

## THE VEDAS

WHATEVER may be the truth of the theory of the racial affinities of the Indian and the European peoples, there is no doubt that Indo-European languages derive from a common source and illustrate a relationship of the mind. The oldest Indo-European literary and philosophical monument is the *Rg Veda*. The name *Veda*, signifying wisdom, suggests that the road which the Vedic sages traveled was the road of those who seek to understand. The questions they investigate are of a philosophical character: "What god shall we adore with our oblation?"<sup>1</sup> "Who verily knows and who can here declare where it was born and whence comes this creation? The gods are later than this world's production. Who knows whence it first came into being?"<sup>2</sup>

A study of the hymns of the *Rg Veda* is indispensable for any adequate account of Indian thought. Whatever we may think of them, half-formed myths or crude allegories, obscure gropings or immature compositions, still they are the source of the later practices and philosophies of the Indo-Āryans, and a study of them is necessary for a proper understanding of subsequent thought.

There are four Vedas, the *Rg Veda*, composed of hymns, the *Yajur Veda*, which deals with sacrificial formulas, the *Sāma Veda*, which refers to melodies, and the *Atharva Veda*, which has a large number of magic formulas. For philosophical purposes, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Sāma Veda* are not of great importance. The *Atharva Veda* describes spells and incantations. There are spells for the healing of diseases, for long life, etc. It is said that in the *Atharva Veda* are to be found the beginnings of Indian medical science.

Each of the Vedas contains four sections: *Samhitā* (a collection of hymns, prayers, benedictions, sacrificial formulas, and litanies), *Brāhmaṇas* (prose treatises discussing the significance of sacrificial rites and ceremonies), *Āraṇyakas* (forest-texts), which are partly included in the *Brāhmaṇas* and partly reckoned as independent, and *Upaniṣads*.

The dates of the composition and of the collection of the hymns of the *Rg Veda* are unknown. It is believed, however, that a long period of time must have elapsed between the composition and the compilation of the hymns. There is evidence to indicate with some certainty that the hymns were current fifteen centuries before Christ, somewhat in the arrangement

<sup>1</sup> x.121.

<sup>2</sup> x.129.

in which we have them at the present time. The *Rg Veda Samhitā* is a collection which represents the thought of several generations of thinkers, and this fact accounts both for the heterogeneity of the hymns and also for the different strata of thought which indicate marked development from "polytheistic" religion to monistic philosophy.

The *Rg Veda*, which comprises 1,017 hymns divided into ten books, represents the earliest phase of the evolution of religious consciousness, where we have not so much commandments of priests as the outpourings of poetic minds who are struck by the immensity of the universe and the inexhaustible mystery of life. We have worship of deities like *Sūrya* (sun), *Agni* (fire), *Dyaus* (sky or heaven), *Maruts* (storms), *Vāyu* or *Vāta* (wind), *Āpas* (waters), *Uṣas* (dawn), and *Pṛthivi* (earth). Even deities whose names are no longer so transparent, such as *Indra*, *Varuṇa*, *Mitra*, *Aditi*, *Viṣṇu*, *Pūṣan*, the two *Asvins*, *Rudra*, and *Parjanya*, were originally related to natural phenomena. Qualities which emphasize particular important aspects of natural phenomena attained sometimes to the rank of independent deities. *Savitṛ* (*Savitar*), the inspirer or life-giver, and *Vivasvān*, the shining, were originally attributes, names of the sun, but later became sun-gods. Some of the deities worshiped by the different tribes, such as *Pūṣan*, were admitted into the Vedic pantheon. Abstract qualities like *Śradhā* (faith), *Manyu* (anger), *Gandharvas* (fairies), *Ap-saras* (heavenly damsels), and forest and field spirits were also included.

Though the *Rg Veda* speaks of a plurality of gods, when worship is accorded to any one of them, he becomes the chief god, the creator, preserver, and judge (or destroyer) of the universe. As several gods are exalted to this high place, the tendency is called henotheism, as distinct from monotheism where only one God is exalted as the highest.

The attributes of creation, preservation, and judgment (or destruction), it was felt early, could not be separated and ascribed to different deities. They were given to a single personality, *Prajāpati*, the lord of creatures, and *Viśvakarman*, the world-maker. The conception of *Rta* (the order of the world) supports this idea. If the endless variety of the world suggests numerous deities, the unity of the world implies one deity.

The beginnings of doubt are felt in the *Rg Veda*. It is said, "Of whom they ask, 'Where is he?' of him indeed they also say, 'He is not.'"<sup>1</sup> A super-personal monism develops, and the universe is explained in the Hymn of Creation<sup>2</sup> as an evolution out of an ultimate One. This hymn suggests the distinction between the absolute reality (*Brahman*) and the personal God (*Īśvara*), which dominates the subsequent development of Indian thought.

The passages quoted in this chapter are all from the *Rg Veda*. They are selected primarily from Books I and X, in which the philosophical material of the *Rg Veda* is most concentrated. In the selections an effort has been made to give representative statements of the several basic attitudes, ideas, and tendencies found in the *Rg Veda*. The selections are divided into six topical sections. The most important of these sections, from the point of

<sup>1</sup> II.12

<sup>2</sup> x.129.

view of philosophical content, is that termed "Monotheistic and Monistic Tendencies," where the transition from early polytheism to the more philosophical monism of later hymns is depicted.

Since the hymns often deal with more than one topic, it is not possible always to subsume the entire hymn under single topical categories. The Hymn of Creation, for example, deals with the nature of the Absolute and the relation of the Absolute to the empirical world, as well as the process of creation itself. Sometimes, because of the singleness of subject-matter and for the sake of adequate presentation of the poetic style, entire hymns are quoted.

The relative clarity of most of the hymns quoted here should not minimize the fact that almost innumerable problems and theories of interpretation are involved throughout the Vedas.

The selections have been taken from R. T. H. Griffith, *The Hymns of the Rigveda*, 2 vols. (Benares: E. J. Lazarus and Co., 3rd ed., 1920-6); A. A. Macdonell, *Hymns from the Rigveda* (London: Oxford University Press, 1922); Hermann Oldenberg, *Vedic Hymns*, Part II, Sacred Books of the East, XLVI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897); Edward J. Thomas, *Vedic Hymns*, Wisdom of the East (London: John Murray, 1923). The translator's name will accompany the number of the hymn in the selections.

## 1. HYMNS TO GODS—POLYTHEISM

Three strata of development are found in the thought of the hymns of the *Rg Veda*, naturalistic polytheism, monotheism, and monism. Naturalism and anthropomorphism, as indicated in these hymns, seem to constitute the first stage or stages of Vedic thought. The hymns quoted in this section represent this first phase of the doctrine of the *Rg Veda*. A striking aspect of the hymns is their polytheistic character. Very many gods are named and worshipped.

Different views of the spirit of these hymns are held by competent scholars. They have been referred to as primeval child-like naive prayers, as the allegorical representation of the attributes of the supreme Deity, as sacrificial compositions of a primitive race which attached great importance to ceremonial rites, as altogether allegorical, or as somewhat naturalistic. These varying opinions need not be looked upon as antagonistic, for they only point to the heterogeneous nature of the *Rg Veda* collection.

