

## LETTER: Vedic Hinduism and the Four Elements

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In his articles on the theory of four elements—water, air, earth, and fire—Habashi mentions that this theory was known by ancient civilizations in the East long before the Greeks (1,2). I would like to confirm that this theory was actually mentioned in the Indian book *Alchemy: Soma in the Veda*, in which the Vedic Hindus of 3000 BC made alloys of gold and silver (3). Vedas are the books of knowledge created by ancient Hindus. In the Vedas, Vayu is air, Agni is fire, Varuna is water, and Prithvi is earth. The powerful Surya, or the Sun, was at the center, surrounded by eight planets: Mars (Angaraka), Mercury (Budha), Jupiter (Guru), Venus (Sukra), Saturn (Sani), Moon (Chandra), and two nodes (Rahu and Kethu). These nine (excepting Prithvi) were considered Nava Graha (nine houses). The astrological relationship of these four elements with the planets is also discussed in the Vedas (4). In addition to these four elements, Vedas and Upanishads (interpretations of Vedas) also mention other material elements which form the basis of intelligence and consciousness in describing life (5). This has been one of the pursuits of the scientific community besides developing and understanding of material things. Such knowledge has been kept up over the millennia by transferring by word of mouth from generation to generation. They have been transcribed to the printed form only recently.

Vedic Hinduism preceded the later religions such as Buddhism and Jainism springing out of Hinduism to overcome some of the interim fallen knowledge in the 6th century BC. Thanks to Habashi for the Cambodian Temple reference (2)—which was actually a Hindu Temple at the time mentioned in the article. Knowledge of the Vedic period was not known to many in the West.

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### REFERENCES AND NOTES

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2. F. Habashi, "Cambodia's Four Elements," *Bull. Hist. Chem.*, **2004**, 29(2), 97-98.
3. S. Kalyanaraman, *Indian Alchemy: Soma in the Veda*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 2004. Synopsis is given at the website <http://www.exoticindiaart.com/book/details/IDE220/>.
4. D. Frawley, "Yagya: the Sacred Fire," <http://www.india-travelogue.com/sacr/refl/yagya.html>.
5. J. Mares and the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, "Dharma – Karma – Samsara: The System Of Cosmic Justice," <http://www.veda.harekrsna.cz/encyclopedia/dharma.htm>.