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Pinnacles of India's Past

Selections from the Ṛgveda

Translated and annotated by
Walter H. Maurer

John Benjamins Publishing Company

PINNACLES OF INDIA'S PAST

SELECTIONS FROM THE ṚGVEDA

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Volume 2

Walter H. Maurer

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Translated and Annotated

by

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JOHN BENJAMINS PUBLISHING COMPANY
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*To All Those Who
Have Occupied Themselves
With the Ṛgveda
and
Endeavored to Understand
its Meaning
and
Convey it to Others
This Volume
Is Dedicated
in
Esteem and Gratitude*

Foreword

For years I had cherished the idea of translating and annotating a fairly representative selection of hymns of the R̥gveda such as would be appealing to the general reader, but it was not until the summer of 1978 that circumstances made it possible for me to begin work on this project. During that summer I had the good fortune of receiving a Visiting Honorary Fellowship at the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, where the congenial facilities for research and reflection that were put at my disposal were entirely conducive to the prosecution of the project as I then conceived it. The impressions of that summer at the Institute are among the happiest of my life, and the hospitality and numerous acts of kindness accorded to me and my wife by Professor William Beattie, Director of the Institute, and Miss Margaret M. Jardine, Administrative Secretary, as well as their interest in my work and its daily progress continue to linger in my mind today as vividly as when they were being experienced.

As I continued to work on this project during the summers that followed - work during the intervening academic years being precluded by other responsibilities - I gradually extended my original plan of translation and annotation so as to cover approximately twice the number of selected hymns and to make the notes on each hymn much more detailed. In this and yet other ways I found that what was once conceived to be a limited work of somewhat practical character had become almost imperceptibly a work of no small dimension.

My wife has been my constant companion throughout this work, and it is quite impossible for me to describe her contribution to it, so inseparable has been her connection with even its minutest aspect. With infinite patience, oftentimes interrupting her own work, she read and re-read these translations and their notes, commenting on both their clarity and obscurity with suggestions that never failed to be noteworthy for their insight and reasonableness. Had our roles been reversed, I am certain that I could not have exercised her role with any semblance of the patience and intellectual empathy which pervaded all her readings and comments.

I shall be eternally grateful to Dr. David A. Utz, brilliant and learned Iranist of the University of Pennsylvania, for his meticulous study of the majority of these selected hymns. His comments, founded upon wide and thoughtful reading in the twin fields of Iranian and Indic studies, always demonstrated prodigious acumen and were immensely appreciated alike for their intrinsic value and the time they exacted from his busy schedule of work.

I am deeply thankful also to Professor Richard W. Lariviere of the University of Texas at Austin, for his careful reading of many of the hymns and notes, which resulted in much valuable oral and written comment.

My good friend, John E. Frazer, whose study-room I shared at the University of Pennsylvania during my sabbatical of 1982-83, frequently offered suggestions to me revelatory of his lucid thinking and facility with English style.

I have benefited much from Elliot Stern's many perceptive comments, all reflective of his extensive learning and rare punctiliousness. Another young scholar, also from the University of Pennsylvania, Frederick M. Smith, often helped with advice and criticism, especially on matters of Vedic ritual.

Professor Rubellite Johnson of the University of Hawaii made a number of excellent suggestions for the *Introduction*, drawing upon her sensitive literary acumen, and there are yet others, colleagues and students alike, to whom I am indebted in ways too varied to enumerate. All have given something of their knowledge, and this work in its final form would be in some degree different without their contributions.

I am deeply thankful also to the Editorial Board of the University of Pennsylvania Studies on South Asia, whose wise and perspicacious comments, made to me anonymously, have added greatly to the improvement of the *Introduction*.

To Miss Kanta Bhatia, South Asia Bibliographer, South Asia Library of the University of Pennsylvania, I am beholden for so many kindnesses extending over the whole of my sabbatical that it would be futility itself to attempt a listing of them, a feat which, even if I were capable of its execution, she would not wish of me, as it is inherent in her nature to be helpful in every possible way.

Honolulu, Hawaii
December 1983

Walter Harding Maurer

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A Communication to the Reader

The Veda, I feel convinced, will occupy scholars for centuries to come, and will take and maintain forever its position as the most ancient of books in the library of mankind.

F. Max Müller¹

As one of the oldest and most precious documents of man, the Ṛgveda will always lay claim to our attention and deserve our most earnest study. Yet for all its value and inherent importance, it does not yield its treasures without effort on the part of both translator and reader. To reach those treasures is much like climbing the steepest of mountains, without paths to guide us, bristling with impediments to our ascent at every step. Yet this lofty and remote peak can be scaled, and indeed it has been scaled many times. The Ṛgveda has been translated often in part and in whole. Perhaps its *highest* pinnacles have not yet been reached: some are enshrouded in clouds or mist, others are not even visible to us. Like Everest, it has been there, shall we say from time immemorial, but it has resisted conquest through the ages. But like Everest, there to fascinate and tantalize, the Ṛgveda is being scaled, and the view from its lofty summit is the view of man's struggle for the Eternal.

Though there are many translations, partial and complete, they are like different paths leading to the top: some are winding and tortuous, some are fairly straight and narrow, some partake of all these qualities. The point I wish to make here is that all translations from one language to another of any document, but most especially of the Ṛgveda, are interpretations, and they are different, like those paths. Probably there can never be too many translations of the Ṛgveda, because, although each is imperfect in manifold ways, each reveals some element of truth that another does not, each brings us a little closer to that lofty summit.

¹ F. Max Müller, tr., *Vedic Hymns, Part I: Hymns to the Maruts, Rudra, Vāyu and Vâta*, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 32 (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1891), p. xxxi.

It may naturally be wondered why interpretations of the Ṛgveda are so divergent, why it is so difficult to get to the summit, to continue our figure. The answer to this question lies in the character of the hymns themselves. While at times highly poetic and rich in bold imagery, the style is often also extremely condensed, the sense being carried by but a few words, a frail skeleton of thought, the import of which is elusive. The Ṛgvedic poets were fond of ellipsis, recondite expression, double meaning, farfetched similes and metaphors that soar to the limits of fancy. There are many words of frequent occurrence, the exact sense of which is not yet established. There are words that occur but a few times, or but once, whose meaning is unknown. There are allusions to legends, undoubtedly well-known to the poets and their clientele, of which but the barest fragments are told in the Ṛgveda - a sort of jigsaw puzzle with most of the pieces lost! As if all this were insufficient to dull the ardor of the boldest investigator, the whole cultural milieu in which these hymns were composed and recited can ever be little more than a reconstruction from bits and pieces in the hymns themselves, really hardly more than a figment of our projected imagination. Finally, it must ever be remembered that these poems were the product of poet-priests, highly skilled in the twin arts of poetry and priestcraft, both of which have their peculiar ways of stating ideas: the one couched in imagery and finesse of expression, the other cloaked in indirectness, mystic symbolism and hidden meaning.