TO INDRA [primarily a deity of the thunderstorm]<sup>1</sup>

x.89 (Griffith)

1. I will extol the most heroic Indra who with his might forced earth and sky asunder;  
Who hath filled all with width as man's upholder, surpassing floods and rivers in his greatness.

<sup>1</sup> Indra is the most prominent of the gods in the *Rg Veda*. He is most frequently praised for his power and heroism, as the god of battle.

2. Sūrya is he: throughout the wide expanses shall Indra turn him,  
swift as car-wheels, hither,  
Like a stream resting not but ever active: he hath destroyed,  
with light, the black-hued darkness.
3. To him I sing a holy prayer, incessant, new, matchless, common  
to the earth and heaven,  
Who marks, as they were backs, all living creatures: ne'er doth  
he fail a friend, the noble Indra.
4. I will send forth my songs in flow unceasing, like water from the  
ocean's depth, to Indra.  
Who to his car on both its sides securely hath fixed the earth and  
heaven as with an axle.
5. Rousing with draughts, the shaker, rushing onward, impetuous,  
very strong, armed as with arrows  
Is Soma; forest trees and all the bushes deceive not Indra with  
their offered likeness.
6. Soma hath flowed to him who naught can equal, the earth, the  
heavens, the firmament, the mountains,—  
When heightened in his ire his indignation shatters the firm and  
breaks the strong in pieces.
7. As an axe fells the tree so he slew Vṛtra,<sup>1</sup> brake down the strong-  
holds and dug out the rivers.  
He cleft the mountain like a new-made pitcher. Indra brought  
forth the kine with his companions.
8. Wise art thou, punisher of guilt, O Indra. The sword lops limbs,  
thou smitest down the sinner,  
The men who injure, as it were a comrade, the lofty Law of  
Varuṇa and Mitra.<sup>2</sup>
9. Men who lead evil lives, who break agreements, and injure  
Varuṇa, Aryaman,<sup>3</sup> and Mitra,—  
Against these foes, O mighty Indra, sharpen, as furious death,  
thy bull of fiery colour.
10. Indra is sovran lord of Earth and Heaven, Indra is lord of waters  
and of mountains.  
Indra is lord of prosperers and sages: Indra must be invoked in  
rest and effort.
11. Vaster than days and nights, giver of increase, vaster than firma-  
ment and flood of ocean,

<sup>1</sup> Vṛtrāsura, a cloud-demon.

<sup>2</sup> One of the chief Ādityas or sons of Aditi.

<sup>3</sup> A god of light.

Vaster than bounds of earth and wind's extension, vaster than rivers and our lands is Indra.

12. Forward, as herald of refulgent morning, let thine insatiate arrow fly, O Indra,  
And pierce, as 'twere a stone launched forth from heaven, with hottest blaze the men who love deception.
13. Him, verily, the moons, the mountains followed, the tall trees followed and the plants and herbage.  
Yearning with love both worlds approached, the waters waited on Indra when he first had being.
14. Where was the vengeful dart when thou, O Indra, clavest the demon ever bent on outrage?  
When fiends lay there upon the ground extended like cattle in the place of immolation?
15. Those who are set in enmity against us, the Ogaṇas,<sup>1</sup> O Indra waxen mighty,—  
Let blinding darkness follow those our foemen, while these shall have bright shining nights to light them.
16. May plentiful libations of the people, and singing <sup>sa yā</sup> ṛṣiṣ<sup>2</sup> holy prayers rejoice thee.  
Hearing with love this common invocation, come unto us, pass by all those who praise thee.
17. O Indra, thus may we be made partakers of the new favours that shall bring us profit.  
Singing with love! may we the Viśvāmitras win daylight even now through thee, O Indra.
18. Call we on Maghavan, auspicious Indra, best hero in the fight where spoil is gathered,  
The strong who listens, who gives aid in battles, who slays the Vṛtras, wins and gathers riches.

To AGNI [the god of fire]

1.1 (Oldenberg)

1. I magnify Agni, the Purohita, the divine ministrant of the sacrifice, the Hotṛ priest, the greatest bestower of treasures.
2. Agni, worthy to be magnified by the ancient ṛṣiṣ and by the present ones—may he conduct the gods hither.
3. May one obtain through Agni wealth and welfare day by day, which may bring glory and high bliss of valiant offspring.

<sup>1</sup> Probably a hostile clan.

<sup>2</sup> Sages.

4. Agni, whatever sacrifice and worship thou encompassst on every side, that indeed goes to the gods.
5. May Agni the thoughtful Hotṛ, he who is true and most splendidly renowned, may the god come hither with the gods.
6. Whatever good thou wilt do to thy worshipper, O Agni, that (work) verily is thine, O Angiras.<sup>1</sup>
7. Thee, O Agni, we approach day by day, O (god) who shinest in the darkness; with our prayer, bringing adoration to thee—
8. Who art the king of all worship, the guardian of Rta, the shining one, increasing in thy own house.
9. Thus, O Agni, be easy of access to us, as a father is to his son. Stay with us for our happiness.

To VIṢṆU [the all-pervader]

1.154 (Macdonell)

1. I will proclaim the mighty deeds of Viṣṇu,  
Of him who measured out the earthly spaces;  
Who, firmly propping up the higher station,  
Strode out in triple regions, widely pacing.
2. Because of this his mighty deed is Viṣṇu  
Lauded, like some fierce beast that is much dreaded,  
That wanders as it lists, that haunts the mountains:  
He in whose three wide strides abide all creatures.
3. Let my inspiring hymn go forth to Viṣṇu,  
The mountain-dwelling bull, the widely pacing,  
Him who has measured out with but three footsteps,  
Alone, this long and far-extended station;
4. Him whose three footsteps filled with mead, unfailing,  
Revel in blissful joy; who has supported  
Alone the universe in three divisions:  
The earth and sky and all created beings.
5. I would attain to that his dear dominion  
Where men devoted to the gods do revel.  
In the wide-striding Viṣṇu's highest footstep  
There is a spring of mead: such is our kinship.
6. We long to go to those your dwelling-places  
Where are the kine with many horns, the nimble:  
For thence, indeed, the highest step of Viṣṇu,  
Wide-pacing bull, shines brightly down upon us.

<sup>1</sup> A semi-divine patriarchal ṛṣi or sage.

TO AGNI

1.143 (Oldenberg)

1. Bring forward my most powerful, entirely new (pious) thought (i.e., hymn), the prayer of my words to Agni, the son of strength; he is the child of the Waters, the beloved one, who together with the Vasus has sat down on the Earth as a Hotṛ observing the appointed time (for sacrificing).
2. Being born in the highest heaven Agni became visible to Mātariśvan.<sup>1</sup> By the power of his mind, by his greatness when kindled, his flame filled Heaven and Earth with light.
3. His flames are fierce; never ageing are the flames of him who is beautiful to behold, whose face is beautiful, whose splendour is beautiful. The never sleeping, never ageing (rays) of Agni whose power is light, roll forward like streams across the nights (?).
4. Him the all-wealthy, whom the Bhṛgus have set to work on the navel of the earth, with the whole power of the world—stir up that Agni by thy prayers in his own house—(him) who alone rules over gods like Varuna.—
5. He who is not to be kept back like the roar of the Maruts,<sup>2</sup> like an army that is sent forward, like the thunderbolt of heaven—Agni eats with his sharp jaws, he chews, he throws down the forests as a warrior throws down his foes.
6. Would Agni eagerly come to our hymn? Would He the Vasu together with the (Vasus) fulfil our desire? Will He, the driver, stir our prayers that they may be successful? (Thus thinking) I praise Him whose face is bright, with this my prayer.
7. He who has kindled him strives towards Agni as towards Mitra (or, towards a friend)—(to Agni) whose face shines with ghee, the charioteer of Rta. May he who when kindled becomes a racer, shining at the sacrifices, lift up our bright-coloured prayer.
8. Preserve us, O Agni, never failing with thy never-failing, kind and mighty guardians; protect our people all around with those undecieved, undismayed, never slumbering (guardians), O thou our wish!

