation of truth is one of the characteristics of the *ṛṣis*. Whatever the *ṛṣi* sees, is the *darśana*. All scientists, poets and artisans are *kavis* or *ṛṣis* in India, if they are men of real visions.

The Rsis had Vision of Reality

The seers manifested the *Ṛta* and *Satya* - the Eternal Law and Truth, the Dharma and Cosmic Order - Reality through the blazing spiritual fire (RV 10. 190. 1). The seers had the true vision of the Reality (RV 10. 138. 2; 3. 33. 5; 3. 51. 1; 3. 31. 13; 4. 56. 1; 5. 43. 8; etc.). When *Ṛta* is followed, there is real peace and harmony and then one becomes a *yogin*.

Ṛta was the firm ground on which the seer tested his vision. It is the harmony of all the spheres. The Vedas are the result of a "seership" which manifested itself at two levels - psychic and mystical and which only the science of yoga fathomed. The seer has borrowed the imagery from everyday life and expressed the bare truth in the concrete garb of life and its symbols. His vision had both mythical and mystical dimensions. A selfish seer contextualizes it with a selfish motive. Then the *aucitya* - propriety is destroyed. Otherwise a vision uplifts man to a fuller growth. It admits of no law of human making. Meditation and vision gave rise to mythical and mystical poems in the Vedas. However, the visions of the Vedic seers were later rationalized for the purpose of rituals and laws.

The vision is the ground of being and source of inspiration and criterion of knowledge, as well as basis for further action in conformity with the origin. "Indeed each vision had to be filled up with

truth as to mirror the Cosmic Order (*Rta*) before it could be accounted truth. Hence the Vedic patriarchs established the law of truth and made its realization possible".³ The seers received the enlightenment. RV 7. 76 gives a typical example of the *ṛṣi*'s method: turning first to the Cosmic Order, the unfailing pattern of ever-recurring dawn in accordance with the eternal law, the poet visualizes the original action whereby his ancestors, in harmony with the divine law which brings the light, themselves discovered the light. The sages had the vision as a result of the search which changed them and enabled them to change others as they had seen and experienced the truth. The Vedic seers had mastery in the art of meditation and they understood the power of the word. "Man", "*dhi*" and "*Brahman*" were the powerful instruments they used to see the truth. Man is the sum total of his experiences stored in his psyche-the mind. He plunges himself into it and takes with him history and tradition. Here he employs his highest powers of vision and expression.

This is an active participation in truth and being. This unborn truth when internally "seen" is personal power called *Ātman*; and it is externally viewed in the Upaniṣads as Brahman. Knowing it one knows everything. "The wise bards keeping watch in their hearts take the unaging one to his abode. Longingly they gaze out towards the ocean, by these was the Sun made manifest for men" (RV 146. 4). Some of the visions are aesthetico-mystical: such are the hymns on *Rātri*, the night (RV 10. 127), on *Uṣas* (dawn) (RV 1. 48) etc. But the fundamental education was for *tapas* and self-realization and vision (RV 10. 109. 4; 10. 154. 2; 10. 190. 1; 10. 167. 1). The Atharva Veda says: I have known you Skambha by direct vision-*pratyakṣam*. I have known you Indra by direct vision (10. 7. 29-30).

The Vision is Acosmic

The right vision is the vision of *Rta* – the Cosmic Order. To have such a vision we must transcend the whole material universe and we should comprehend the entire Cosmic Order in our vision, keeping ourselves both in and out of the Cosmos simultaneously. It is like seeing a forest from afar and near. To see the whole we have to transcend the particular trees though we do not exclude any tree in our vision. The vision illuminates the seer and he sees in his deep

3. J. Miller, *The Vedas, Harmony, Meditation and Fulfilment* (London, Rider & Co., 1974), p. 19.

consciousness the truth (RV 10. 67. 1). The very nature of man is acosmic. The world is a cosmos because it follows the *Ṛta*. Man reflects God and God is reflected in man perfectly when Nature is fully known and the *Ṛta* is followed. This is the point where the human merges into the divine and the wholeness of man reflects the wholeness of God. God, world and man form a perfect yoga in the human consciousness. This is the complete acosmism of the Vedic seers.

