

Vayu

Definitional Essay

Theosophy Trust

Vayu is air and wind in Sanskrit, and the deity associated with them in Vedic tradition. In the Theosophical interpretation developed by Professor Iyer, *Vayu* also signifies spiritual air within a triad of spiritual fire, air and sun. The visible movement of wind offers a beginning for contemplation, but the teaching reaches beyond ordinary atmosphere. It asks how motion, breath and expression belong within a living order, and how a human being can participate in that order more consciously.

The Theosophical Glossary preserves several levels of the term. It names air as a state of matter, presents *Vayu* as a divine figure, and places him in a close relationship with *Agni* and *Surya*. The passage also gives a particular correspondence with human principles. These meanings need to be distinguished. A deity, a cosmic principle and a physical element are related through the symbolic account; they are not simply three interchangeable definitions of a substance.

In the Glossary's particular psychological correspondence, *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* are related respectively to *Kama*, *Kama-Manas* and *Manas*. This differs in emphasis from Professor Iyer's contemplation of the primordial triad. The comparison reminds us to follow the level at which a symbol is being used. *Vayu* can belong to an account of the desire-linked mind without every reference to spiritual air being confined to that meaning. A symbol can disclose several relationships while requiring precision in each.

Professor Iyer's "Spectator and Participant" supplies the governing context. *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* are described as the primeval triune rays within the *Tetraktys*, arising in relation to *Hiranyagarbha-Prajapati*. Their distinction belongs inside a prior unity. He expressly cautions against separating the three from one another or from the primordial seven, the *Ah-hi*. To study *Vayu* well is therefore to retain both its particular character and the whole through which that character becomes meaningful.

Spiritual air can suggest mediation: a movement through which something becomes communicable. Breath carries a spoken word; the word can convey an intention or an idea. This ordinary relationship is an analogy for approaching the teaching, not a physical explanation of cosmic manifestation. The image directs attention toward the relationship between an intention and the means through which it becomes effective. The correspondence invites a deeper inquiry into expression while leaving each level its proper conditions.

The doctrine of divine breaths widens this inquiry further. In the same essay, Professor Iyer places the *Ah-hi* and the emergence of spiritual intelligences within a cosmological account of periodic manifestation. Breath there does not mean the respiration of a body. The Great Breath offers the larger horizon of manifestation and withdrawal; *Vayu* belongs to a more particular field of symbolic and elemental relationships. Holding this distinction prevents an illuminating comparison from becoming a careless identification.

Professor Iyer turns from cosmic relations to the rhythm of a day. He suggests contemplating the unity of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* at dawn, sunset, midday and midnight. The point is sustained recollection and gratitude. A sacred idea can become sufficiently familiar that ordinary events recall it, without requiring a continuous verbal commentary. The day's changes then offer occasions to recover an intention that activity may have obscured.

In "Cognition, Breath and Speech," he again distinguishes the philosophical meaning of breath from bodily manipulation. His account extends through subtler vestures and relates the breaths to rhythms associated with *Buddhi*. Its emphasis belongs to a discipline of consciousness. The student need not turn every reference to breath into an instruction for controlling respiration. The deeper question concerns the awareness from which speech and action arise.

This makes speech a fruitful place for study. Professor Iyer discusses recitation and the use of meaningful sound in gathering a restless mind. The words are not merely emitted; attention participates in their expression. Their usefulness depends upon the consciousness guiding the utterance. Audible repetition alone cannot be assumed to confer the understanding it names. Listening to what one is saying can reveal the distance between an affirmed principle and the motive presently using it.

Consider explaining a task to someone who is learning it for the first time. The explanation may contain correct information and still be too hurried to follow. A speaker who listens only for the sound of personal competence may overlook the learner's hesitation. A brief pause, a simpler sentence or an invitation to ask a question can change the encounter. The same knowledge becomes more useful because its expression has become attentive to another person.