<sup>1</sup> A divine being described in *Rg Veda* 1.60.1 as bringing Agni to Bhṛgu, an ancient ṛṣi or sage.

<sup>2</sup> Storm-gods. → Rudras (healing power.)

Vasus - A class of gods.  
9 3

TO BRĤASPATI [primarily the god of prayer] x.68 (Griffith)

1. Like birds who keep their watch, plashing in water, like the loud voices of the thundering rain-cloud,  
Like merry streamlets bursting from the mountain, thus to Br̥haspati, our hymns have sounded.
2. The Son of Aṅgiras,<sup>1</sup> meeting the cattle, as Bhaga, brought in Aryaman among us.  
As friend of men he decks the wife and husband: as for the race, Br̥haspati, nerve our coursers.
3. Br̥haspati, having won them from the mountains, strewed down, like barley out of winnowing-baskets,  
The vigorous, wandering cows who aid the pious, desired of all, of blameless form, well-coloured.
4. As the Sun dew with meath the seat of Order, and casts a flaming meteor down from heaven,  
So from the rock Br̥haspati forced the cattle, and cleft the earth's skin as it were with water.
5. Forth from mid-air with light he drave the darkness, as the gale blows a lily from the river.  
Like the wind grasping at the cloud of Vala,<sup>2</sup> Br̥haspati gathered to himself the cattle.
6. Br̥haspati, when he with fiery lightnings cleft through the weapon of reviling Vala,  
Consumed him as tongues eat what teeth have compassed: he threw the prisons of the red cows open.
7. That secret name borne by the lowing cattle within the cave Br̥haspati discovered,  
And drave, himself, the bright kine from the mountain, like a bird's young after the eggs' disclosure.
8. He looked around on rock-imprisoned sweetness as one who eyes a fish in scanty water.  
Br̥haspati, cleaving through with varied clamour, brought it forth like a bowl from out the timber.
9. He found the light of heaven, and fire, and morning: with lucid rays he forced apart the darkness.  
As from a joint, Br̥haspati took the marrow of Vala as he gloried in his cattle.

<sup>1</sup> "Son of Aṅgiras," i.e., especially worshiped by Aṅgiras.

<sup>2</sup> An imprisoning deity, a demon of drought.

10. As trees for foliage robbed by winter, Vala mourned for the cows  
Bṛhaspati had taken.  
He did a deed ne'er done, ne'er to be equalled, whereby the Sun  
and Moon ascend alternate.
11. Like a dark steed adorned with pearl, the fathers have decorated  
heaven with constellations.  
They set the light in day, in night the darkness. Bṛhaspati cleft  
the rock and found the cattle.
12. This homage have we offered to the cloud-god who thunders out  
to many in succession.  
May this Bṛhaspati vouchsafe us fulness of life with kine and  
horses, men, and heroes.

To PṚTHIVI [Earth] *Prithivi, Earth, v.84 (Macdonell)*

1. Thou bearest truly, Pṛthivi,  
The burden of the mountains' weight;  
With might, O thou of many streams,  
Thou quickenest, potent one, the soil.
2. With flowers of speech our songs of praise  
Resound to thee, far-spreading one,  
Who sendest forth the swelling cloud,  
O bright one, like propelling speed;
3. Who, steadfast, holdest with thy might,  
The forest-trees upon the ground,  
When, from the lightnings of thy cloud,  
The rain-floods of the sky pour down.

To DYAUS AND PṚTHIVI [<sup>SKY</sup>Heaven and Earth] 1.185 (Thomas)

1. Which was the former, which of them the later? How born?  
O sages, who discerns? They bear of themselves all that has  
existence. Day and Night revolve as on a wheel.
2. The two footless ones that go not uphold many a germ that goes  
and has feet. As a son in his own parents' lap, may Heaven and  
Earth protect us from fearful evil.
3. I invoke the gift of Aditi,<sup>1</sup> the gift free from hatred, inviolable,  
heavenly, invulnerable, worshipful. This, O Worlds, beget for  
the singer. May Heaven and Earth protect us from fearful evil.

<sup>1</sup> Śāyana, a famous commentator on the Vedas, explains Aditi here as the space between  
Heaven and Earth. Henry explains the gift as sinlessness. If Śāyana's meaning is taken,  
it would refer to the blessing of seasonable rain.

with help, that have Gods as sons, both of them among the Gods  
with alternate days and nights. May Heaven and Earth protect  
us from fearful evil.

5. The two maidens uniting form a pair, twin sisters in their parents'  
lap, caressing the navel of the world. May Heaven and Earth  
protect us from fearful evil.
6. The two wide great abodes I duly invoke, the two parents with  
the protection of the Gods, the beautiful ones, who partake of  
the immortal drink. May Heaven and Earth protect us from  
fearful evil.
7. The two wide, broad, great ones, with far limits, I implore with  
worship at this sacrifice, the two gracious bounteous ones who  
share it. May Heaven and Earth protect us from fearful evil.
8. Whatever sin we have committed against the Gods, or ever  
against a friend, or against a master of the house, may this prayer  
be a propitiation for them. May Heaven and Earth protect us  
from fearful evil.
9. May the blessings both of men (and of the Gods) aid me, may  
both attend me with protection and help. Abundance be to the  
more generous one rather than to the godless. Exhilarated with  
refreshment may we be nourished, O Gods.
10. This solemn ordinance (the sacrifice) have I Sumedhas uttered  
to Heaven and Earth for them first to hear. May they guard us  
from fault and crime. As father and mother may they protect  
us with their help.
11. May this, O Heaven and Earth, be true, O father and mother,  
that which I here implore you. Become the nearest of the Gods  
with your help. May we find refreshment and a well-watered camp.

To SŪRYA [the sun-god] 1.50 (Macdonell)

1. Aloft his beams now bring the god  
Who knows all creatures that are born,  
That all may look upon the Sun.
2. Away like thieves the stars depart,  
By the dark nights accompanied,  
At the all-seeing Sun's approach.
3. His beams, his rays, have shone afar  
Athwart the many homes of men,  
Flaming aloft like blazing fires.

Maker of light thou art, O Sun,  
Illuming all the shining space.

