

3.1 THE CREATIVE POWER

THERE ARE FEW MYSTIC REALITIES that have been so frequently and so consistently described as God's creative Power. Mystics of many nations and religions have said that the creation is God's emanation; that the oneness of God becomes the multiplicity of creation through the dynamic, ever present activity of this divine Power. Through this primal outpouring, God has created and continually maintains, supports and administers His creation. It is the link between the creation and God. The continuous movement, order and intelligence in creation is a manifestation of the workings of this primal, divine Power or Vibration.

From man's point of view, the creative Power not only provides his link with God, but also the path of his return to the Divine; for one of the continuous refrains throughout mystic literature is that this Power can be heard as heavenly sound or music and can be seen as a divine light or radiance on the inner planes of creation. It is by this means that the soul returns to God, carried blissfully upward on a beam of celestial glory. Many of the names for this Power reflect not only its audibility, but also the captivating sweetness of its music.

Over the course of time, the divine Power has been given thousands of names in different languages, some of which are given here. The size of this section in relationship to others is an indication of the great importance mystics have ascribed to it. Many descriptions of the supreme Lord, such as eternal, immortal and so on, are also used for this Power; and many terms for it are apparent conundrums such as the unspoken Language, the unutterable Word, the silent Music, and so forth.

Terms that specifically relate to the music of the creative Power are considered in Section 3.II.

KEY ENTRIES: Āb-i Ḥayāt, anāhata, Bread, Breath of God, Life Stream, Living Water, Logos, Nāda, Nām, Shabd, Sound, Sraosha, Tree of Life, Vohu Manō, Wisdom, Word.

Udgīth(a) (S/H) *Lit.* upward (*ud*) song (*gīthā*);¹ the Song from above, the Sound from above; the celestial or heavenly Song; the Song of the heavenly regions; the higher or heavenly Music; also the name of a hymn from the *Sāma Veda*. The term is used in the *Chhāndogya Upanishad* for the creative Sound or Word, where it is also called *Om* or *Praṇava*:

Meditate upon the syllable *Om*, the *Udgītha*,
 for the *Udgītha* is sung, beginning with *Om*...
 The essence of the *Sāma (Veda)* is the *Udgītha*....
 That *Udgītha* is the essence of all essences,
 the supreme, the ultimate.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:1.1–3

And:

He who ... meditates on the syllable *Om*, the *Udgītha*,
 he indeed becomes a fulfiller of desires.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:1.7

The *Chhāndogya Upanishad* goes on to speak allegorically of the various ways in which people try to meditate on the *Udgītha*.² But demons sully their efforts, and they are unfruitful. Finally, meditation on the *Udgītha* as the *mukhya prāṇa* (principal breath, principal life energy) is tried, and this finally overcomes the demons:

Then they (the gods in the allegory)
 meditated on the *Udgītha*
 as the principal life energy (*mukhya prāṇa*).
 And when the demons attacked it, they were destroyed,
 just as a clod of earth striking a stone is shattered.

Chhāndogya Upanishad 1:2.7

The highest life energy is that of the true *Udgītha*, *Om* or Sound, and it seems that in this sense the *mukhya prāṇa* actually refers to the Sound Current, not the lower *prāṇas* of the body, as understood in *yoga* philosophy. The demons are the weaknesses and powers of the mind that are dispersed when confronted with the true *Udgītha*.

See also: **Om, Praṇava.**

1. *Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 14:4.1.25.
2. *Chhāndogya Upanishad* 1:2ff.

Umm al-Kitāb (A/P) *Lit.* Mother (*Umm*) of the Book (*al-Kitāb*); an expression from the *Qur'ān*:

Allāh blots out or confirms whatever He pleases:

With Him is the Mother of the Book (*Umm al-Kitāb*).

Qur'ān 13:39; cf. *AYA*

This “Mother of the Book” is believed by Muslims to be a prototype or blueprint in heaven of the *Qur'ān*, inscribed on the Well-Guarded Tablet (*al-Lawḥ al-Mahfūz*). Sufis have equated the *Umm al-Kitāb* (Mother of the Book) with the Primal Intelligence (*al-'Aql al-Awwal*). It is said that the Supreme Pen (*al-Qalam al-'Alá*) writes the story of creation on the Well-Guarded Tablet. It is there that the destiny of the world is ‘written’. The Mother of the Book is associated with this Supreme Pen and Well-Guarded Tablet. In a general sense, these are all metaphors for the divine creative power:

(*Umm al-Kitāb*) means the Essence of the Book, which is the Well-Guarded Tablet. In *Ṣūfī* terms, it refers to the Primal Intelligence (*'Aql-i Avval*), which is the level of Unity (*Vaḥdat*).