In overcoming these obstacles to understanding the hymns, every means available to the scholar has to be used, among which may be mentioned the comparison of similar passages and of the same words in all the hymns where they occur, the help of comparative mythology and religion, comparative Indo-European philology (these three with caution), the many studies by Vedic scholars on specific problems as well as all the translations that have been made as reflecting different interpretations of problematic passages, and certainly also the traditional Indian commentaries on the Ṛgveda, especially that of Sāyaṇa, even though they are in large measure based on much later traditions, often considerably developed and modified from the intentions of the authors of the hymns. Such are the means at one's disposal, to which may be added a certain reliance on one's own instincts, accumulated from the experience of studying numerous and varied hymns and the insight it is hoped may emanate from this experience.

The translations presented here are as close a rendition as English idiom permits. Though literal, they are not slaves to literality, and I trust they will not be found wooden or stilted. While the English employed is not archaic and muddled with affectations, yet it is not quite the English of everyday usage. That, in my view, would be inappropriate, almost irreverential. An effort must be made to conserve some of the remoteness of the Ṛgveda as well

as the loftiness to which some of its language and thought rise. To give some impression of these special qualities I have resorted to a style to which I dare apply the name 'elevated prose'. I am quite aware that it will not please everyone: some would prefer a translation into strictly current English, others into some sort of metrical form to suggest the poetry of the original. With regard to the latter, I am convinced that the problems of translation are sufficient without their unnecessary augmentation and, in any case, a metrical version would not serve to convey any impression whatsoever of the chanted recitation of the Ṛgveda. I have made some conscious attempt to preserve the word order where its retention seemed congruous with my own preferred phraseology or was more conducive to reproducing the flavor of the original. Wherever possible I have tried to use the same English word for the same Vedic word, though there are many cases where the coverage of a Vedic word exceeds the limits of one and the same English equivalent, so that complete consistency in this is unattainable.

The translation of obscure passages poses a special problem, because, insofar as possible, the obscurities or at least some impression of them ought to be preserved in the translation. Indeed it should be an axiom of Ṛgvedic translation that obscurities are not to be resolved by overly wordy and interpretive translation. Amplification and interpretation are the province of the notes. In short, the translation must not reflect an endeavor to improve or clarify the Ṛgveda, but solely to reproduce it as faithfully as possible. But there are numerous instances where every translation, no matter how rigidly adherent to this principle it may be, must ineluctably be clearer than the original. Vedic and later also classical Sanskrit idiom freely admit the omission of subject and object pronouns, which in English must be supplied. Supplying these implicit words requires an interpretation of the text, often differing from that of other translators, that is reflected in the translation.

In the notes to each hymn I have conscientiously attempted to explain every matter that seemed to require discussion, whether because it was innately obscure or because it involved something unfamiliar to the general reader. I am aware that, while some will find these notes insufficiently detailed, others may find them prolix and unnecessarily copious. But I have everywhere had principally in mind the general reader to whom these hymns are a *terra incognita*, who therefore, needs to be guided at every turn. If, then, they seem overly abundant, let the reader who feels no need of this degree of guidance, be patient toward the one who does. If, on the other hand, the notes seem insufficiently explanatory here and there, I can only resort to my inability to see every dark spot and seek the reader's understanding for the deficiency.

When I first conceived this project of translation, I had in mind only the general reader who had no familiarity or virtually no familiarity with the Ṛgveda. As I proceeded, I felt hopeful that these translations, coupled with their rather full exegesis, would prove appealing also to students of Sanskrit who had not had the time to enter upon a study of the Veda or had devoted themselves so little to it that they would not be averse to a fresh translation.

In selecting hymns for translation I have had no easily definable principles beyond that of representing the chief deities of the Ṛgveda adequately and including also the majority of the speculative and cosmogonic hymns as well as a fair portion of hymns that seem rarely to appear in anthologies, yet are deserving of attention. In this rather unprincipled procedure I have tried to include all the well-known hymns, but obviously there is an inescapable subjectivity about this, and I hope I will not be found guilty of too glaring omissions from anyone's list of favorites.

The imperfections in this work must be many and diverse, but I trust the reader will be gentle in his disposition toward them, knowing that, even were these imperfections to be expunged, there are yet others undiscovered by him, which, were they too known, would reveal all the more acutely the impossibility of achieving freedom from error in attempting to understand a work that occupies so isolated a pinnacle in antiquity.

A Brief Introduction to the Ṛgveda

The Ṛgveda is the oldest of the books that comprise the scriptures of Hinduism. While its age cannot be accurately determined, it can be said with reasonable certainty that it must have existed in its present form at least as early as 1000 B.C. The composition of the Ṛgveda, however, does not belong to a single point in time, but must, by the nature of its contents and the multiplicity of its authorship, have extended over a very long period, perhaps reaching back to the very beginning of the second millennium B.C. Moreover, some of the hymns of the Ṛgveda may have been composed not on the soil of India, but in the lands to the west, where the Aryans, as the people of the Ṛgveda called themselves, had lived for a long time before gravitating to their final home in India.

The language of the Ṛgveda, properly designated Vedic, but loosely Sanskrit in a broader sense, belongs to the very large group of languages referred to by scholars as 'Indo-European', which embraces English and most of the languages of Europe. The people who became the Vedic Aryans once formed a part of these widely dispersed speakers of Indo-European who, as nomads, had no fixed home, but moved in different directions as necessity or other cause impelled them until they eventually settled down, relinquishing a migratory way of life.

Reflective of the intimate relationship between the Vedic language and English is the word *Veda* itself, literally 'knowledge', which is genetically related to English 'wit', originally 'understanding, good sense', which has come down into modern English unchanged from Old English *wit*. This Old English *wit* and *veda* are formed from an Indo-European root *wid-* 'know', which, in numerous modifications and amplifications, is found in almost every Indo-European language.