5. Thou risest toward the host of gods  
And toward the race of men: toward all,  
That they may see the heavenly light.
7. The broad air traversing, the sky,  
Thou metest, Sun, the days with nights,  
Seeing all creatures that are born.
8. The seven bay mares that draw thy car, ( ... )  
Bring thee to us, far-seeing god,  
O Sūrya of the gleaming hair.
9. The Sun has yoked the seven bright mares, ( ... )  
The shining daughters of his car:  
With that self-yoking team he speeds.
10. Athwart the darkness gazing up,  
To him the higher light, we now  
Have soared to Sūrya, the god  
Among the gods, the highest light.

✓ To UṢAS [Dawn] - Daughter of ... i.48 (Griffith)

1. Dawn on us with prosperity, O Uṣas, daughter of the sky,  
Dawn with great glory, goddess, lady of the light, dawn thou  
with riches, bounteous one.
2. They, bringing steeds and kine, boon givers of all wealth, have  
oft sped forth to lighten us.  
O Uṣas, waken up for me the sounds of joy: send us the riches  
of the great.
3. Uṣas hath dawned, and now shall dawn, the goddess, driver  
forth of cars  
Which, as she cometh nigh, have fixed their thoughts on her,  
like glory-seekers on the flood.
4. Here Kaṇva,<sup>1</sup> chief of Kaṇva's race, sings forth aloud the glories  
of the heroes' names,—  
The princes who, O Uṣas, as thou comest near, direct their  
thoughts to liberal gifts.
5. Like a good matron Uṣas comes carefully tending everything:  
Rousing all life she stirs all creatures that have feet, and makes  
the birds of air fly up.

<sup>1</sup> A ṛṣi or sage.

6. She sends the busy forth, each man to his pursuit: delay she  
knows not as she springs.  
O rich in opulence, after thy dawning birds that have flown  
forth no longer rest.
7. This dawn hath yoked her steeds afar, beyond the rising of the  
Sun:  
Borne on a hundred chariots she, the auspicious dawn, advances  
on her way to men.
8. To meet her glance all living creatures bend them down:  
excellent one, she makes the light.  
Uṣas, the daughter of the sky, the opulent, shines foes and  
enmities away.
9. Shine on us with thy radiant light, O Uṣas, Daughter of the  
sky,  
Bringing to us great store of high felicity, and beaming on our  
solemn rites.
10. For in thee is each living creature's breath and life, when,  
Excellent! thou dawnest forth.  
Borne on thy lofty car, O lady of the light, hear, thou of won-  
drous wealth, our call.
11. O Uṣas, win thyself the strength which among men is wonderful.  
Bring thou thereby the pious unto holy rites, those who as priests  
sing praise to thee.
12. Bring from the firmament, O Uṣas, all the gods, that they may  
drink our Soma juice,<sup>1</sup>  
And, being what thou art, vouchsafe us kine and steeds, strength  
meet for praise and hero might.
13. May Uṣas, whose auspicious rays are seen resplendent round  
about,  
Grant us great riches, fair in form, of all good things, wealth  
which light labour may attain.
14. Mighty One, whom the ṛṣis of old time invoked for their pro-  
tection and their help,  
O Uṣas, graciously answer our songs of praise with bounty and  
with brilliant light.
15. Uṣas, as thou with light to day hast opened the twin doors of  
heaven,  
So grant thou us a dwelling wide and free from foes. O goddess,  
give us food with kine.

<sup>1</sup> The drink of the gods.

← (9.32.11)

10. Bring us to wealth abundant, sent in every shape, to plentiful refreshing food,  
To all subduing splendour, Uṣas, mighty one, to strength, thou rich in spoil and wealth.

To VĀTA (VĀYU) [the wind god] x.168 (Thomas)

1. Declare the might of Vāta's chariot. Crushing in pieces he goes. Thundering is his roar. He touches the sky as he advances, making (the clouds) ruddy, and speeds over the earth, whirling up dust.
2. Behind him rise the blasts of Vāta. They advance to him like women to a meeting. United with them, in the same car, hastens the God, the king of the whole world.
3. Hastening through the air on his ways he never rests. The friend of the Waters, the first-born, law-maintaining—where has he been born? Whence has he arisen?
4. The breath (ātman) of the Gods, the germ of the world, this God wanders at his will. His roarings are heard, not (seen) is his form. This Vāta let us worship with an oblation.

To VĀK [voice or speech personified]<sup>1</sup> x.125 (Griffith)

1. I travel with the Rudras<sup>2</sup> and the Vasus,<sup>3</sup> with the Ādityas<sup>4</sup> and all-gods I wander.  
I hold aloft both Varuṇa and Mitra, Indra and Agni, and the Pair of Aśvins.<sup>5</sup>
2. I cherish and sustain high-swelling Soma, and Tvaṣṭar<sup>6</sup> I support, Pūṣan,<sup>7</sup> and Bhaga.<sup>8</sup>  
I load with wealth the zealous sacrificer who pours the juice and offers his oblation.
3. I am the queen, the gatherer-up of treasures, most thoughtful, first of those who merit worship.  
Thus Gods have established me in many places with many homes to enter and abide in.

<sup>1</sup> "Vāk is speech personified, the Word, the first creation and representative of Spirit, and the means of communication between men and gods."—Griffith.

<sup>2</sup> Tempest-gods.

<sup>3</sup> A class of gods.

<sup>4</sup> A special group of seven or eight gods.

<sup>5</sup> The two horsemen, twin heralds.

<sup>6</sup> The divine artificer of the dawn.

<sup>7</sup> A sun-god.

<sup>8</sup> One of the Ādityas; the deity who bestows wealth and presides over love and marriage.

4. Through me alone all eat the food that feeds them,—each man sees, breathes, hears the word outspoken.  
They know it not, but yet they dwell beside me. Hear, one and all, the truth as I declare it.
5. I, verily, myself announce and utter the word that gods and men alike shall welcome.  
I make the man I love exceeding mighty, make him a sage, ṛṣi, and a brāhmin.
6. I bind the bow for Rudra that his arrow may strike and slay the hater of devotion.  
I rouse and order battle for the people, and I have penetrated Earth and Heaven.
7. On the world's summit I bring forth the father: my home is in the waters, in the ocean.  
Thence I extend o'er all existing creatures, and touch even yonder heaven with my forehead.
8. I breathe a strong breath like the wind and tempest, the while I hold together all existence.  
Beyond this wide earth and beyond the heavens I have become so mighty in my grandeur.

## 2. MONOTHEISTIC AND MONISTIC TENDENCIES<sup>1</sup>

The hymns in this section represent the second and third stages of the development of the thought of the *Rg Veda*, the transition from naturalistic polytheism to monotheism and then to the philosophical monism which constitutes the main philosophical doctrine of the Veda later to be carried over into the Upaniṣads and eventually into the most highly developed system of Indian thought, the Vedānta. All the crowding of gods and goddesses in Vedic polytheism proved a weariness to the intellect and so a tendency shows itself very early to identify one god with another or throw all the gods together. This tendency and systematization has its natural end in monotheism, which is simpler and more logical than the anarchy of a crowd of gods and goddesses thwarting each other.

The gradual idealization of the conception of God, the logic of religion which tended to make the gods flow into one another, the henotheism which has its face set in the direction of monotheism, the conception of *Rta* or the unity of nature, and the systematizing impulse of the human

<sup>1</sup> Hymns dealing with creation will be found in this section. No special section can be devoted to hymns on creation without unwise and artificial selection of parts of hymns which are not restricted to that topic exclusively.