Tahānawī, Kashshāf Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Funūn, KIF p.91, in FNI3 p.138

Umm al-Kitāb represents the Primal Intelligence (*'Aql-i Avval*) and the Supreme Pen (*Qalam-i 'Alá*).

Mir'āt-i 'Ushshāq, in TAT p.172, in FNI3 p.138

Rūmī says that the real meaning of *Umm al-Kitāb* is to be found with *Allāh*:

The letters are the vessel:

therein the meaning is contained like water;

But the sea of the meaning is (with God) –

“with Him is the *Umm al-Kitāb*”.

In this world, the bitter sea and the sweet sea are divided –

between them is “a barrier which they do not seek to cross”.

Know that both these flow from one origin.

Pass on from them both, go to their origin!

Rūmī, Maṣnavī I:296–98, MJR2 p.19

See also: **al-'Aql al-Awwal, al-Qalam** (6.3).

Uncion (of Incorruption) See Oil.

Utterance Something uttered, such as a statement, speech or words; a term sometimes used for the creative emanation of God's Word. In the early Christian *Odes of Solomon*, for instance, the writer speaks of the "Utterance" of the "Word" by means of which the inner realms and powers (the "aeons") came into being and work in harmony with each other. They "acquired speech" and "spoke to one another":

For the subtlety of the Word cannot be told,
and like (the wonder of) its Utterance,
so too is its swiftness and its penetration,
for its course is without end....

By it, the *aeons* (worlds) spoke to one another,
and those that were silent acquired speech....

For the Mouth of the Most High spoke to them,
and His expression came about by means of it (the Word).

Odes of Solomon 12:5, 8, 11

In Hebrew, the terms *ma'amarot* (utterances), *imra* and *imarot* (words) are used for God's ten utterances, according to the creation story in the first chapter of *Genesis* ("And God said, 'Let there be light!' ... 'Let there be a firmament ...'" etc.). Later rabbis and Jewish mystics interpreted these 'utterances' as manifestations of the original, divine creative impulse.

See also: **ma'amarot, Speech.**

Vāch, Vāk (S/H/Pu) *Lit.* word, speech, voice; a Vedic term for the divine Creative Word; equivalent to the English use of Word, the Arabic *Kalimah*, the Greek *Logos*, the Latin *Verbum*, and the Avestan *Manthrā*. In Vedic literature, *Vāk* and *Shabd* are also used synonymously. In Hindu culture, *Vāch* is also a name for *Sarasvatī*, the goddess of speech. Hence, a person with the gift of eloquence is considered to have been blessed by the goddess. In Indian mythology, *Vāch* is credited with extensive powers. She pervades heaven and earth, and is the power behind all phenomena. *Vāch* is also said to have discovered *Amṛit* (Nectar of immortality). Such a description is suggestive of a symbolic meaning of *Vāch* as the creative Power. In the *Brāhmaṇas* (sacred texts attached to the *Vedas*), *Vāk* is "second" to the Supreme in the creative process:

This (in the beginning) was only the Lord of the universe.
His Word (*Vāk*) was with Him; this Word was His second.
He contemplated; He said:

“I will deliver this Word so that she will produce,
and bring into being all this world.”

Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa 20:14.2, VE p.107

Vāk is also “infinite” and the “support” of all creation:

The Word (*Vāk*) is infinite, immense, beyond all this....

All the gods, the celestial spirits, men and animals,
live in the Word (*Vāk*).

In the Word (*Vāk*), all the worlds find their support.

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 2:8.8.4, VE p.107

In the *Haṃsa Upanishad*, a description is given of ten stages experienced as the soul leaves the body in meditation. The eighth stage is said to be the experience of the *Parāvāk* (supreme Word). The ninth is the opening of the third eye, followed by the soul’s realization of *Brahman*:

In the eighth, the supreme Word (*Parāvāk*) is heard;

In the ninth, ... the pure divine eye opens;

In the tenth, he attains *Parabrahman*,

and the soul (*ātman*) become one with *Brahman*.

Haṃsa Upanishad 16; cf. TMU pp.163, 299

The term is also used in Jainism. Jinasenāchārya writes in the *Ādi Purāṇa* that although the divine Speech is unspoken, it is understood by all, and nourishes all:

The divine Word (*Vāk*) emanating from the Lord *Tīrthakara*
came without the Lord’s wish to speak....