Vayu offers an image for contemplating this passage from inward intention to shared understanding. We cannot give someone knowledge merely by releasing a stream of words. We must attend to the conditions through which meaning can be received. Tone, timing and the listener's circumstances matter. This is a human application of mediation, rather than a claim that kindness can be measured as a particular occult current.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception includes the whole encounter. The learner may be tired, unfamiliar with a term, or reluctant to expose uncertainty. The task may also carry consequences

for people who will later depend on it being done well. The speaker's need to finish quickly is one consideration among these others. A wider view can lead to a better sequence of instruction and a more patient use of time.

Silence has a place in that sequence. A pause may allow a question to form or let a difficult idea settle. It may also conceal withdrawal or impatience. The outward absence of speech does not settle its inward quality. Self-study asks what the silence is serving. A helpful quiet remains present to the other person; it does not use distance to punish or to display an imagined superiority.

The distinction between movement and rest also concerns thought. A mind can be busy while moving repeatedly around the same anxiety. It can become quiet enough to discover a relation that activity had hidden. The aim is not to condemn mental motion, but to educate its use. In Theosophical terms, *Manas* becomes more receptive to *Buddhi* as attention is freed from the need to confirm every personal demand. Thought then has a clearer purpose and more room to listen.

Human Solidarity gives that education its wider direction. A household, workplace or circle of friends is affected by the ways its members speak and listen. We cannot control everyone's inward state, but we can help make questions welcome and correction less humiliating. Professor Iyer's concern for a genuine contribution to other lives gives contemplation a practical test. Does an inward discipline improve the conditions under which others can understand, act and grow?

The image of a shared atmosphere can strengthen this responsibility without replacing ordinary judgment. One person's steadiness may help a difficult conversation proceed, yet it cannot remove every source of distress. Clear agreements, practical assistance and time may also be needed. Spiritual reflection becomes trustworthy when it increases our willingness to notice what the situation actually requires. It should not make us demand that another person feel peaceful because we have spoken gently.

Vayu thus brings the attention toward the life of expression. Something is received, formed inwardly and offered into a field that belongs to more than oneself. The student can return to that simple movement throughout the day: gather the intention, find a fitting expression, and remain attentive to its effects. Within the greater unity of fire, air and sun, spiritual air becomes a reminder to let understanding circulate through useful speech, patient listening and a presence that gives others room.

Glossary

Adept — A person who has attained profound spiritual knowledge and mastery through discipline; the cited passages emphasize wisdom joined to service.

Adoration — Reverent attention and devotion; in the cited account, the Monad's orientation toward its spiritual source.

Agni — Fire; the Vedic divine figure associated with sacred fire and creative spiritual energy.

Ah-hi — Spiritual intelligences that contain and reflect universal ideation in the cited cosmology.

Anandamaya Kosha — The bliss sheath in Vedantic classifications; related to the causal vesture in the quoted teaching, with distinctions depending on the system and context.

Androgyne — A symbolic unity of masculine and feminine creative aspects.

Anugita — A philosophical dialogue within the *Mahabharata*, cited here for its discussion of breath, speech and the movable and immovable minds.

Arcane — Hidden or esoteric; requiring more than an outward reading.

Astral — Pertaining to a subtle plane or vehicle, particularly the formative pattern underlying physical embodiment.

Buddhi — The spiritual soul or faculty of intuitive discernment; Buddhic means pertaining to it.

Builders — Spiritual intelligences associated with the formation and ordering of worlds.

Cognition — Knowing or the act of knowing; cogniser names the knower, and cognised refers to what is known.

Correspondence — A meaningful relation between different orders or levels; an instrument of analogy that requires attention to context.

Cosmic Ideation — The universal aspect of intelligence or thought considered as a source of manifested consciousness in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Dhyan-Chohans — Spiritual intelligences; the designation used by Blavatsky in defining the *Ah-hi*.

Drawing a Larger Circle of Conception — Widening understanding to include more relationships, consequences and the needs of others.

Duration — In the cited Theosophical usage, an underlying continuity distinguished from ordinary measurements of successive events.

Emanation — An unfolding or radiation from a source, distinguished in the teaching from manufacture by an external maker.

Esoteric — Pertaining to an inward or occult interpretation of a teaching, distinguished from its outward formulation.

Father-Mother — A symbolic expression for complementary spiritual and substantial powers held together in a primordial unity; also written Mother-Father.