The name Ṛgveda is a compound of *veda* 'knowledge' and *ṛc* 'hymn of praise' and thus means 'Knowledge (consisting) of Hymns of Praise'. Also designated Veda are three other collections, *viz.* the Yajurveda 'Knowledge (consisting) of Sacrificial Formulae (*yajus*)', the Sāmaveda 'Knowledge (consisting) of Chants (*sāman*)', and the Atharvaveda 'Knowledge of, *i.e.* belonging to, the Atharvans,' the ancient priestly family within which it was presumably handed down.¹

¹ The substitution of the forms *ṛg-*, *yajur-*, *sāma-* and *atharva-* respectively for *ṛc*, *yajus*, *sāman* and *atharvan* is due to grammatical rule.

From these four sacred collections is derived an immense body of literature, which grew up in a series of successive and fairly sharply definable strata. These layers of exegetical and amplificatory treatises, called Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads are, together with the four Vedas, collectively also called the Veda. Thus, the term Veda, somewhat confusingly, has both a narrow and a wide application, being either restricted simply to the four collections or extended to include these three layers of treatises founded upon each of them.

Formally speaking, the Ṛgveda consists of 1,028 hymns averaging about eleven stanzas each, arranged, according to the form in which the Ṛgveda has been transmitted, in ten divisions or books, called *maṇḍalas* (literally 'circles' or perhaps 'cycles'), of unequal numbers of hymns. Maṇḍalas II-VII are the Family Books, so-called because each is composed by members of the same family of priestly poets within which it was handed down. These maṇḍalas apparently formed the original kernel of the Ṛgveda when the hymns were first assembled into a single collection at some unknown time in antiquity. Prefixed and suffixed to this nucleus are Maṇḍalas I, VIII and X, each of which contains hymns of various authorship, while IX is in a class by itself, being exclusively devoted to the deified Soma plant.

Most of the hymns are directed to individual gods of the Indo-Aryan pantheon, but some are of a miscellaneous and less easily definable character, while others contain the earliest notions of creation that have come down from ancient times. Although some of the deities, as also many aspects of Vedic thought and practice, were surely evolved and developed within the ample fold of Indian culture, other deities and the general mythology connected with them were the common cultural heritage shared by the Indo-Aryans with their brethren in ancient Iran. The Ṛgveda, then, far from being an isolated product of remote antiquity, must be viewed in intimate relationship with the Avesta, the sacred book of the Zoroastrians, and very often the one is found to cast a ray of light on the other.

The Ṛgvedic Indian viewed the world in which he lived as pervaded with life, divine life: fire, water, wind, the earth and sky, the sun, dawn and light, the thunderstorm and so on - all were conceived as gods, much like persons in physiognomy and behavior, but with vast, superhuman and incomprehensible powers. The material objects of everyday life were also deified; thus, the paraphernalia of the warrior going into battle, the melted butter (ghee) that was poured into the sacred fire, or the post to which the sacrificial animal was tied, were made into gods. A feature which the Ṛgveda shares with the Avesta is the personification of abstractions, as exemplified by the class of deities called Ādityas, chief among whom are the great gods Varuṇa and Mitra.

There is a remarkable tendency, to be seen in many of the hymns, for the worshipper to treat the particular god whom he is venerating as all-powerful and supreme, as though he were the *only* god, for the moment at least, to the exclusion of all others. Perhaps contributing to this tendency was the absence of temples and images that are so characteristic of later Hinduism, which permitted greater freedom of conception of a god's powers and comprehensiveness of his functions. This attitude in worship, often termed henotheism, lends a monotheistic coloring to the Ṛgveda. None of the gods to whom this exclusive veneration is accorded, however, is ever permanently elevated to the station of *the* one and only god. In fact, although various attempts are made in some of the later hymns to postulate a single god who created and sustains the world, it cannot be said that the Ṛgveda ever finally and unconditionally arrives at monotheism. In one quite remarkable hymn (X.129) all the Gods are momentarily brushed aside as being subsequent to the creation of the world, and a neuter first principle called That One is presupposed as the source of all. Here, then, occurs the earliest expression of monism, later to be developed and elaborated into the fundamental doctrine of intellectual Hinduism.

The gods of the Ṛgveda were righteous gods whose behavior was governed by a universal cosmic and moral law called the Ṛta, which was under the care of Varuṇa, the personification of Truth, who was, of course, subject himself to its adherence. On nearly every page of the Ṛgveda one may read that this or that god was an adherent of the Ṛta. Malevolence, afflictions and catastrophes were attributed to demons, so that if a drought plagued the land, it was not because the god Indra was angry or giving way to some momentary whim, but rather because the serpent-demon Vṛtra was withholding the waters until he would be conquered by Indra in battle.

It is really quite impossible to translate Ṛta, as there is no single English word that covers the manifold and complex conceptions embraced by this term. It corresponds etymologically to Aśa of the Avesta, which is often rendered 'Truth', a meaning that probably may be regarded as adequate most of the time because of its juxtaposition with its diametric opposite, Druj 'Falsehood, Deceit.' While 'Truth' may frequently suffice as a translation for Vedic Ṛta, there are many instances where 'Truth' is too narrow in scope and its connotations too closely linked with moral values. In such cases, 'Cosmic Order' or 'Cosmic Law' come nearer to conveying the meaning of Ṛta.²

² In the translations that follow, the word Ṛta is sometimes retained, at other times it is rendered by 'Cosmic Order' or 'Cosmic Law'.

The hymns of the Ṛgveda are for the most part requests, usually directed to a single god, less frequently to a pair or a combination of gods, for the physical comforts of life and freedom from distress of various kinds: an abundance of heroic sons, cows and wealth in general, good fortune, well-being, food, strength, a long life, protection from enemies, thieves and wild animals, delivery from hardships, freedom from illness; occasionally also insight and eloquence. Sometimes there is no specifically stated request, but a god's heroic and wondrous feats are eulogized on the tacit assumption, we may suppose, that he will be thereby impelled to confer general well-being upon the worshipper.

The religion of the Ṛgveda was a fire-cult, and fire was therefore the focal point of the sacrifice, without which it could not take place. Other essentials were the melted butter and the juice of the Soma plant. The sacrifice was a meal to which the gods were invited, such as that given by a host to his guests. The gods are asked to come and sit down on a layer of special grass strewn out for them. Agni, god of fire and intermediary between men and gods, is invoked to fetch the god or gods to the place of sacrifice.