To PURUṢA [person or man personified] x.90 (Thomas)

1. Thousand-headed was the Puruṣa, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. He embraced the earth on all sides, and stood beyond the breadth of ten fingers.
2. The Puruṣa is this all, that which was and which shall be. He is Lord of immortality, which he grows beyond through (sacrificial) food.
3. Such is his greatness, and still greater than that is the Puruṣa. One fourth of him is all beings. The three fourths of him is the immortal in Heaven.
4. Three fourths on high rose the Puruṣa. One fourth of him arose again here (on the earth). Thence in all directions he spread abroad, as that which eats and that which eats not.
5. From him Virāj was born, from Virāj the Puruṣa.<sup>1</sup> He when born reached beyond the earth behind as well as before.
6. When the Gods spread out the sacrifice with the Puruṣa as oblation, spring was its ghee, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation.
7. As the sacrifice on the strewn grass they besprinkled the Puruṣa, born in the beginning. With him the Gods sacrificed, the Sādhyas<sup>2</sup> and the sages.
8. From that sacrifice completely offered was the sprinkled ghee collected. He made it the beasts of the air, of the forest, and those of the village.
9. From that sacrifice completely offered were born the Verses (*Rg Veda*) and the *Sāman*-melodies (*Sāma Veda*). The metres were born from it. From it was born the Sacrificial formula (*Yajur Veda*).
10. From it were born horses, and they that have two rows of teeth. Cattle were born from it. From it were born goats and sheep.
11. When they divided the Puruṣa, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What his two arms? What are his thighs and feet called?
12. The *brāhmin* was his mouth, his two arms were made the *rājanya* (warrior), his two thighs the *vaiśya* (trader and agriculturist), from his feet the *śūdra* (servile class) was born.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Virāj has been interpreted as the female principle, which with the primal Puruṣa produces the concrete universe. In the *Atharva Veda* she is an independent creative principle, identified with the Spell (*brahma*), with Speech, and with Prajāpati.

<sup>2</sup> A class of gods or celestial beings.

<sup>3</sup> This is the famous passage describing the origin of the castes.

13. The moon was born from his spirit (*manas*), from his eye was born the sun, from his mouth Indra and Agni, from his breath Vāyu (wind) was born.
14. From his navel arose the middle sky, from his head the heaven originated, from his feet the earth, the quarters from his ear. Thus did they fashion the worlds.
15. Seven were his sticks that enclose (the fire), thrice seven were made the faggots. When the Gods spread out the sacrifice, they bound the Puruṣa as a victim.
16. With the sacrifice the Gods sacrificed the sacrifice. These were the first ordinances. These great powers reached to the firmament, where are the ancient Sādhyas, the Gods.

To THE GODS

x.72 (Griffith)

1. Let us with tuneful skill proclaim these generations of the gods, That one may see them when these hymns are chanted in a future age.
2. These Brahmanaspati<sup>1</sup> produced with blast and smelting, like a smith. Existence, in an earlier age of gods, from non-existence sprang.
3. Existence, in the earliest age of gods, from non-existence sprang. Thereafter were the regions born. This sprang from the productive power.
4. Earth sprang from the productive power; the regions from the earth were born. Dakṣa was born of Aditi, and Aditi was Dakṣa's child.<sup>2</sup>
5. For Aditi, O Dakṣa, she who is thy daughter, was brought forth. After her were the blessed gods born sharers of immortal life.
6. When ye, O gods, in yonder deep close-clasping one another stood. Thence, as of dancers, from your feet a thickening cloud of dust arose.
7. When, O ye gods, like *yatis*,<sup>3</sup> ye caused all existing things to grow, Then ye brought Sūrya forward who was lying hidden in the sea.

<sup>1</sup> Lord of prayer.

<sup>2</sup> Aditi is infinity or the infinite; Dakṣa is force or power personified.

<sup>3</sup> Devotees.

8. Eight are the sons of Aditi who from her body sprang to life. With seven she went to meet the gods: she cast Mārtāṇḍa<sup>1</sup> far away.
9. So with her seven sons Aditi went forth to meet the earlier age. She brought Mārtāṇḍa thitherward to spring to life and die again.

To VIŚVEDEVAS [All gods—the pantheon as a whole] 1.164 (Griffith)

1. Of this benignant priest, with eld grey coloured, the brother midmost of the three is lightning. The third is he whose back with oil is sprinkled. Here I behold the chief with seven made children.
2. Seven to the one-wheeled chariot yoke the courser; bearing seven names the single courser draws it. Three-naved the wheel is, sound and undecaying, whereon are resting all these worlds of being.
3. The seven who on the seven-wheeled car are mounted have horses, seven in tale, who draw them onward. Seven sisters utter songs of praise together, in whom the names of the seven cows are treasured.
4. Who hath beheld him as he sprang to being, seen how the boneless One supports the bony? Where is the blood of earth, the life, the spirit? Who may approach the man who knows, to ask it?
5. Unripe in mind, in spirit undiscerning, I ask of these the gods' established places; For up above the yearling calf the sages, to form a web, their own seven threads have woven.
6. I ask, unknowing, those who know, the sages, as one all ignorant for sake of knowledge, What was that One who in the unborn's image hath stablished and fixed firm these worlds' six religions [regions]?
46. They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garutmān.<sup>2</sup> To what is one, sages give many a title: they call it Agni, Yama,<sup>3</sup> Mātariśvan.

<sup>1</sup> Sūrya, the sun.

<sup>2</sup> The "Celestial Bird," the sun.

<sup>3</sup> King of the departed. See below, *Rg Veda* x.14.

To VIŚVEDEVAS ( ) III.54 (Griffith)

5. What pathway leadeth to the gods? Who knoweth this of a truth, and who will now declare it? Seen are their lowest dwelling-places only, but they are in remote and secret regions.
8. All living things they part and keep asunder: though bearing up the mighty gods they reel not. One All is lord of what is fixed and moving, that walks, that flies, this multiform creation.

To VIŚVEDEVAS ( ) 1.89 (Griffith)

1. May power auspicious come to us from every side, never deceived, unhindered, and victorious, That the gods ever may be with us for our gain, our guardians day by day unceasing in their care.
2. May the auspicious favour of the gods be ours, on us descend the bounty of the righteous gods. The friendship of the gods have we devoutly sought; so may the gods extend our life that we may live.
3. We call them higher with a hymn of olden time, Bhaga, the friendly Dakṣa, Mitra, Aditi, Aryaman, Varuṇa, Soma, the Aśvins. May Sarasvatī,<sup>1</sup> auspicious, grant felicity.
4. May the Wind waft to us that pleasant medicine, may Earth our Mother give it, and our Father Heaven, And the joy-giving stones that press the soma's juice. Aśvins, may ye, for whom our spirits long, hear this.
5. Him we invoke for aid who reigns supreme, the Lord of all that stands or moves, inspirer of the soul, That Pūṣan may promote the increase of our wealth, our keeper and our guard infallible for our good.
6. Illustrious far and wide, may Indra prosper us; may Pūṣan prosper us, the Master of all wealth. May Tārksya<sup>2</sup> with uninjured fellies prosper us; Bṛhaspati vouchsafe to us prosperity.
7. The Maruts, Sons of Pṛṣṇi, borne by spotted steeds, moving in glory, oft visiting holy rites,

<sup>1</sup> River-goddess; goddess of eloquence and sacred poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Probably a form of the sun.