The Seer's Mission to the Society

In the Vedas the seers spoke about the various aspects of human existence. They had a definite mission in the society. The *ṛṣis* paid attention to every walk of life and guided people, they themselves remaining as the central light showing the right path. They established *sanjñāna*, right knowledge (harmony and concord) among themselves and others. They exhorted men to love, to live in brotherhood and amity: "Meet together, speak together, let your mind be of one accord. Be all of one mind so that you may live happily together" (RV 10. 191).

"Let us have concord with our own people and concord with foreign people too. ... May we and the foreigners unite in our minds, unite in our purposes and not fight against the divine spirit within us. Let not the battle-cry rise amidst many lying slain" (AV 7. 52). This should be the aim of national and international relations even with more relevance today.

The vision inspired the *ṛṣis* to undertake a mission for humanity. The tradition of the vision and the mission was kept alive by the family poets. The ability to share the vision and the ability to undertake the same mission of the *ṛṣis* and to transmit it is the criterion that one is acceptable as a *guru*. The *guru* with a mission was an institution. He generally stayed in the *āśrama* where the people went for guidance and blessings. The *ṛṣi* had the mission of sending his disciples to spread his message while he himself remained in one place.

All the attempts in India have been to re-establish the Vedic ideal existence, to bring back the *krta yuga*. The whole yoga was practised for this purpose. It is a different life altogether, a risen life. "I

have risen with a life, risen with a good life, following the devas".⁴ Each *avatāra*-story shows how much man longed for *ṛta* or righteousness to be established even when they thought that it is beyond their reach.

Who could become a Rsi ?

Anyone from any walk of life could become a *ṛṣi*. Brāhmaṇas were recruited from all walks of life, based not on birth but on the achievement of the vision. Kavaṣa, the son of a slave girl, was accepted as a *ṛṣi* by other *ṛṣis* of his time. Vasiṣṭa was born of a low-class woman. The descendents of Bhr̥gu-Ṛṣi (RV 10. 39. 14) were master-carpenters skilled in making chariots. Ṛbhūs, the gods (gods were wise men), are celebrated as workers in wood and metals. "I am a poet, my father is a physician and my mother is a grinder of corn. All of us desiring wealth and gain pursue various means (RV 9. 112). The *ṛṣi* desired to have sons to defeat the enemies (RV 5. 23. 1; 6. 31. 1). *Ṛṣi* Maudgalya took arms to chase robbers (RV 10. 102). Nobility and learning were the criteria of Brahmanhood, not birth. Brahmanhood was not used as a means for livelihood stated in the *Ācārya Hr̥daya* which is a translation of the Tamil work Tirumalai.⁵

Different Kinds of Poets

We know that all poets are not alike. The Vedic poets too are not an exception to this. Piṅgiyāni in Aṅg. Nik. 2. 230 enumerates the four types of poets: poets by reflection (*cintākavi*), poets by traditional learning (*sūtakavi*), a didacting poet (*atthakavi*) and a poet by inspiration (*pratibhānakavi*).⁶

To explain this division no clear cut examples can be given. It might generally be accepted that *Kālidāsa* and *Vālmiki* are poets by inspiration, *Śriharṣa* is a poet by reflection, many of the family poets of the *Ṛg Veda* are poets by traditional learning, and most of our philosophical writers such as Śankara are didactic poets. In fact, all kinds of poetry is found in all poets.

4. A. C. Bose, "The Vedic Seers", in *The Seers and Thinkers, Cultural Leaders of India* (New Delhi: Government Publication Division, Government of India, 1979), p. 10.

5. *Sutra* 65, *pāsuram* 42.

6. J. Gonda, *Visions of the Vedic Poets* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1963), p. 323.

One is called a poet in the Vedas only if he has the Vision - *darśana*, which means a vision of the various forms that lie hidden in realities. When he delineates the vision in some medium of expression he is called a poet in the practical sense. Though Vālmiki had a clear vision in abundance he did not acquire the status of the poet until he wrote the actual *Rāmāyaṇa*.