Although a sacrifice is nowhere described in the Ṛgveda, a general idea of it may be gained from scattered references. There were four sorts of priests with fairly specific functions. Thus, the *hotṛ* recited the hymn of praise to the god to whom worship was to be accorded. It cannot be said whether in all cases he was also the composer of the hymn, but the hymns were composed in priestly families, and very likely the *hotṛs* were drawn from those families. The manual aspects of the sacrifice were performed by the *adhvaryu*, and the chanting of certain verses was the function of the *udgātṛ*. Finally, a priest designated the *brahman* served as a kind of overseer of the whole sacrificial process, and for this reason was expected to have a thorough knowledge of all these operations or, to put it in another way, he had to be versed in the hymns of the Ṛgveda recited by the *hotṛ*, the chants of the Sāmaveda intoned by the *udgātṛ*, and the formulae or *mantras* of the Yajurveda, muttered by the *adhvaryu* as he performed this or that sacrificial act.

Melted butter was poured into the sacrificial fire at a specific point in the proceedings and to the accompaniment of certain *mantras*. The stalks of the Soma plant were pressed between stones and the extract purified through a filter of sheep's wool, whence it trickled loudly into troughs below. The Soma was imbibed by the priests after it was mixed with water, milk or ghee.

These sacrifices were performed on behalf of a prince, king or anyone who could afford them. It is certain that the sacrifices varied greatly in complexity, especially in the later period, and obviously the more elaborate and complex they were, the more costly the gifts to the priests who were

responsible for performing them. The fee paid to the priest, called a *dakṣiṇā*, is the subject of an entire Ṛgvedic hymn (X.107).

A Ṛgvedic hymn was an act of truth. Since from start to finish it contained only statements of absolute truth concerning the god to whom it was addressed, it was felt to be a miraculous power which could not fail to achieve its purpose.³ It was, moreover, a sort of bargain between the worshipper and the god who was praised, and like any contract had to be honored. In this way also the hymn to the frogs (VII.103) and the so-called Gambler's Lament (X.34) are surely to be explained.

The Ṛgveda, like the other Vedic collections, was passed on orally from generation to generation within priestly families, a process which has continued among a diminishing number of families to the present day. The duration of this oral transmission and its absolute fidelity are a truly incredible phenomenon with no close parallel elsewhere. At a very early time, as the spoken language came to diverge more and more from the somewhat stylized and archaic language of the hymns, attempts were made to analyze and to understand them by specially contrived types of recitation as well as by treatises dealing with phonetics, grammar, prosody and etymology. A remarkable consequence of this was the rise and growth of a number of separate branches of learning in which the Vedic Aryans achieved unsurpassed eminence, chief among which was grammar.

Apart from sporadic and fragmentary bits of information, the West knew little or nothing about the Ṛgveda or any of the Vedas until the end of the eighteenth century. Practically speaking, Vedic scholarship began with the appearance of the essay *On the Vedas, or Sacred Writings of the Hindus* in 1805 by the British scholar Henry Thomas Colebrooke. Since then and especially after the publication of Max Müller's *editio princeps* of the Ṛgveda (1849-74) along with the Sanskrit commentary of Sāyaṇa,⁴ which for the first time made the complete text easily available to scholars, serious interest in the Ṛgveda has grown prodigiously. Its problems have exerted a fascination on a whole galaxy of scholars of West and East, all of whom have contributed in one way or another to the elucidation of this precious heritage of mankind, for it no longer belongs to India alone.

³ The power of truth has always been a potent force in Indian thought; so, *cf.* its application in modern times by Gandhi and note the motto on the great seal of India, extracted from the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (III.1.6): *satyam eva jayate* 'Truth alone is victorious'.

⁴ Sāyaṇa was a minister in the court of Bukka I, king of Vijayanagara in South India, during the latter half of the fourteenth century A.D. He wrote a commentary on every hymn of the Ṛgveda. (except the eleven so-called Vālahilya hymns, VIII.49-59), probably in collaboration with other Vedic paṇḍits, as he did also on other works of Vedic literature.

Selected Hymns

Agni

Next to Indra the most frequently invoked of all gods in the Ṛgveda is Agni. But as the god of fire and fundamental principle of the Vedic sacrifice, Agni was by far the most important of the gods, exceeding even Indra. Every sacrifice, from the simplest domestic rite to the most elaborate and complex, centered around the fire, the Vedic religion having been a fire-cult, as was its sister religion, Zoroastrianism, though the two were developed along very different lines. No sacrifice in either was possible without fire, although in Zoroastrianism there was no god of fire and, strangely enough, the cognate of the name Agni does not exist in the Avesta, although a vestige of it has been found in one or two proper names.¹ That the worship of fire in some form existed among the Indo-European peoples can hardly be doubted, as attested in part by the worship of Hestia in Greece and Vesta in Rome. Perhaps there is no phenomenon of nature that is more conducive to worship and personalization by early man than fire in its many manifestations. But nowhere among the Indo-European peoples was the worship of fire so elaborated and emphasized as among the Aryans and their descendants, the Irano-Aryans and the Indo-Aryans.

In the Ṛgveda Agni is a very complex deity, as he is conceived under so many diverse forms, partly terrestrial and partly celestial, and some of these manifestations are more developed and play a greater role than others. Of particular importance is his presence in the Waters, not so much because of his emanation from them in the form of lightning during a thunderstorm, but because it is through this means that he enters all plant life, penetrates the earth and all things, and, in a curiously indirect way, comes to man as terrestrial fire, whether for the sacrifice or any ordinary purpose. It is by rubbing together the wood of certain trees, all of which, after all, gain the

¹ Thus, Dāštāyṇi, i.e. *dāšta* 'worshipped' + *ayni* 'fire,' hence, literally 'he by whom fire is worshipped'; possibly also Ag-nu-par-nu, an Akkadian transcription of Agnifarnah 'he who has fortune through fire.' For further details v. M. Mayrhofer, *Iranisches Personennamenbuch* (Wien, Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1979), I.36, no. 104.

nourishment for their growth from water, that fire is obtained, so that it was believed that Agni entered the wood in his embodiment as water. But he is also inherent in rocks and stones, as is evident from the sparks that can be produced by striking them together. The sun itself is yet another of Agni's many forms, though usually treated as a separate god. Agni's intimate connection with the Waters led to his identification with Apām Napāt, the old water-spirit of the Aryans, in which form he is said to shine without fuel in the Waters.