The Word came without any movement of the palate,
throat or lips, and without showing any teeth....

Though the language was one, yet it assumed different forms,
depending on the language known to each listener....

Even as canal water, though one, takes different forms
in the different trees it irrigates.

Jinasenāchārya, Ādi Purāṇa 1:186, 184, 187, 23:71, APJ1 pp.25, 549

See also: **Kalimah, Logos, Word.**

Vahishta Manō (Av) *Lit.* Highest (*Vahishta*) Mind (*Manō*); Great Mind; First or Primal Intelligence; used by Zarathushtra for the creative Power.

See also: **Vohu Manō**.

Vahman (Pv) See **Vohu Manō**.

Vānī (S/H) See **Bānī**.

Verbum (L) *Lit.* Word; the divine Creative Word; the Latin term used in Christian texts for the Greek *Logos*.

See **Logos**.

Vine, Vine of Life, Vine of souls See **True Vine**.

Virginal Spirit, Virgin of the Holy Spirit, Virgin of Light Gnostic and Hermetic terms used for God, for the Holy Spirit, Wisdom or Mother as the creative Power, and for other powers within the creative hierarchy. *Zostrianos*, for example, speaks of the “Virgin Light”.¹ The *Second Book of Jeu* describes the “baptism of fire” that is given by the “Virgin of the Light”.² *On the Origin of the World* speaks of the “Virgin of the Holy Spirit”.³ In the *Pistis Sophia*, the “Virgin of the Light”⁴ is the power responsible for overseeing the rebirth of souls according to their deeds.

In the *Gospel of the Egyptians*, the Creator is described by such expressions as the “great, invisible, incomprehensible Virginal Spirit”⁵ and the “great, invisible, uncallable, unnameable Virginal Spirit”.⁶ And the *Apocryphon of John* describes the supreme Lord as the “invisible, Virginal Spirit who is perfect”⁷ from whom the “*Pronoia*”, the “Thinking” or Primal Thought proceeds as the creative Power.

Such terms are also very common in Manichaean literature, where scholars have tended to use the term ‘Maiden’ rather than ‘Virgin’ in their translations, though it comes to the same thing. Like the gnostic texts, these writings characteristically speak of the Holy Spirit as the “glorious Maiden of Light”⁸ and so on.

See also: **Mother**.

1. *Zostrianos* 129, *NHS31* pp.218–19.
2. *Second Book of Jeu* 110:46, *BC* pp.148–49.
3. *On the Origin of the World* 105:33, *NHS21* pp.44–45.
4. *Pistis Sophia*, *PS* and *PSGG* – many places, throughout.

5. *Gospel of the Egyptians* 49, *NHS4* p.94.
6. *Gospel of the Egyptians* 55, 65, *NHS4* pp.114, 152.
7. *Apocryphon of John* 4, *NHS33* p.33.
8. *Manichaean Psalm Book CCXXXVII*, *MPB* p.37.

Vohu Manō (Av), **Vahman** (Pv), **Mānā** (Md) *Lit.* Great, Pre-eminent, First or Primal (*Vohu*) Mind (*Manō*); Primal Intelligence. Often translated by the expression Good (*Vohu*) Mind (*Manō*), this is one of the many fundamental expressions in the *Gāthās* of Zarathushtra concerning whose meaning scholars disagree. From its usage and from the meaning given to it by the third-century Iranian mystic, Mānī, the term seems to refer to the divine creative power. It is God's First or Primal Mind, His Intelligence or Creative Word which manifests and maintains all creation. Similar expressions are very common in a variety of languages, in Greek, gnostic and Sufi traditions.

In later Zoroastrian thought, *Vohu Manō* retains the position of first-born in the creation of his Father, *Ahurā Mazdā*. Along with the other *Ameshā Spentās*, he is personalized and given the status of an archangel with various functions and duties. He is the guardian of wisdom and the protection given to creation against the attack of the evil Spirit. He is the intermediary through whom the devout may aspire to reach *Ahurā Mazdā*. Metaphysically speaking, he is also the one who welcomes the souls of the righteous into paradise, rising from his golden throne to receive the newcomers with kindness and gracious words.

In more philosophical terms, *Vohu Manō* is perceived as the vital force within all living creatures on the 'good' side of creation (according to Zoroastrian dualism). He is regarded as being present everywhere, and all the good thoughts, good deeds and good words of human beings are considered to be his doing. In Zoroastrian tradition, *Vohu Manō* is also credited with being the guardian of the animal kingdom. All these may be seen as a personalization of aspects of the divine creative power.