Fohat — The dynamic energy relating Cosmic Ideation to manifestation in *The Secret Doctrine*; not simply another name for *Vayu*.

Gandharvas — Celestial beings associated with music and sacred sound; the quoted Glossary entry names *Vayu* as their king.

Great Breath — The Theosophical symbol of universal motion and the rhythm of manifestation and withdrawal; distinguished from bodily respiration and from the particular principle *Vayu*.

Gupta Vidya — Sacred or esoteric wisdom; also the title of Professor Iyer's collected Theosophical writings.

Hanuman — The heroic figure in the *Ramayana* described in the cited Glossary entry as a son of *Vayu*.

Hiranyagarbha-Prajapati — The cosmic golden egg considered in relation to the Lord of beings; a combined symbol of cosmic emergence in the quoted account.

Human Solidarity — The shared dignity and interdependence of human beings, expressed through responsibility for one another's welfare.

Indra — A Vedic deity; *Vayu* is identified with one of his forms in the cited Glossary correspondence.

Kama — Desire; in the cited Theosophical psychology, a principle that may condition the personal mind.

Kama-Manas — The mind in alliance with desire; distinguished from mind receptive to spiritual discernment.

Karana sharira — The causal body or vesture in the cited account of the subtler meanings of breath.

Kosmos — The universe considered as an ordered whole.

Latent — Present as a possibility or capacity that has not yet become active or manifest.

Manas — The self-conscious thinking principle; in its higher sense, the reincarnating individuality. Manasic means pertaining to this principle.

Manasaputras — Sons of Mind; spiritual intelligences associated with the awakening of self-conscious *Manas* in humanity.

Manifestation — The expression of differentiated existence from a subtler or unmanifest condition.

Mantram — A sacred formula or invocation; *mantra* is another form, and *mantras* is a plural used in the cited discussion of recitation.

Manvantara — A period of manifestation and activity, contrasted with *pralaya*; manvantaric means pertaining to such a period.

Mediation — The relation or process through which something becomes expressible or communicable; used here as an analogy for approaching spiritual air.

Metaphysics — Inquiry into the fundamental nature and principles of reality, including consciousness and causation; metaphysical means pertaining to such inquiry.

Monad — The spiritual unit or pilgrim, commonly related to *Atma-Buddhi*; its essential unity is distinguished from the changing vehicles through which evolution proceeds.

Nirukta — A traditional work on Vedic words and their meanings, cited within the Glossary entry on *Vayu*.

Noetic — Pertaining to the higher mind and spiritual cognition, distinguished from merely personal or reactive mental activity.

Pralaya — A period of dissolution or rest between cycles of manifested activity.

Pranayama — Discipline of breath in yoga; Professor Iyer emphasizes its subtler philosophical meaning in the cited passage.

Primordial — Pertaining to an original or underlying condition before later differentiation.

Ramayana — The Hindu epic in which *Hanuman* is a central heroic figure.

Self-consciousness — The capacity to reflect upon one's own experience, intention and action; the sources distinguish personal and more universal degrees.

Spiritual Sun — The inward source of spiritual illumination contemplated beyond the visible solar orb in Theosophical symbolism.

Stanzas of Dzyan — The archaic stanzas presented and interpreted in *The Secret Doctrine*.

Surya — The Sun in Vedic tradition; in the Theosophical interpretation, a symbol of spiritual illumination whose visible expression reflects a deeper source.

Tetraktys — The Pythagorean sacred four, interpreted through several cosmological relationships in Theosophy; also spelled *Tetractys*.

Trimurti — A threefold divine expression; the cited contexts use *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*, or the triad of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya*.

Vata — Wind; a name associated with *Vayu* in the cited Glossary entry.

Vayu — Air or wind and the deity associated with them; in the cited Theosophical context, spiritual air within the triad of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya*.

Vedic — Pertaining to the early Hindu sacred texts known as the *Vedas* and the tradition associated with them.

Vestures — The bodies or instruments through which consciousness is expressed at different levels in Theosophy.

Vishnu Purana — A traditional Hindu text concerning *Vishnu*, cosmology and sacred history.