One of Agni's principal roles is to serve as messenger between men and gods, in which capacity he either conveys the essence of the sacrificial meal to the gods or brings the gods themselves to the sacrificial feast, where they sit down together on the sacred grass that has been spread out for them. As the sacrificial fire, Agni knows all there is to know about the sacrifice, and it is hardly surprising that, due to this perfect knowledge, he is regarded as a supreme priest, the divine counterpart of the earthly priest. But his knowledge is not by any means limited to the sacrifice and priestly matters: he is said to be the 'all-knower,' and his wisdom is often alluded to. He is, not unnaturally, a dispeller of darkness and disease, a destroyer of malignant demons. He is frequently associated with Indra, especially in these exploits against demons, and in many hymns conjointly worshipped with Indra. But in spite of their intimate association and even the traits they share in common, Indra and Agni are of markedly different character: Indra, on the one hand, is the mighty warrior god, the unrelenting vanquisher not only of demons, but also of all the enemies of the Indo-Aryans and hence their staunchest protector; Agni, on the other hand, is the arch-priest, intermediary between men and gods, the great and omniscient sage, and, as the focal point of all sacrifices and provider of warmth and light in the home, closest kinsman to man among the gods.

The name Agni is Indo-European, as proved by the presence of obvious cognates in Latin *ignis*, Lithuanian *ugnīs* and Old Church Slavic *ognī*, although the variation in the initial vowel affords a problem not yet satisfactorily resolved.² Agni, under the form Aknis, appears as a fire-god also in Hittite, but the word is believed not to have been inherited from Indo-European, but borrowed into Hittite, probably from the nearby Mitanni people.³

² For some discussion of the vocalism v. J. Loicq, 'Minutiae Latinae' in *l'Antiquité classique* 31 (1962), p. 131 and notes 3 and 4 for many bibliographic references.

³ For further on this v. H. Otten and M. Mayrhofer, 'Der Gott Aknī in den hethitischen Texten und seine indo-arische Herkunft' in *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 60 (1965), pp. 545-552.

I.1

Agni

1. Agni I call on, who is placed at the fore, the divine ministrant of the sacrifice, the invoker, who bestows the most gifts.
2. Agni is worthy of being called on by former seers and present: may he bring hither the gods!
3. Through Agni may he obtain wealth, prosperity, every day, splendid and abounding in heroic sons!
4. O Agni, the sacrifice and work of the sacrifice, which you encircle on every side - that alone goes unto the gods.
5. May Agni, the invoker who has the powers of a sage, true and most brilliant in glory, come hither, a god with the gods!
6. Whatsoever favor you would bestow upon your worshipper, Agni, that favor of yours surely is unfailing, O Aṅgiras.
7. You we approach every day, O Agni, you who gleam in the darkness, with devotion and bearing homage;
8. - you who are sovereign of the sacrifices, guardian of the Order, brightly shining, growing in your own abode.
9. Be accessible unto us, O Agni, as a father unto his son! Accompany us for our well-being!

Notes

1. Although this is the first hymn of the Ṛgveda as it has come down to us, it is not necessarily to be regarded as the first in order of composition. But it has been kept first among these selections as setting the tone of the whole, its very first word being Agni, on whom the sacrifice depends. In much the same way do the Iliad and Odyssey commence with the signatory words μῆνιν ('the wrath' of Achilles) and ἄνδρα ('the man', *i.e.*, Odysseus, the hero of the epic) and the Aeneid with *arma virumque* 'arms and the man' (the two principal themes of the work).

'who is placed at the fore': Several layers of meaning are involved here: as the honored guest at the sacrifice, to which he is requested to bring along the gods, Agni is accorded the place of honor, 'at the fore', *i.e.*, right in front, at the head. Virtually, then, in this sense it is equivalent to 'honored guest'. Since 'at the fore' may mean 'in the East', the direction always in front of the officiating priest, the one 'who is placed at the fore' means also 'the sacrificial fire on the eastern altar'. It is also the regular term for the 'domestic priest', the spiritual adviser of the king, from the precedence of rank that exalted position enjoyed. By another figurative facet is suggested simply 'given first rank' without specification, or contrarily with specification: 'put at the head of some undertaking', in particular serving as intermediary between men and gods, *i.e.*, 'one who has been appointed as messenger.'

'divine ministrant of the sacrifice': Without Agni, of course, there could be no sacrifice, as fire was the central feature of the Vedic sacrifice. What is more, Agni, as has just been said, is the intermediary or go-between between men and gods, who transmits the message of the sacrifice and its essence to the gods from men. He is, then, the 'divine ministrant of the sacrifice' in the fullest sense, the counterpart of the earthly priest among the gods. But in the Vedic sacrifice, especially in the great sacrifices, there were many priests, each with particular functions; Agni here, as elsewhere, is especially identified with the priest known as the 'invoker,' whose task it was to recite the hymn (which might, in some cases at least, have been his own composition) to the god to whom the sacrifice was directed. This identification may have been facilitated by the sounds associated with fire, particularly one that has just been freshly kindled. In any case, no such fancied similarity was needed to assign the invokership to Agni.

3. 'he': the institutor of the sacrifice, almost certainly the king or prince, on whose behalf it is performed.

'abounding in heroic sons': The constant request that is made in the Vedic hymns is for sons, brave sons, who will distinguish themselves and their families.

4. 'the sacrifice and work of the sacrifice which you encircle on every side': Fires were kindled at the cardinal points of the place of the sacrifice, where everything connected with the sacrifice transpired, both the liturgical and purely manual, such as measuring the ground for the altar and getting ready the sacrificial implements. Quite literally, then, Agni might be said to 'encircle the sacrifice and work of the sacrifice on every side.'
5. 'who has the powers of a sage': Agni is regarded as all-wise, and various epithets are applied to him to convey his great wisdom and intelligence, which, in part at least, must derive from his rank of 'divine ministrant of the sacrifice' and the other priestly offices he is said to hold, as they imply a perfect knowledge of all the manual acts and ceremonial. As the 'invoker' he would certainly also be a poet, as often the invokers composed their own hymns.
6. 'Aṅgiras': a name often given to Agni. The Aṅgirasas seem to have been a very ancient priestly family, which was early elevated to semi-divine status, having obtained immortality by sacrifice. They may very likely have been practitioners of a fire-cult and so regarded Agni as their titular head, whence the application of their name in the singular to him, as the Aṅgiras *par excellence*, so to speak. Agni's ubiquitous identification with the various priests of the Vedic sacrifice may have contributed to this association with the priestly Aṅgirasas.