In his *Gāthās*, Zarathushtra places great emphasis on *Vohu Manō*. It is, he says, the means by which the soul may reach God:

Gladly would I, *Mazdā Ahurā*, reach up to You,
through *Vohu Manō*.

Zarathushtra, Yasna 28:2; cf. DSZ p.94

In another verse, he uses imagery familiar to far later Jewish, Christian, Sufi and Indian mystics – that of the lover and the Beloved:

I know, O *Mazdā*, the reason why I am indeed so helpless, ...
but, O *Ahurā*, I appeal to You as lover to Beloved:

Teach me how I may be one with You in perfect Bliss;
 Through Your divine Truth (*Ashā*),
 make me feel the might of Your Primal Mind (*Vohu Manō*).

Zarathushtra, Yasna 46:2; cf. DSZ p.575

In the Zoroastrian *Dēnkart*, *Vohu Manō* is described as “visiting” the “life principle” or soul:

Every opening of the (inner) eye
 (comes to pass) by the complete visiting of *Vohu Manō*
 to the life principle.

Dēnkart, CTPD p.281; cf. GVM p.46

In Middle Eastern mysticism, the soul was commonly said to be in search of its lost garment or robe of light and glory which it discarded when it left its heavenly home with God. In Zoroastrianism, the soul’s guide and the bestower of its immortal garment was understood to be *Vohu Manō*. Swedish scholar Geo Widengren writes:

It is related in a passage in *Dātastān-i Dēnik* (a Zoroastrian text) that the soul of the righteous man, accompanied by the Good Spirit (*Vohu Manō*) who is the ‘companion of the soul’ after death, ascends to the heavenly abodes and to the garment.... And having introduced the soul to *Ahurā Mazdā*, *Vohu Manō* shows it its throne and reward.

Geo Widengren, The Great Vohu Manah, GVM pp.49–50

That is, it is *Vohu Manō*, the creative Power, who takes the soul to God, and gives it its garment of light. In the same Zoroastrian book, *Vohu Manō* is likened to a seamless “garment”:

It is necessary that it is the healthy, white, pure, single (garment), made in one piece, just as *Vohu Manō* is in this manner the first creature (created power). Consequently, it is from him (*Vohu Manō*) that ... the innermost and concealed garment has its appellation.

Dātastān-i Dēnik 40:2; cf. GVM p.50

Though an Avestan term, *Manō* became incorporated into later Persian and Mesopotamian languages, where it is commonly translated as ‘mind’, but it is more in keeping with what mystics mean in modern times by ‘soul’. *Manō*, on its own, was also used for the Mind of God, meaning His creative Thought or Power.

Mandaean texts from southern Mesopotamia, stemming from earliest Christian times, use the term *Mānā* or First *Mānā*, incorporating the Persian

term into their own Aramaic-like language. In places, *Mānā* seems to be the divine Source itself. It is the First Power, the First Cause, the First Thought or creative Intelligence, the Primal Essence or Essence of Being that lies behind everything:

I worship, laud and praise that great, secret, First *Mānā*
 who abode for nine hundred and ninety-nine myriads of years
 alone in His own abode – for no companion came to Him.
 (None existed) save that great, secret, First *Mānā*.

Mandaean Prayer Book 36, CPM pp.36–37

In other instances, the First *Mānā* is the Emanation or Messenger of God, known to the Mandaeans – among other names – as the “Great First Life”:

Let there be light, let there be light!
 Let there be the light of the Great First Life!
 There shone forth wisdom, vigilance and praise
 of the First *Mānā* which came from its place....

Before the *Mānā* there is light, behind the *Mānā* glory,
 and at either side of the *Mānā*,
 radiance, brilliance and purity.

Mandaean Prayer Book 5, CPM p.4

This Messenger is one of love, bringing *Nāṣīrūtha* (mystic Truth) to human beings:

As long as water flows will the lovingkindness
 of the mystic *Mānā* flow on.
 He will enlighten your mind with *Nāṣīrūtha*.

Mandaean Prayer Book 376, CPM p.275

And likewise:

The great *Mānā* was dazzlingly bright in His glory.
 So too shall these living, shining,
 steadfast and vigorous souls shine in splendour
 in the great place of Light and the everlasting abode.

Mandaean Prayer Book 56, CPM p.49

In Zarathushtra’s Avestan language the individual soul, as a spark of the divine, was also known as *manō*, synonymous with the Avestan *urvan*, meaning soul. The relationship between *manō* and *Manō* or *Vohu Manō* is the same as that which exists between *ātman* (individual self or soul) and