

The Myth of Somakasura Stealing the Vedas: Jungian Analysis of the Symbol of Wisdom

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ABSTRACT

After a fierce battle with *Somakasura*, there stood the enormous presence: Lord *Matsya*, *Sri Vedanarayana*, embodiment of the vedas on the holy land of now *Nagalapuram* (*Sri Vedanarayana Swamy Temple*), South India- awaiting a journey, awaiting a hero, the savior of all, *Vaivasvata Manu* to impart the wisdom of life through the teachings of the *Vedas*. The myth of *Somakasura* stealings the *Vedas* and being restored by Lord *Matsya* (as extracted from sources in the temple when visited by the author) is decoded through the Jungian perspective in this paper. The layers of the symbol of the *vedas* as the supreme provenance of complex truths of life, knowledge and wisdom is explored and rooted into in this research through *archetypal amplification* (research tool) as a pre-instantiating objective to prepare the gifts for the *archetypal* hero, the progenitor: *Manu*. The symbolic precarious journey of attaining wisdom mirrors that of the journey taken in by the archetypal hero *Vaivasvata Manu*, the flood savior, post the *Vedas* were restored.

Keywords: *Lord Mastya, Sri Vedanarayana, Somakasura, Jungian perspective, archetypal amplification*

Somakasura Stealing the Vedas

As narrated by the temple sources (devotees, temple priests and other temple staff) of *Sri Vedanarayana Swamy temple* in *Nagalapuram, Chittoor district, South India*, below is the myth commemorating the birth of the *Matsya Avatar* of Lord *Vishnu* to secure the *Vedas* from the demon *Somakasurudu*. The origin of the *Avatar* was taken to kill the demon *Somakasurudu* and restore the process of creation and protect the pious, the *Vedas*.

The end of a *Kalpa* (a day of Lord *Brahma*) is marked by the submersion of the three worlds into the water. This is the time when Lord *Brahma* sleeps or performs *Tapasya* (meditation). While practicing the same, the *vedas* started emerging from his mouth and fell (also considered to have fallen as Lord *Brahma* yawned before entering a state of sleeping), this caught the attention of a demon named *Somakasurudu*. The demon was quick in action and so stole the *vedas* and took them deep into the waters to hide. The gods feared the end of the world as the *Vedas* were stolen. They went to Lord *Vishnu* to seek help. After hearing the plea, Lord *Vishnu* took the *Matsya Avatar* (Fish Incarnation). Lord *Vishnu* in the *Matsya* form

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used the *Vishnu Chakra* (cosmic disc), also known as *Prayog Chakra* by rotating it in a vertical circular form to divide the waters so as to reach the demon. When the *Asura* (demon) was found, Lord *Vishnu* killed *Somakasurudu* and retrieved the *Vedas* back to Lord *Brahma* to aid in the next cycle of creation. The devotees believe that Lord *Vishnu* in his *Matsya* form after securing the vedas stood at the site where the temple is currently.

Hypothetical Interpretation

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1). In this Biblical verse, the primal word, the *logos*, the divine wisdom resides in God just as it was in the creator’s mouth in the myth Lord *Brahma*, in the form of the *Vedas*. Etymologically, the word *Veda* means “to know” and “wisdom” and are passed on orally as *Śrutis* which means “what is heard”. Thus the divine sacred knowledge is contained within the mouth of God and its falling off is a loss of the knowledge reservoir that is the vehicle to channel creation and impart constructive life teachings. Wisdom (in the myth, the *vedas*) signifies the meaning in/of life, it regenerates and uplifts, without which humane loses shape, form and its very structure. As an *archaic* heritage, a collective of *archetypal* experiences necessary for meaning-making, wisdom is to be secured and passed on and that exudes through the very essence of the myth taken in this paper.

A *Kalpa* (aeon) is equated as a day of *Brahma*, it is the time period which marks the creation and renewal of the world. During the night time of *Brahma*, the dissolution of the world begins. *Brahma’s Kalpa* according to the *Hindu* cycle of time is a prolonged period considered as the day of Lord *Brahma* suspending in the night. It is an interval of hiatus denoting the end of a cycle to be reincubated thereafter (Ronnberg & Martin, 2010, p. 98). At around this time is when the *Vedas* get stolen by the demon, this is the onset of *Pralaya* (dissolution), as the act of stealing is a prelude to the Great Flood. A period of symbolic darkness, away from the wise teachings equates *Pralaya*, within the psyche it is a chaotic, haphazard state that can only be quenched by the actions of Lord *Matsya* to restore wisdom. It is the light of the day and shall shine on us for it is the *archaic* mentor for the journey of consciousness ahead. In the myth, the presence of the demon *Somakasura* was the reason for the stormy conditions of the waters; this was the beginning of *Pralaya*. The demon was quick in possessing the *vedas* and its descent into the depths invited Lord *Matsya* to battle it out which made the waters tempestuous. The conditions resemble the water-thunder caused by the arrival of the Greek sea-God, Poseidon, who comes along horses and is also represented with a fish tail imbibing the unity with sea and water. This represents the uncertain times where one is on a journey to seek the light in the darkness, wisdom.

In *Hinduism*, *Asuras* (demons) are considered the owners of the earthly wealth and they are in a constant battle with the *Devas* (gods) for equal status and powers. Hence, *Somakasurudu* didn’t leave a chance to acquire the wealth of Knowledge through the *vedas*. But since the Indian concept of knowledge suggests sharing rather than its possession, the *Asura’s* theft needed retaliation to restore the ideology of knowledge and counter its sole acquisition. In response to the demon, the God’s prayed to Lord *Vishnu* to restore the *Vedas*, this was so as Lord *Vishnu* adorns the aspect of preservation and in the context of knowledge it is of utmost importance. It is the foundation for creation and renewal of the world. Just as how fish takes to water, Lord *Vishnu’s Matsya avatar* was apt for the creation times and for the primordial waters, in which the mythic drama germinated. As a powerful element of the holy trinity of *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahesh* (Lord Shiva), Lord *Vishnu* as per the *Vedas*, is considered *Sattvaguna*. He is the all-pervading one, who has seen everything. *Ranganatha*, his other

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name means the controller of the universe created by him. Armed with mighty power, Lord *Vishnu* embraces the role (Ramesh, 1992, p.6).

The act of saving the *vedas* is in consequence saving the Gods and creation. It is echoed by the Gnostic perspective and worldview, that fish as the vehicle of the deep waters saves all, Gods and humanity. As a part of the “*Acts of Thomas*”, the Gnostic text, “*The Hymn of the Pearl*” narrates a journey, a perilous one of the lost spirits to attain their true origin. The quest is arduous, just like how gaining the pearls of wisdom and knowledgeable teachings is not easily accessible and requires a dip into our depths to attain the same. Therefore the restoration of the *Vedas*, in the myth, is not just an extraction of scriptures but symbolic of restoring ourselves through wisdom. Wisdom is the ultimate savior. This myth, so contains the way of knowledge, the way to life (Smith, 2007). The use of the most powerful weapon, the *Prayog Chakra*, killed the demon. Its circular and cyclic motion signifies the symbolic cycle of destruction, annihilation, renewal and recreation as it helps maintain the cosmos and gives clarity in perception. It is the weapon that cleared the path for wisdom (Pattanaik, 2003, p. 8).

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