It is interesting to note that the word Aṅgiras used to be etymologically equated, as a cognate word, with Greek ἄγγελος (whence through ecclesiastical Latin *angelus* to Old French *angele* to English *angel*) 'messenger', a correspondence which nicely agreed with Agni's role as a 'messenger' between men and gods in the sacrificial rite.

8. 'guardian of the Order': By 'Order' is meant the Ṛta, which regulates all the recurring phenomena of the cosmos: the movements of the celestial bodies, change of the seasons, all the phases of nature, and here especially the proper conduct of the ritual of the sacrifice, the particular concern of Agni in his role as the divine priest of the sacrifice. The Ṛta or Cosmic Order was in the charge of Varuṇa, but all the gods (including Varuṇa!) were obliged to adhere absolutely to it.

'growing in your own abode': that is, flaring up as the melted butter is poured into the fire from the sacrificial ladle.

I.58

Agni

1. Never goaded is the immortal, born of strength, since, as messenger of Vivasvat, he became the invoker. By the straightest paths he measures out the space. Through his divine office he seeks to procure the gods by means of the oblation.
2. Seizing upon his food, the ageless one greedily devouring lingers in the woods. Like a horse, his back gleams when he is besprinkled; like heaven's surface thundering he has sounded.
3. In concert with the Rudras, the Vasus, the invoker is seated, placed in front, master of wealth, the immortal. Darting like a chariot among the settlements, he proffers choice gifts to mortals.
4. Driven by the wind, he spreads out in the woods, loud-roaring at will, with his tongues as a sickle. When greedily, O Agni, you crave the trees, black is your course, O brilliant-billowed, ageless one.
5. Flame-toothed, impelled by the wind in the woods, he snorts away like a lordly bull in the herd, rising up to the unmolested space with his body. What stands, what moves is afraid - the birds too.
6. The Bhṛguṣ put you among men like a precious treasure, easy for the people to invoke, an invoker, O Agni, a choice guest, like a kindly friend for the divine race.
7. The one whom the seven-tongued priests choose as the invoker, the best sacrificer in the rites, O Agni, procurer of all riches, I worship with refreshing oblation. I go to him for wealth.
8. Shelters without a break, O son of strength, today grant to us, your praisers, you who are rich in friends! O Agni, protect the one who praises you from distress with iron strongholds, O offspring of strength!
9. Be a protection to him who praises you, O far-shining one! Be a shelter to the bountiful, O bountiful one! Protect, O Agni, from distress the one who praises you! Straightway in the morning let him go rich in wisdom!

Notes

1. 'Never goaded' etc.: *i.e.*, never needs to be goaded, as he is in the constant performance of his office. Agni has regularly applied to him the epithets 'born of strength,' 'son of strength' and other synonymous expressions in allusion to the vigorous effort required for his production by rubbing firesticks together. He is also constantly called the 'invoker' in his capacity as chief priest of all sacrifices, a function that naturally befell him as messenger between men and gods.

Vivasvat, a somewhat shadowy figure in the Ṛgveda, to whom no complete hymn is addressed, was the father of Yama, the first man to die, and of Manu, the progenitor of the human race. To judge from the etymology of his name, which means 'shining far and wide' and other scattered details, he must have been in origin a god of the sun, hence his nomination of Agni to be his messenger.
2. 'his back gleams, when he is besprinkled': with reference to the brightening of the sacrificial fire when ladles of ghee (clarified butter) are sprinkled thereon.

Stanzas 2-5 are devoted to a vivid description of Agni in his aspect of the all-consuming forest-fire.
3. The Rudras, so-called as being the sons of Rudra, are more familiarly known as the Maruts, the storm-gods generally associated with Indra and his exploits (v. ṚV I.85). The Vasus, literally 'The Good Ones' or 'The Shining Ones,' are yet another group of deities, often mentioned in the Ṛgveda, though never specifically characterized and hence vague in function.
7. 'the seven-tongued priests': a word-play is involved here which is lost in the translation. The word for 'tongue' also means a certain tongue-shaped ladle or spoon employed by the priests. Thus, it is simultaneously implied that the priests have seven ladles and seven tongues, *i.e.*, utterances.
8. 'you who are rich in friends': this is expressed in a single compound word in the original, which is capable of various interpretations. It might also mean: 'you who have the majesty of Mitra' or 'worshipped as a friend.' Sāyaṇa curiously has 'favorably shining!'
9. It is not clear to whom the last sentence refers, whether to Agni, whose wisdom is often extolled, or to the author of the hymn, or to the patron of the sacrifice.

I.143

Agni

1. I offer a mightier, newer devotional hymn to Agni - words and prayer to the son of strength, who, as the beloved son of the waters, has sat down on the ground along with the Vasus as invoker in observance of the ritual-time.
2. Born in the highest heaven, this Agni became manifest to Mātariśvan. Through his power, when he has been kindled, through his greatness, brilliance illuminated earth and heaven.
3. Of him sparkling are the lustres, ageless of him, who is of goodly appearance, goodly countenance, goodly splendor: the lustres of Agni, producer of light, shimmer like the iridescence of rivers by night, not slumbering, ageless.
4. The all-knower, whom the Bhṛguś placed in the navel of the earth, of the world, through their greatness - do stimulate that Agni with hymns of praise in his own abode, who alone rules over wealth like Varuṇa.
5. One who cannot be checked, like the roar of the storm-winds, like a missile that has been let go, like the thunderbolt of the gods: Agni eats with his sharp teeth; he devours: as does a warrior his enemies, he lays low the forests.
6. Will Agni like our poem of praise? Rich with riches will he thwart our wish? A stimulator, would he spur our devotions unto their attainment? Him, of radiant countenance, I thus praise in song out of devotion.
7. The one who has kindled him, as to a friend goes to Agni whose countenance shines with ghee, who sits on the pole of your Ṛta. Being kindled - a sacrificial post glistening in the sacrifices - he shall hold aloft our bright-hued devotion!
8. Attentive, O Agni, with attentive protectors protect us - kindly, effective ones! With infallible ones, prudent ones, agreeable ones, unwinking ones, protect our offspring on every side!

Notes

1. For an explanation of the Vasus, *v.* note on RV I.58,3.
2. In some degree at least Mātariśvan is a counterpart of the Greek Prometheus, as he is said to have brought the hidden fire from heaven to earth, but he is a curiously ambivalent figure in the R̥gveda, in some passages being indistinguishable from Agni. Perhaps he was originally only a celestial form of Agni, which would account in part for the tendency to treat the two as identical.