The original insight is called *prakhya* and the expression of the same is *upākhyā*. There are many who have insights but do not convey them in a medium of expression. The sublimity of the vision and expression also depends on the maturity of the poet. The greater the maturity the more sublime the expression. The maturity of the poet does not mean the old age of the poet. If we examine the works of Kālidāsa, a progressive maturity of vision and expression can be observed in his dramas and poems. *Mālavikāgnimitra*, *Vikramorvaśīya* and *Śākuntala* show a greater maturity, in that order, and the same is true of the poems of *Ṛtusaṃhāra*, *Kumārasaṃbhava*, *Raghuvamśa* and *Meghadūta*. But we do not know in what order Kālidāsa wrote them. But the point is that the maturity of the poet is reflected in the sublimity of expression whether it be in a Veda or a poem or a scripture. The nature of revelation, mission etc. depends on the maturity of the poet.

Method used for Vision

We have seen that the *ṛṣis* employed a threefold method for realization, namely, penance, sacrifice and soma. Again while doing penance they employed a threefold method for attaining the vision of the reality: *māntric meditation*, *visual meditation* and *contemplation*. The *mantra* is the sound of words with great power affecting the consciousness, and man is enabled to reach the Source. The seer uses a particular word or object or idea for his visionary insight, and this is *dhyāna*. In contemplation the *ṛṣis* bring together different insights, and in the level of reality seen as one, they dive deeper into greater truth of the reality.⁷ Words and language are not adequate media of expression. But *mantra* must succeed in reproducing the vibration of the "heart" the *ṛṣi* had at the time of the insight. *Mantra* is a symbol in which the vision is expressed, and this symbol when used must reproduce the same vision.

7. J. Miller *op. cit.* p. 61

The *ṛṣis* expressed their visions in inspired words which themselves are powerful enough to inspire others who recite them. The words have power in so far as they are associated with the self; the self when it is active with its real powers can see the cosmic being and vibrate beyond the limits of cosmic matter. The higher the vision the greater the meaning of the words. The thrill of the vibration caused by the vision impregnates the word which is delivered to the hearer through the *sphoṭa*. Hence the sound goes to eternity. The hearer, when he attunes himself to the words, can get the same vision. In this context the versicle of K. K. Raja is relevant : If two *vīṇas* of the same culture are kept close to one another the motion which is produced in one will in turn, produce the sound in the other too.

The inadequacy of the medium of language is compensated to a very great extent by meditation where the abstract thought is entertained in the mind. Here we do not have the variations due to the materiality of the sound. Man is not satisfied by a conceptual level of experience of the truth. He longs for a person to person, reality to reality experience. This can be achieved only in contemplation. The main source of experience, however is contemplation. Vedic contemplation is cosmic experience within the heart. The consciousness finds itself at home in this experience. At that time the power of consciousness is firm in its own nature as in the *Kaivalya*. The Christian parallel is the same-vocal prayer, meditation and contemplation. India has this aspect of prayer transmitted through the *dhāraṇa*, *dhyaṇa* and *samādhi* of the Yoga school. The pure vision is ecstatic and unconscious, that is, the subject is completely forgotten. The seer does not see the seer.⁸ The logical reason constitutes the major instruments of our knowledge, and has enslaved intuition. The method used in the Vedic period is intuitional and the appeal is mystical.

Vision as Revelation

Every religion claims to possess the truth of transcendental nature which is not attainable by ordinary men in ordinary conditions of knowing. Some claim truth to have come to them from divine revelation, God himself revealing it, as in Christianity and Islam.

8. Cf. R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), pp. 292-381

In Hinduism there are four kinds of revelation: Vedic revelation, Natural revelation, revelation by *Avatāra* and revelation by *Anubhava*-experience. Examining the nature of these four types of revelation we come to the conclusion that all these revelations depend on *anubhava* on the part of man. No revelation is possible unless it is through a human experience. In that case the self-revelation of God is also the revelation of man's power to experience God's manifestation.

In the Vedas we have revelation expressed through language. In Natural revelation man reads Nature in the light of his experience and uses it for attaining higher excellence. *Avatāra* enshrines the revelation in words and deeds and in a living experience at the personal level. Hence it can be said that each kind of revelation is an experience for man. Language is a living reality, not something which is dead, mummified and preserved in the dictionary. The meaning of language is in its use, and every use of a word is a vivification of it. The content of revelation is something real, living and growing, and the medium of expression—language—also is alive and changing so that no one can use it a second time with exactly the same shade of meaning. Revelation, experience and language cannot be fossilized by any dogmatic definitions. The real revelation is the meaning we get when we read the Scriptures. Of course, the traditional understanding of revelation must not be overlooked. The meaning of the Scriptures is manifold because the meaning of the text enlarges with the contexts of the readers.