Sages whose tongue is Agni, brilliant as the sun,—hither let all the gods for our protection come.

8. Gods, may we with our ears listen to what is good, and with our eyes see what is good, ye Holy Ones.

With limbs and bodies firm may we extolling you attain the term of life appointed by the gods.

9. A hundred autumns stand before us, O ye gods, within whose space ye bring our bodies to decay;

Within whose space our sons become fathers in turn. Break ye not in the midst our course of fleeting life.

10. Aditi is the heaven, Aditi is mid-air, Aditi is the mother and the sire and son,

Aditi is all gods, Aditi five-classed men, Aditi all that hath been born and shall be born.

## HYMN OF CREATION

x.129 (Macdonell)

1. Non-being then existed not nor being:

There was no air, nor sky that is beyond it.

What was concealed? Wherein? In whose protection?

And was there deep unfathomable water?

2. Death then existed not nor life immortal;

Of neither night nor day was any token.

By its inherent force the One breathed windless:

No other thing than that beyond existed.

3. Darkness there was at first by darkness hidden;

Without distinctive marks, this all was water.

That which, becoming, by the void was covered,

That One by force of heat came into being.

4. Desire entered the One in the beginning:

It was the earliest seed, of thought the product.

The sages searching in their hearts with wisdom,

Found out the bond of being in non-being.

5. Their ray extended light across the darkness:

But was the One above or was it under?

Creative force was there, and fertile power:

Below was energy, above was impulse.

6. Who knows for certain? Who shall here declare it?

Whence was it born, and whence came this creation?

The gods were born after this world's creation:

Then who can know from whence it has arisen?

the  
One  
breathed  
(at the end)

One = Will

7. None knoweth whence creation has arisen;  
And whether he has or has not produced it:  
He who surveys it in the highest heaven,  
He only knows, or haply he may know not.

TO PRAJĀPATI<sup>1</sup> [Hymn to the Unknown God] x.121 (Thomas)

1. As the Golden Germ he arose in the beginning; when born he was the one Lord of the existent. He supported the earth and this heaven. What God with our oblation shall we worship?

2. He who gives breath, who gives strength, whose command all the Gods wait upon, whose shadow is immortality, is death—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

3. Who through his greatness over that which breathes and closes the eyes is only king of the world, who is Lord of the two-footed and four-footed—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

4. Whose are the snowy mountains through his greatness, whose, as they say, are the ocean and the Rasā,<sup>2</sup> whose are the regions, whose the arms<sup>3</sup>—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

5. Through whom the mighty heaven and the earth have been fixed, through whom the sun has been established, through whom the firmament; who in the middle sky measures out the air—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

6. To whom the two realms (heaven and earth), sustained by his aid, looked up, trembling in spirit, over whom the risen sun shines—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

7. When the great waters came, bearing all as the Germ, and generating fire (Agni), then arose the one life-spirit of the Gods—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

8. Who through his greatness beheld the waters, that bore power and generated the sacrifice, who was the one God above the Gods—what God with our oblation shall we worship?

9. May he not injure us, who is the generator of the earth, he of true ordinances, who produced the heaven, who produced the shining mighty waters.

<sup>1</sup> Lord of creation or of creatures.

<sup>2</sup> A mythical river surrounding the world.

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps the all-embracing arms of Prajāpati. Sāyana understands the four quarters, and by the regions the intermediate quarters.

10. O Prajāpati, none other than thou has encompassed all these created things.<sup>1</sup> May that for which we desiring have invoked thee be ours. May we become lords of wealth.

3. COSMIC LAW OR ORDER, RIGHT, TRUTH—RTA

One of the special forms in which the doctrine of the unity of reality appeared was in the recognition of a universal and eternal law, Rta. Rta represents the law, unity, or rightness underlying the orderliness of the universe.

There are no hymns addressed specifically to Rta, but brief references to the important concept are found repeatedly in hymns to Varuṇa, the dispenser of the law, Agni, Viśvedevas, etc.

TO INDRA *comp. ... Rta* iv.23 (Griffith)

8. Eternal Law [Rta] hath varied food that strengthens; thought of eternal law removes transgressions.  
The praise-hymn of eternal law, arousing, glowing, hath oped the deaf ears of the living.
9. Firm-seated are eternal law's foundations; in its fair form are many splendid beauties.  
By holy law long lasting food they bring us; by holy law have cows come to our worship.
10. Fixing eternal law he [Indra], too, upholds it: swift moves the might of law and wins the booty.  
To law belong the vast deep earth and heaven: milch-kine supreme, to law their milk they render.

CREATION x.190 (Griffith)

1. From fervour<sup>2</sup> kindled to its height Eternal Law and Truth were born:  
Thence was the night produced, and thence the billowy flood of sea arose.
2. From that same billowy flood of sea the year was afterwards produced,  
Ordainer of the days nights [sic], Lord over all who close the eye.

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig interprets this hymn to mean essentially: "what other God than Prajāpati shall we worship?"

<sup>2</sup> This term could refer to the devotional ardor or asceticism of Brahman or "warmth."

3. Dhātār, the great creator, then formed in due order sun and moon.  
He formed in order heaven and earth, the regions of the air, and light.

TO VĀYU *(...)* i.2 (Griffith)

8. Mitra and Varuṇa, through Law, lovers and cherishers of Law,  
Have ye obtained your mighty power.

TO VIŚVEDEVAS *(...)* i.105 (Griffith)

12. Firm is this new-wrought hymn of praise, and meet to be told forth, O gods.  
The flowing of the floods is Law, Truth is the sun's extended light. Mark this my woe, ye earth and heaven.
16. That pathway of the sun in heaven, made to be highly glorified,  
Is not to be transgressed, O gods. O mortals, ye behold it not.  
Mark this my woe, ye earth and heaven.

TO AGNI *(...)* iv.5 (Griffith)

11. With reverence I declare the law, O Agni; what is, comes by thine order, Jātavedas [Agni].

TO BRAHMANĀSPATI [lord of priests] ii.23 (Griffith)

15. Bṛhaspati, that which the foe deserves not, which shines among the folk effectual, splendid,  
That, Son of Law! which is with might refulgent—that treasure wonderful bestow thou on us.

TO INDRA *(...)* iv.21 (Griffith)

1. May Indra come to us for our protection; here be the Hero praised, our feast-companion.  
May he whose powers are many, waxen-mighty, cherish, like Dyaus, his own supreme dominion.
2. Here magnify his great heroic exploits, most glorious one, enriching men with bounties,  
Whose will is like a sovrān in assembly, who rules the people, conqueror, all-surpassing.
3. Hither let Indra come from earth or heaven, hither with speech from firmament or ocean;  
With Maruts, from the realm of light to aid us, or from a distance, from the seat of Order.