The etymology of the name, while not entirely free of obscurity and discussion among scholars, seems to suggest a literal sense of 'he who grows in his mother,' which, if correct, could imply either a terrestrial or celestial origin of Mātariśvan, depending on just what is meant by 'mother.' If by 'mother' is meant the 'thundercloud,' then 'he who grows or is formed in the thundercloud' would, of course, be the lightning or celestial form of Agni. If, on the other hand, by 'mother' is meant the lower of the two sticks of attrition used in his production, the terrestrial form of Agni is meant.

An interesting example of Mātariśvan's identification with Agni is to be seen in the famous passage from RV I.164,46: 'What is one seers call in many ways: they call him Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.'

4. It was to the Bhṛgus that Mātariśvan allegedly brought Agni from heaven, and by them, as may be seen in this passage, Agni was 'placed in the navel of the earth, of the world,' *i.e.*, in the altar of the sacrifice, there to become the focus of all sacrificial rites. The ancient race of the Bhṛgus, then, was both the recipient of the heavenly gift of fire and its disseminator among men.
7. 'who sits on the pole of your Ṛta': Here Ṛta means the sacrifice (a part of the Cosmic Order), which is conceived as a chariot, to be drawn, as it were, by Agni.

I.12

Agni

1. We choose Agni as messenger, as invoker, the all-knower, who has goodly knowledge of the sacrifice.
2. May they ever invoke Agni again and again with invocations, Agni the lord of the dwelling, conveyor of the oblation, dear to many!
3. Bring hither the gods, Agni, you who are just born, for him who has spread out the sacred grass: you are the invoker worthy to be worshipped by us.
4. Wake them up, the eager ones, when you go on your mission! With the gods do you sit down on the sacred grass!
5. You whose oblation is the ghee, O Agni brightly shining, burn up the malevolent who have wrought harm upon us!
6. Agni is kindled with Agni: the sage, lord of the house, the youth, bearer of the oblation, who has the sacrificial ladle in his mouth.
7. Praise the sage Agni, who is true to the law in the sacrifice, the god who dispels disease!
8. O Agni, the lord of the oblation, who honors you, the messenger, O god - of him do be the protector!
9. The one who, presenting an oblation, seeks to win Agni hither for a feast to the gods - unto him be gracious, O purifier!
10. O purifier, brightly shining one! Bring hither the gods for us, Agni, to our sacrifice and oblation!
11. Being celebrated with our newest song, bring us wealth of heroes and nourishment!
12. O Agni, with bright flames, with all the invocations to the gods, enjoy this our hymn of praise!

Notes

1. Agni is habitually called the 'messenger' as intermediary between men and gods, because he brings the gods to the place of sacrifice or because he takes to them the oblation offered in the sacrifice. He is also regularly depicted as an officiating priest at the sacrifice, usually as the 'invoker,' *i.e.*, the priest whose duty it was to call upon the god to whom the sacrifice was directed. Since no sacrifice could take place without fire as its nucleus, Agni was naturally viewed as an expert in everything that concerned the sacrifice, hence here as one 'who has goodly knowledge of this sacrifice'. But his knowledge is by no means limited to that of the minute details of the sacrifice: his wisdom embraces everything, and the Ṛgveda is full of epithets asserting his omniscience.
2. 'lord of the dwelling': The meaning is doubtful; some say 'lord of the house' (as though equivalent to the expression used below in stanza 6), others 'lord of the tribes,' 'lord of the clans,' 'lord of men.'
3. 'you who are just born': Before each sacrifice the fire has to be kindled anew by means of two firesticks, one of which is twirled vigorously in the other.
 'for him who has spread out the sacred grass': that is, for the priest who has strewn out the sacred grass on which the invited gods are to sit. But equally possible and plausible would be the translation: 'for him for whom (*i.e.*, on whose behalf) the sacred grass has been spread out,' the person then referred to being not the priest who has strewn the grass, but the institutor of the sacrifice (the king or prince) for whom the priest has done so.
4. 'Wake them up, the eager ones': the gods, who are eager to have the sacrificial meal.
6. 'Agni is kindled with Agni': From the fire lighted first the others are lighted.
 'the sage': *v.* the latter part of the note on 1 above; an alternative translation 'the poet,' while also suggestive of great wisdom, would allude to Agni's role as the 'invoker' who was often the author of the hymn he uttered in his invocation.
 'lord of the house': The only god to whom this epithet is applied in the Ṛgveda, Agni is so called because he dwells in every house and home, furnishing warmth against the cold, heat for the cooking of food and fire for the domestic rites.
 'the youth': Agni is called a youth because he is constantly kindled anew.

7. 'who is true to the law in the sacrifice': that is, who is faithful to the rules concerning the manual operations of the sacrifice, which are but a part of the Cosmic Order or Ṛta, adherence to which is incumbent upon all the gods (v. the note on 'guardian of the Order,' I.1.8).

'the god who dispels disease': As a destroyer of demons (*cf.* 5: 'burn up the malevolent who have wrought harm upon us'), it is but natural that Agni should also be a dispeller of diseases, which were often thought to be the work of demons.
8. 'the lord of the oblation': the institutor of the sacrifice.
9. 'purifier': a common epithet of Agni and later a synonym for fire.
12. 'with': probably to be understood as equivalent to 'attended by': attended by your bright flames and all the invocations to the gods.

V.11

Agni

1. As the people's protector, Agni of goodly strength has been born, watchful for our renewed welfare. Having ghee on his face, with his lofty flame touching the heaven, brightly does he shine forth for the Bharatas, the pure one.
2. Banner of the sacrifice, the first purohita, men kindled Agni in the threefold abode. Along with Indra and the gods he sat down on the sacred grass for the worship, the very wise invoker.
3. Uncleansed, you are born pure of your two mothers. A sage, bringer of joy, you sprang forth from Vivasvat. With ghee they made you to grow, O Agni, you to whom the oblation has been offered. The smoke, gone heavenward, became your banner.
4. May Agni come straightaway to our sacrifice! Men distribute Agni in every home. Agni became the messenger, bearer of the oblation. In choosing Agni, they choose one who has the wisdom of a sage.
5. For you, O Agni, are these most honied words! For you let this prayer be a comfort to the heart! Our songs fill you up as do the great rivers the Sindhu and make you to grow in strength.
6. You, O Agni, the Aṅgirasas found hidden away, abiding in every wood. As such you are born while being churned with great strength: they call you 'Son of Strength', O Aṅgiras.