Yoga — Spiritual discipline directed toward integration and realization; a *yogi* or *yogin* is a practitioner.

Quotes for Meditation and Self Study

1. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 364, “Vayu”.

“Air: the god and sovereign of the air; one of the five states of matter, namely the gaseous; one of the five elements, called, as wind, *Vâta*. The *Vishnu Purâna* makes *Vâyû* King of the *Gandharvas*. He is the father of *Hanumân*, in the *Râmâyana*.”

Meditation thought: The entry begins with air and a divine figure associated with it. Keep the physical, mythological and philosophical meanings distinct while studying how the source relates them.

2. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 316.

“From that One and the egg, the inseparable and androgyne *Hiranyagarbha-Prajapati*, emanate the Three-in-One, the *Tetraktys* or sacred Four. The original triune rays in the *Tetraktys* are the primeval Vedic *Trimurti* of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* – spiritual fire, spiritual air and spiritual sun. From these emanate the other seven. Together they constitute either the seven or the ten, depending upon how one counts the original Three-in-One. However reckoned, one must not emphasize any separation between *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* or between these three and the primordial seven, the *Ah-Hi*.”

Meditation thought: *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya* are distinguished within a prior unity. A useful distinction should clarify a relationship without turning its participants into isolated powers.

3. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 316.

“It is best to think of them as one while meditating at dawn, at sunset, at midday and midnight. Whether one employs a sacred *mantram* or invocation to draw one's entire attention to the great Mystery, or whether one has the idea of it so impacted in the consciousness that it may be linked to anything before the mind's eye, this is the path of those who are serious about living a life of constant gratitude. Once a taste for it is developed, it is pure bliss. It is better to spend time in gratitude than in brooding over the shadow.”

Meditation thought: The changing hours can recall a steady intention. Choose an ordinary transition in the day as an occasion for gratitude and a conscious return to what deserves your attention.

4. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 315.

“This is the divine *Tetraktys*, the sacred four, the eternal self-existent One called the concealed Lord and also known as the androgyne Father-Mother, the direct emanation from the primordial Flame. From this emanate the primordial seven, the highest *Ah-Hi*, the divine breaths; from those emanate the *Manasaputras* as well as the builders of form. The primordial seven, the highest beings on the scale of existence, latent during *pralaya* and active during *manvantara*, constitute the ray of the *Tetraktys*, which is eternal in essence and periodic in manifestation.”

Meditation thought: The divine breaths belong to a cosmological account of spiritual intelligences. Let the breath image remain spacious enough to serve this meaning without reducing it to bodily respiration.

5. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 316.

“Constant adoration of the *Ah-Hi*, the Seven-in-One, the *Trimurti* of *Agni*, *Vayu* and *Surya*, is the inherent and essential activity of the Monad. Owing to its constant adoration of the primordial One, the primordial Three, the primordial Seven, the Monad is able to maintain ceaseless awareness in eternal Duration.”

Meditation thought: The Monad is portrayed through sustained awareness and adoration. Consider how remembrance of a worthy source might quietly inform activity, rather than remain confined to moments set aside for reflection.

6. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Theosophical Glossary*, p. 364, “Vayu”.

“The trinity of the mystic gods in Kosmos closely related to each other, are ‘*Agni* (fire) whose place is on earth; *Vâyû* (air, or one of the forms of *Indra*), whose place is in the air; and *Sûrya* (the sun) whose place is in the air’ (*Nirukta*). In esoteric interpretation, these three cosmic principles, correspond with the three human principles, *Kâma*, *Kâma-Manas* and *Manas*, the sun of the intellect.”

Meditation thought: This psychological correspondence gives *Vayu* a different emphasis from the primordial triad in Professor Iyer’s account. Follow the context carefully; an elementary association does not fix every use of a symbol.