To Uṣas [Dawn]

I.123 (Griffith)

6. ...The far-refulgent mornings make apparent the lovely treasures which the darkness covered.
7. The one departeth and the other cometh; unlike in hue day's halves march on successive.  
One hides the gloom of the surrounding parents. Dawn on her shining chariot is resplendent.
8. The same in form to-day, the same to-morrow, they still keep Varuṇa's eternal statute....
9. ...The maiden breaketh not the law of Order, day by day coming to the place appointed.
13. Obedient to the rein [sic] of Law Eternal give us each thought that more and more shall bless us....

To Āpṛis

III.4 (Oldenberg)

7. I catch hold of the two divine Hotṛs first<sup>1</sup>. The seven strong ones rejoice according to their wont. Teaching the right, they proclaim the right, the guardians of law, contemplating the law.

To VARUṆA

II.28 (Griffith)

4. He made them flow, the Āditya, the Sustainer: the rivers run by Varuṇa's commandment.

#### 4. ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

Rta, the law or order of the world—literally "the course of things"—provides the standard of morality. As seen in the preceding section, Rta represents the orderliness and eternal Law of the universe. Here, Rta stands for the same principle in human conduct. Orderly and consistent conduct is the essential feature of the good life. Disorder, often represented in the form of falsehood, is the greatest evil. Virtue is conformity to the cosmic law. (Rta also serves as the origin of the basic ethical concept of *dharma* in later Indian philosophy.) Love of fellowmen, kindness to all, and obedience to our duties to the gods and to men are enjoined. Asceticism, fasting, and abstinence are not unknown to the *Rg Veda*, but asceticism is not the dominant note.

<sup>1</sup> The Āpṛis are the divine or deified beings and objects to which the propitiatory verses are addressed. The Hotṛs are Agni and perhaps Varuṇa.

Comp. p. 104  
H. 104

To INDRA-SOMA

VII.104 (Griffith)

8. Whoso accuses me with words of falsehood when I pursue my way with guileless spirit,  
May he, the speaker of untruth, be, Indra, like water which the hollowed hand compresses.
9. Those who destroy, as is their wont, the simple, and with their evil natures harm the righteous,  
May Soma give them over to the serpent, or to the lap of Nirṛti<sup>1</sup> consign them.
10. The fiend, O Agni, who designs to injure the essence of our food, kine, steeds, or bodies,  
May he, the adversary, thief, and robber, sink to destruction, both himself and offspring.
11. May he be swept away, himself and children: may all the three earths press him down beneath them.  
May his fair glory, O ye gods, be blighted, who in the day or night would fain destroy us.
12. The prudent finds it easy to distinguish the true and false: their words oppose each other.  
Of these two that which is the true and honest, Soma protects, and brings the false to nothing.
13. Never doth Soma aid and guide the wicked or him who falsely claims the warrior's title.  
He slays the fiend and him who speaks untruly: both lie entangled in the noose of Indra.

To SOMA PAVAMĀNA [Self-Purifying Soma]<sup>2</sup>

IX.113 (Griffith)

4. Splendid by Law! declaring Law, truth-speaking, truthful in thy works,  
Enouncing faith, king Soma!...

To ĀPAS [Waters]

VII.47 (Griffith)

3. All-purifying, joying in their nature, to paths of gods the goddesses move onward.  
They never violate the laws of Indra....

<sup>1</sup> Death and destruction.

<sup>2</sup> See also *Rg Veda* IX.112, below.

- TO MARUTS vii.56 (Griffith)
12. Pure, Maruts, pure yourselves, are your oblations: to you, the pure, pure sacrifice I offer.  
By Law they came to truth, the Law's observers, bright by their birth, and pure, and sanctifying.
- TO VARUNA (Chief of Gods) ii.28 (Griffith)
5. Loose me from sin as from a band that binds me: may we swell, Varuṇa, thy spring of Order....
- TO VĀYU AND OTHERS (Winds) i.23 (Griffith)
22. Whatever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have wrought, If I have lied or falsely sworn, Waters, remove it far from me.
- TO AGNI (Fire) iv.5 (Oldenberg)
5. They who roam about like brotherless girls, of evil conduct like women who deceive their husbands, being wicked, sinful, and untrue—they have created for themselves this deep place.
- TO VARUṆA v.85 (Thomas)
7. What sin we have ever committed against an intimate, O Varuṇa, against a friend or companion at any time, a brother, a neighbour, or a stranger, that, O Varuṇa, loose from us.  
8. If like gamblers at play we have cheated, whether in truth or without knowing, all that loose from us, O God. So may we be dear to thee, O Varuṇa.
- TO DĀNA [charity or liberality] x.117 (Macdonell)
1. The gods inflict not hunger as a means to kill:  
Death frequently befalls even satiated men.  
The charitable giver's wealth melts not away;  
The niggard never finds a man to pity him.
2. Who, of abundant food possessed, makes hard his heart  
Towards a needy and decrepit suppliant  
Whom once he courted, come to pray to him for bread:  
A man like this as well finds none to pity him.
3. He is the liberal man who helps the beggar  
That, craving food, emaciated wanders,  
And coming to his aid, when asked to succour,  
Immediately makes him a friend hereafter.

4. He is no friend who gives not of his substance  
To his devoted, intimate companion:  
This friend should turn from him—here is no haven—  
And seek a stranger elsewhere as a helper.
5. The wealthier man should give unto the needy,  
Considering the course of life hereafter;  
For riches are like chariot wheels revolving: (turning)  
Now to one man they come, now to another.
6. The foolish man from food has no advantage;  
In truth I say: it is but his undoing;  
No friend he ever fosters, no companion:  
He eats alone, and he alone is guilty.
7. The plough that cleaves the soil produces nurture;  
He that bestirs his feet completes his journey.  
The speaking *brāhmin* earns more than the silent;  
A friend who gives is better than the niggard.
- TO KEŚINS<sup>1</sup> x.136 (Griffith)
2. The *muni*,<sup>2</sup> girdled with the wind, wear garments soiled of yellow hue.  
They, following the wind's swift course, go where the gods have gone before.
3. Transported with our *muni*hood we have pressed on into the winds:  
You therefore, mortal men, behold our natural bodies and no more.
4. The *muni*, made associate in the holy work of every god,  
Looking upon all varied forms flies through the region of the air
5. The steed of Vāta, Vāyu's friend, the *muni*, by the gods impelled  
In both the oceans hath his home, in eastern and in western sea
6. Treading the path of sylvan beasts, Gandharvas, and Apsarases  
He with long locks, who knows the wish, is a sweet most delightful friend.
7. Vāyu hath churned for him: he poundeth things most hard to bend,  
When he with long loose locks hath drunk, with Rudra, water from the cup.

<sup>1</sup> Wearers of long, loose hair, ascetics.

<sup>2</sup> Ascetics. The hymn is perhaps the earliest reference to the supernatural power attainable by ascetic practices.

TO UṢAS [the Dawn]<sup>1</sup>

i.113 (Thomas)

5. The generous one, that he who lies down may go, one to his enjoyment, one to his desire, another to wealth, that those who behold little may see widely, the Dawn has awakened all living things.
6. That one may win rule, another fame, another his desire, another achieve his end, to behold their different livelihoods the Dawn has awakened all living things.