How can man reveal truth? The Hindu tradition holds that man in certain circumstances can rise to the vision of truth. Our seers were men of great intuition and insight, hence could see through the gross world the subtle essence of it, the law, the *Rta* that directs it. This establishment of a link with the Unseen and communion with it, is the precondition to become a seer or a guru. Hence the continuous effort to transcend the empirical level is one of the characteristics of the Indian religious quest. In the Indian tradition the poets and seers are almost identical and the terminologies used by them are interchangeable. We have seen that without *r̥sihood* no poet is a poet. With their faculties heightened by *tapas* and contemplation, the *r̥sis* soared high into the realms of gods and communed with them and gained insights into their nature and communicated them to us. This is an act of revelation. This experience gave them a new vibration

of the soul by which they were able to compose and impart their visions in poetry. The *ṛṣis* had visions which could guide the destinies of men in this country throughout the ages. This vision has given them a mission, the mission to uphold righteousness and to chastise evil. The visions of the *ṛṣis* were normative for human life on earth. The transmission of their mission took place through the family poets of the Vedas such as : Mandala II of the Gītsamatas, III of the Visvāmitras, IV of the Vāmadevas, V of the Atris, VI of the Bharadvājas, VII of the Vasiṣṭhas. Ofcourse there are other creations by non-family *ṛṣis*, their names being : Savya, Nodha, Parāśara, Gotama, Kutsa, Kakṣivat, Parucepa, Dīrghatamas and Agastya.⁹

According to Ranade "the real meaning of revelation seems to be not any external message delivered to man from without but a divine afflatus springing from within the result of the inspiration through God-intoxication."¹⁰ The revelation is not a wireless message received without the assistance of the postal department.

In the *Upaniṣads* there are references to revelation. The Br. Up. says that the Vedas are breathed forth (Br. Up. 2-4-10). According to Sve. Up. revelation takes place through the means of penance and grace of God (6. 21). *Vedānuvacana*-post-illuminational discourse-is revelation. It is in consonance with mystical illumination (Tai. Up. I. 10). Kena Up. and Iśa Up. agree that there is a human share in the revelation when it is a question of transmission (Iśa Up. 10, Kena. 1. 3). In Cha. Up. (6. 4. 5) there is a statement that the sages of old took great pains to learn the spiritual wisdom from their teachers, for fear that after these teachers had departed, there would be no one left, who would tell them "what could not be otherwise heard, and what could not be otherwise thought and what could not be otherwise known."

Tradition and Transmission

Two important aspects of revelation, therefore, are: conformity with tradition and faithfulness in transmission. These two aspects are binding both on those who have the vision and mission and those who simply receive the tradition and transmit it. The main purpose

9. Cf. Gonda, *op. cit.* pp. 9-11 passim

10. Ranade, *A Constructive Survey of Upanishadic Philosophy* (Bombay : Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1968), p. 6

of the Vedic hymns was to transmit the vision of *r̥ṣis* and not for sacrificial use. The sacrificial use was a later development.

The new insights presupposed and absorbed the previous ones and their newness was anticipated by the past tradition. "This lofty seven-headed thought-provoking vision born of reality, our ancestor discovered." (RV 10. 67. 1). This vision opens the way to deeper knowledge which comes from the *pitṛs* and the *r̥ṣis*. Using my mind (*manas*) as my eye, I perceive in vision those (seven *r̥ṣis*) who formerly offered this sacrifice (RV 10.130.6; 9.21.2; 7.40.5).

The family poets especially, and others too, look up to the tradition, not only to the form of expression but also to the content of expression. The heredity of the gift of poetry is mentioned in RV 1. 87. 5. All the visions must be the reproduction of the one and the same archetype because they are called ancestral (RV 10.67.1). The conformity with what has been seen before is a condition for truthfulness and genuineness since one and the same reality is seen. Any change must be regarded as a progress in understanding the truth. Since the whole of the reality cannot be expressed in words, the conformity with vision, conception and expression is very much important. The *aucitya* (propriety) in poetics deals with this aspect. Here is what T. S. Eliot has to say about tradition: "No poet, no artist of any art has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him for contrast and comparison among the dead (Eliot, 1979, 294).