7. R.N. Iyer — “Cognition, Breath and Speech”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, pp. 77–78.

“All of this amounts to a re-ascent in consciousness through the vestures of the mind towards their ultimate ground in that which is beyond manifestation. The same process may be understood in relation to the complex teaching of *Gupta Vidya* concerning the different aspects of breath and their relationship through speech to mind. Like everything else in arcane metaphysics, the concept of breath does not refer merely to something physical. It refers, even at the lowest level, to that which is astral, but which has its analogues all the way up to and including the highest vestures and beyond. When texts like the *Anugita* speak of the discipline of the breath or *pranayama*, they refer not to the crude physical manipulations of the breath that often pass in ignorant circles for a form of yoga. These physical practices are often dangerous in the extreme and invariably result from a fatal misunderstanding of the teachings. Philosophically, the breaths are rhythms and motions in the *karana sharira* or the *anandamaya kosha*, inseparable from *Buddhi*.”

Meditation thought: Professor Iyer reads the discipline of breath through subtler levels of consciousness. Attend to the awareness guiding expression, and avoid turning a metaphysical passage into an improvised bodily technique.

8. R.N. Iyer — “Cognition, Breath and Speech”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 78.

“Inspirational breathing is important in relation to being able to aspirate properly, to speak clearly, and so to control the power of sound. To control a restless mind, for example, one

could try reading aloud some passage from a sacred text. The principal thing is to forget oneself, in the lower sense. Yet this is no easy task, if only because one has spent too much time, too much energy and too much wasted breath over so many lives in lower selfmeditation. Even if this is so, one can use the vestures of the lower self on behalf of a higher egoism. Through intoning sacred words, paying attention to the sound of one's own voice and the words being formulated, one may employ the power of speech to govern the restless lower mind. Because one is lending voice to intoning that which is meaningful and powerful, the practice will, after a point, prove helpful."

Meditation thought: Meaningful recitation can gather attention when the speaker participates in the words. Listen for whether your expression is serving the meaning or merely filling the silence.

9. R.N. Iyer — "Cognition, Breath and Speech", *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 78.

"When people take advantage of the power of sound through chanting to calm the mind, they are able to gain some relief from its restless activity. But as the *Anugita* teaches, speech which is uttered audibly is capable of affecting only the lower or movable mind. Audible speech cannot affect the immovable mind except in the case of an Adept, who is above both the immovable and movable minds and can use all energies noetically. Thus, the *Anugita* points to the important use of the power of audible speech in reference to the lower *Manas*, working through the power of recitation of texts and *mantras* to gain self-control."

Meditation thought: The passage distinguishes gathering the ordinary mind from higher realization. Value a modest discipline for what it can actually accomplish, without assigning it an attainment it has not earned.

10. R.N. Iyer — "Cognition, Breath and Speech", *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. I, p. 78.

"In the use of audible speech to govern the lower mind, that speech must originate in a self-consciousness that is superior and prior to the utterance. It must be inspired, guided by a breath that comes from a region of more subtle and universal substance and intelligence, if it is to have a harmonizing effect upon the physical and lower astral field of the personal mind and the body."

Meditation thought: Speech takes its quality from the consciousness behind it. Before explaining something important, clarify what the listener needs and the intention from which you are speaking.

11. H.P. Blavatsky — *The Secret Doctrine*, Vol. I, p. 16.

“*Fohat* is thus the dynamic energy of Cosmic Ideation; or, regarded from the other side, it is the intelligent medium, the guiding power of all manifestation, the ‘Thought Divine’ transmitted and made manifest through the *Dhyān Chohans*, the Architects of the visible World.”

Meditation thought: *Fohat* relates intelligence to manifestation in this metaphysical account. The comparison with spiritual air should illuminate mediation while preserving the distinct meanings of the terms.

12. R.N. Iyer — “Spectator and Participant”, *The Gupta Vidya*, Vol. III, p. 315.

“If, through suffering and solicitude for others, one begins to gain a sense of the magnitude of this dismal delusion, it is natural to want to restore dignity to one's own life through a search for knowledge and for the means of making a genuine contribution to the lives of others. Having thus raised one's sights, one may be prepared to read the *Stanzas of Dzyan* and resonate to the ancient accent and self-validating summons of *Gupta Vidya*.”

Meditation thought: The search for knowledge is directed toward a genuine contribution to other lives. Let contemplation return to one useful act through which another person may gain clarity, confidence or room to grow.