TO INDRA, PARVATA, ETC.<sup>2</sup>

iii.53 (Griffith)

15. Sasārpā,<sup>3</sup> the gift of Jamadagnis,<sup>4</sup> hath lowed with mighty voice dispelling famine.  
The daughter of the Sun hath spread our glory among the gods, imperishable, deathless.
16. Sasarpā brought glory speedily to these, over the generations of the fivefold race;<sup>5</sup>  
Daughter of Pakṣa, she bestows new vital power, she whom the ancient Jamadagnis gave to me.

## TO PURUṢA

x.90 (Thomas)

11. When they divided the Puruṣa, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What his two arms? What are his thighs and feet called?
12. The *brāhmin* was his mouth, his two arms were made the *rājanya* (warrior), his two thighs the *vaiśya* (trader and agriculturist), from his feet the *śūdra* (servile class) was born.<sup>6</sup>

## 5. THE HEREAFTER

The Vedic Indians believed in personal immortality and in the world of the gods and the world of the fathers (manes). Good men went to heaven or the world of Viṣṇu, and others to the world presided over by Yama,<sup>7</sup> although Yama was also thought of as the ruler of all departed spirits.

<sup>1</sup> This and two succeeding passages are among the earliest references to the castes.

<sup>2</sup> The "Genius of the Mountains and Clouds," frequently an associate of Indra.

<sup>3</sup> An epithet of Vāk (Voice), the daughter of the sun.

<sup>4</sup> This refers to an ancient story which is of no philosophical significance.

<sup>5</sup> The five tribes of Aryan men, the four castes and the barbarians or non-Aryans.

<sup>6</sup> See note to these verses in *Rg Veda* x.90, above.

<sup>7</sup> Yama is sometimes described as the ruler of the realm of all departed spirits, but at other times (i.38. 5) as presiding over a realm which departed spirits wish to avoid.

## TO SAVITR [Heaven]

i.35 (Griffith)

6. Three heavens there are; two Savitar's, adjacent: in Yama's world is one, the home of heroes.  
As on a linch-pin, firm, rest things immortal: he who hath known it, let him here declare it.

## TO YAMA [Ruler of the realm of departed spirits]

x.14 (Macdonell)

1. Him who has past along the mighty ridges,  
And has spied out the path for many travellers,  
Vivasvant's son, the gatherer of people,  
Yama, the king, do thou present with offering.
2. For us has Yama first found out the pathway:  
This pasture never can be taken from us.  
To where have passed away our former fathers.  
The later born by their own paths have travelled.
4. Upon this sacred grass sit down, O Yama,  
Uniting with the Aṅgiras, our fathers.  
Let spells recited by the sages bring thee;  
Do thou, O king, rejoice in this oblation.
5. Come hither with the Aṅgiras, the holy:  
Here with Virūpa's sons, O Yama revel,  
Vivasvant I invoke, who is thy father,  
When at this rite upon the straw he's seated.
6. The Aṅgiras, our fathers, the Navagvas,  
The Bhṛigus and Atharvans,<sup>1</sup> soma-loving:  
May we abide for ever in the favour  
And the good graces of those holy sages.
7. Depart, depart, along those ancient pathways,  
On which have passed away our former fathers:  
There thou shalt see rejoicing in libations  
The two kings, Varuṇa the god and Yama.
8. Unite thou with the Fathers and with Yama,  
With thy good works' reward in highest heaven.  
To home return, all imperfection leaving.  
Unite with thine own body, full of vigour.
9. Begone, depart from here, disperse and scatter:  
For him the Fathers have prepared this dwelling.

<sup>1</sup> Three priestly families of ancient times.

Yama bestows on him this place distinguished,  
 A place by waters, days and nights distinguished.  
 Run on thy path straight forward, past the two dogs,  
 The sons of Saramā, four-eyed and brindled.  
 Draw near thereafter to the bounteous Fathers,  
 Who revel on in company with Yama.  
 O King, to those two this dead man deliver,  
 The two that are thy guardian dogs, O Yama,  
 Four-eyed, observing men, the pathway watching.  
 Bestow upon the dead man health and welfare.  
 Broad-nosed and brown the messengers of Yama,  
 Greedy of lives they rove among the people.  
 May they give back to us a life propitious  
 Here and to-day, that we may see the sunlight.

1. For Yama press the soma juice,  
 To Yama offering present.  
 To Yama goes the sacrifice,  
 Announced by Agni, well-prepared.
4. To Yama offering rich in ghee  
 Present forthwith, and forward step.  
 Let him direct us to the gods,  
 That we may live a life prolonged.
5. To Yama as a King present  
 Oblation very honey-sweet.  
 This homage is for seers of old,  
 The ancient makers of the path.

TO MARUTS (A. 9) 1.38 (Griffith)

4. If, O ye Maruts, ye the sons whom Pṛṣṇi bare, were mortal, and  
 Immortal he who sings your praise,
5. Then never were your praiser loathed like a wild beast in  
 pasture-land,  
 Nor should he go on Yama's path.

TO VIṢṆU (ALL DEVOTED) 1.154 (Thomas)

5. May I attain to that his dear place, where men devoted to the  
 Gods are exulting; for that verily is akin to the wide-stepper, in  
 the highest step of Viṣṇu a well of sweetness.

TO SOMA PAVAMĀNA

IX.113 (Griffith)

7. O Pavamāna, place me in that deathless, undecaying world—  
 Wherein the light of heaven is set, and everlasting lustre shines.  
 Flow, Indu,<sup>1</sup> flow for Indra's sake.
8. Make me immortal in that realm where dwells the king,  
 Vivasvān's son,<sup>2</sup>  
 Where is the secret shrine of heaven, where are those waters  
 young and fresh. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.
9. Make me immortal in that realm where they move even as they  
 list,  
 In the third sphere of inmost heaven, where lucid worlds are full  
 of light. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.
10. Make me immortal in that realm of eager wish and strong desire,  
 The region of the radiant Moon, where food and full delight are  
 found. Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.
11. Make me immortal in that realm where happiness and trans-  
 ports, where  
 Joys and felicities combine, and longing wishes are fulfilled.  
 Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake.

#### 6. SKEPTICISM AND RIDICULE OF THE GODS

The later Vedic Indian experienced not only the wonder which is so characteristic of the mood of philosophy, but also the doubt and skepticism concerning his previously accepted beliefs, the skepticism which so often prepares the way for philosophic thought. The questioning mood asserted itself very often. Skepticism was in the air. The Indian of this period—as seen in hymns quoted above, e.g., x.121, and x.129—wondered about his gods and about the possibility of knowing the ultimate source of all things, but his doubt often took the form of ridicule of accepted beliefs and of his gods. Even the very existence of his highest gods was questioned. He even offered up a prayer for faith, and a prayer to make us faithful is not possible in a time of unshaken faith.

TO INDRA

VIII.89 (Griffith)

3. Striving for strength bring forth a laud to Indra, a truthful hymn  
 if he in truth existeth.  
 One and another say, There is no Indra. Who hath beheld him?  
 Whom then shall we honour?

<sup>1</sup> Indu (or Soma), the moon, is supposed to contain the celestial nectar, soma juice.  
<sup>2</sup> Yama.