The seers considered it their unique mission to uphold the tradition of truth whenever it was covered by untruth or tarnished by disuse. In Br. Up. (5. 15. 1) we read: "O Pūṣan, uncover the face of truth covered with the golden disc that I may see the truth (*satyam*) and *dharma*." The vision is related to consciousness and it is transferable to another consciousness or mind. Whenever in Indian religion practices without any conscious aspect behind it developed it was the duty of the seers to reverse it to the *sanātana dharma*.

Austerity for Vision and Transmission

How are the past and tradition represented in poetic tradition? Vyasa did not write *Mahābhārata* immediately though he knew what happened to the Pāṇḍavas and Kauravas. He did not write the epic

as he was witnessing it. He retired on to solitude, contemplation and austerity (*tapas*). He subjected his body to severe discipline. He reproduced the whole scene in his mind and tested it and then he was possessed by a desire to express it. He communicated it in language and we have the book *Mahābhārata*." The description of war given in the *Gīta* is not a running commentary; it is rather what the author of the *Gīta* in his pensive moments of contemplation coupled with *tapas* (austerity) could reproduce in his vision.

Likewise, the *Rāmāyaṇa* is not a News Agency report of Sri Rama's life. Vālmīki after listening to the story went to do acts of austerity and meditation. While he was in his musing mood the killing of the bird occurred before his eyes and the *Ādikāvya* "*Māniṣāda* sloka burst forth. Again he saw the whole of the *Rāmāyaṇa* in his vision and created the epic. This is what the Indian tradition says about the great poets' Creative instances. Persons with similar experience of creative activity must have written these lines about the great poets, attributing their own experiences to the proto poets (*Ādikavis*). It is rightly done. Similar must have been the case so far as the Vedic poets are concerned.

Yaska calls the *ṛṣis sākṣātkṛta dharmāṇah* – those who had the privilege of immediate experiences of the reality. These men of vision put down their intuitions (*darśana*) into the form of the Vedas and Vedangas for their use. Out of *sākṣātkāra* (realization) comes the vision where images are created and used for expressing the experience.

The poet has the *prajñānaghana* – realm of consciousness where all his experiences are stored as unspecified. Any incident may activate this and in the moment of vivid consciousness he gets his *prajñāna cakṣus* with which he sees everything devoid of any medium, and later he gives expression to this in language.¹²

11. E.R. Shreekrishna Sharma, *Concept of Poetry in Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (Madras: Madras University, 1976-77), pp. 1-20, deals with the poetic expression in a new way. Here I draw heavily on his ideas.

12. *Br. Up.* (4.5.13) says: *Ātma . . . kṛtsnah prajñāna ghana eva*, the whole mass of intelligence. In *Mānd. Up.* 5 we see: *prajñāna-ghana eva, ānandamaya*, which we may translate: "the realm of consciousness is blissful." Sri Aurobindo translates the *Iṣa Up.* 13; *Iti śuśrūma dhīrāṇām ye nah tad vicācṣire*, "this is the lore we have received from the wise who revealed that to our understanding."

The fruits are crushed and the juice (*rasa*) is separated. So also in the harsh realities of the world the seer sees the essence of it, the spirit of it which, when it touches us clothed in words, pervades our beings and becomes the '*rasa*' the essence of our being.

The seers handed down the truth as they saw it and as they lived it. 'To see' is a symbol of direct, immediate, certain and verified knowledge. This is a seeing not by the eyes turned outwards but inwards (*avṛtta cakṣuḥ*). It is not a certainty of the mediated inference but the immediacy of the direct knowing that is indicated by the verb 'to see'.

The *guru* or teacher or *ṛṣi* belongs to a galaxy and falls in line with other teachers. It is not a line drawn once and for all but instead it projects itself as creativity advances. The line is the tradition of teachers who guard the tradition and produces them. It is an ancient and immemorial tradition. The Brahmagvidya, the foundation of all knowledge, was taught first by Brahmā who rose first among the gods. He taught it to others and the tradition started. Avidya has no beginning but it has an end, while Brahmagvidya has a beginning but it has no end.¹³

Conclusion

We have already seen that the Vedic *ṛṣis* had visions which are revelations for them and these visions entrusted them with a mission for posterity. The Vedic tradition very carefully handed down to us the message. The normative power in Indian tradition is not the power of the institution but the power of the vision. Our land honours not the temporal powers but the spiritual. Renunciation is the purpose of power and wealth in India, not the pursuit of selfish ends. Kalidasa said: *tyāgāya sambhurthārthānām* (of those who acquire wealth for renunciation) about the kings of Raghu's family. Asoka who renounced war, and Gandhi who rejected comfort and power are "great" in our land. When Syāvāsva, an ordinary man in Vedic period (RV 5. 61) wanted to marry the queen he was asked to attain *ṛṣihood* as a mark of merit. The only long-lasting tradition in India is the tradition of the *ṛṣis*. They represent the ultimate power and the criterion of authority in case of doubt. All missions must be

13. Cf. N. A. Nikam, "The Upanishadic Teachers," in *Seers and Thinkers*, Cultural Leaders of India, pp. 18-29.

transmissions of the spiritual vision so that they may be communications of the message of the Reality.

Now, briefly we shall see how the vision was the normative principle in the religious history of India. When something is wrong, go for the vision of truth and undertake a self-correction. When the sacrificial details became nauseating, the cultured people revolted against this practice; because the Brahmins became exploiters and not seers. But some devoted themselves to thinking and philosophizing. There arose the forest-dwellers, hermits, wandering ascetics, who renounced the world and who had nothing to do with the sacrifices of the Brahmanas. They taught the internal way, a shift from rituals to contemplation – mystic meanings and significances of the sacrifices. The Āraṇyakas and the Upanisads contained the best of the religious thoughts and intuitions of the seers as a continuation of the Vedic intuitionary tradition.

The Brahmanic religion was costly and elaborate and got alienated from the common people. The Upanisads came with self-knowledge and renunciation but it was possible only for a cultured minority. The common man was left alone. Then came Buddhism and Jainism denying the authority of the Vedas and the sacrificial cult. The Buddha confined himself to the solution of the problems of sorrow of the common people. He did not deal with the Brahmanic sacrifice or Upanisadic Reality. In the place of formalism Buddha preached love, compassion and simple living.

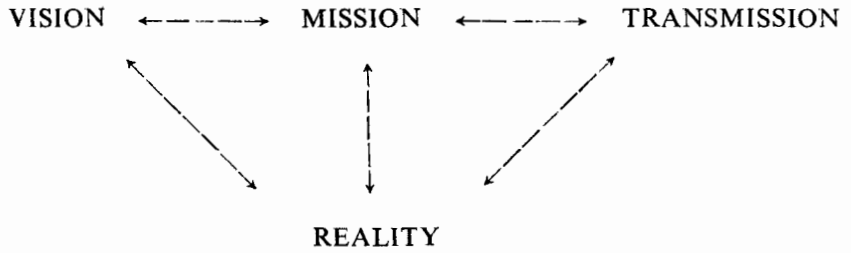
Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism got the upper hand in this context with devotion, temple and idol worship with non-Aryan mode of worship and cult. Later the whole religion of the Hindus was held together under one umbrella of Brahmanism by the Epics and Purāṇas.

In all these religious transformations we see how the visions of the Vedic poets act as a continuous internal thread which is the *raison-de-être* of all the movements in religious innovations. Conformity with the visions of the ṛṣis was the goal in all transformations and reformations. Only the one with ṛṣihood lives in the hearts of the Indians whatever walk of life he may be in -religious, social or political.

The religion in India is the religion of the poet or ṛṣi. Tagore wrote: "My religion is essentially a poet's religion. Its touch comes

to me through the same unseen and trackless channels as does the inspiration of my music. All what I feel about it is from the vision and not from knowledge".¹⁴

The total interrelation between vision, mission and transmission and their relation to reality is shown graphically as follows :



14. Cf. Gonda, *op. cit.* p. 348