Notes

1. Agni is often characterized as 'having ghee on his face' from the liberal quantities of ghee that are poured into the fire during the course of the sacrifice.

The Bharatas are the tribe to which the author of the hymn, Sutambhara Ātreya, belonged.

2. Since without fire there can be no sacrifice, Agni was naturally accorded the office of purohita or priest, quite as though he were in charge of the ceremonies; cf. RV I.1, where Agni is magnified as purohita. The 'threefold abode' refers to the three altars used in the sacrifice.
3. If 'uncleansed' is the correct translation, the sense may be that, unlike other newly born offspring that require to be cleansed of amniotic fluid and various impurities, Agni springs forth in immediate purity from the two sticks of attrition, his 'two mothers.' But by quite another interpretation the Vedic word is rendered 'unadorned' with reference to the absence of ghee upon his production.

'bringer of joy,' that is to people or to man, fire being an essential to existence.

Vivasvat is a somewhat shadowy figure in the R̥gveda, though, as the etymological meaning of his name, *i.e.*, 'shining far and wide,' implies, he is connected with the light, perhaps as representing the sun or bright light of the sky. Because Vivasvat's true nature is hazy, then, it is difficult to say exactly what is meant by this verse. Moreover, other rather divergent renditions are possible, though none are free of obscurity or uncertainty.

4. It is not clear what is meant by 'Men distribute Agni in every house;' nor is it clear whether the more literal rendition 'Men bear Agni here and there in every home' is not preferable, the sense in this case possibly being that all people maintain Agni, each in his own home, apart from the sacrifices performed elsewhere, such as those instituted by kings.

Agni is constantly called a 'messenger' because, as amplified here, he carries to the gods the oblations that are offered in the sacrifice.

5. That is, 'just as many mighty rivers unite in the Sindhu (Indus), swelling and strengthening it with their volume, so may our songs of praise magnify and strengthen you.' It may be remarked that the word rendered by 'strength' means 'swelling' etymologically.
6. Fire was believed to be inherent or latent in trees and wood in general, just as in water, the rubbing of the sticks of attrition merely being the means of manifesting it. Agni is the 'Son of Strength' as being the product of the concentrated effort required to twirl the one firestick in the other.

The Aṅgirasas, who are here said to have discovered Agni's hiding-place in the wood of the trees, were an ancient priestly family who regarded Agni as their chief and, as being their representative *par excellence*, so to speak, called him by their own name 'Aṅgiras.'

VI.6

Agni

1. With a newer sacrifice the one who desires welfare and favor goes forth with an inviting meal unto the Son of Strength, who hews down the woods, whose path is black, the brightly shining one, the divine invoker:
2. he is glistening white, a thunderer abiding in the bright sky with his ageless roaring flames, the youngest - Agni, the purifier, the amplest, who goes after the ample, broad woods, devouring them.
3. On every side, driven by winds, your flames, O Agni, shining, O shining one, spread far and wide; much-destroying do they yearn after the woods, demolishing them boldly like the Navagvas.
4. Your bright shining horses, O shining one, that, unbridled, graze the earth: - then your fiery whirlwind shines afar far and wide, forming a line of battle over the earth's back.
5. Then the tongue of the bull darts out, as the thunderbolt of him who fights for the cows. Like the onset of a warrior is the ardor of Agni. Hard to stop, the awesome one lays waste the woods.
6. With the ray of the great stimulator you spread boldly over the terrestrial expanses. Drive away our fears with your strength! Burn up our adversaries, assailing the assailers!
7. O brilliant one! upon us confer brilliant wealth that makes us brilliant, you whose dominion is brilliant, the most brilliant, strength-bestowing wealth! Glittering wealth of many heroic sons, abundant, for him who praises you in song with glittering praises, O glittering one!

Notes

2. Agni is called 'the youngest' because he is constantly renewed, born anew.

3. If 'Nāvagvas' is indeed a proper name here, the basis of the identification of Agni's flames with them would seem to lie in the Nāvagvas' assistance of Indra in destroying the demon Vala, so that the sense would be 'demolishing them (*i.e.* the woods) boldly, just as the Nāvagvas demolished Vala.' Sāyaṇa regards it as an adjective of the flames, giving the meaning 'freshly moving.' It might mean 'going by nines', 'ninefold' or 'consisting of nine' with reference to the flames. In view of the Vedic poets' love of puns and word-play in general, it is just possible that both the sense of the proper name as well as any of the adjectival meanings suggested might be intended.
4. There has been a change of construction here, which is kept in the translation: the second half of the stanza is worded as though the first were a 'when-clause' ('When your bright shining horses . . . graze, then . . .'). However, the first part actually consists of a noun-subject ('horses') unaccompanied by a verb, enlarged by a relative clause ('that . . . graze'), which is left dangling. Such changes in thought or 'anacolutha,' as they are technically termed, are not by any means rare in the Veda, and, incidentally, are a ubiquitous feature of conversational English.
5. By an obvious figure the tongues of Agni are often referred to (*cf.* English expressions such as 'Tongues of flame licked the building'); here this is combined with another figure, that of Agni as a bull, due to the roaring of his flames. The 'tongue (necessarily in the singular!) of the bull' is then likened to the thunderbolt of Indra, which he wields in his perennial fight against the cow-stealing demons, like Vala.
6. 'the great stimulator' must presumably be the sun, with whose rays Agni's rays are here identified.
7. A stanza remarkable for its juxtaposition of identical words in various functions, of which the Vedic poets were very fond, though here the predilection is carried somewhat farther than usual. Unfortunately these effects are largely lost in translation, although an attempt has been made to suggest the repetitive effect and jingling of the original by using the same English word wherever the same Vedic word is repeated. It may perhaps be worthwhile to compare the Vedic text, in which occur the words *citra* and *candra* in various functions, translated by 'brilliant' and 'glittering' respectively:

sá citra citrám citáyantam asmé
cítrakṣatra citrátamaṁ vayodhám |
candrám rayīm puruvīraṁ bṛhántam
cáandra candrābhir gṛṇaté yuvasva ||

III.29

Agni

1. Here is the churning-instrument. Here is the tinder made ready. Bring hither the mistress of the people: let's churn Agni as before!
2. Concealed in the firesticks, Jātavedas is well-placed, like the embryo in pregnant women. Day after day Agni is to be called on by men when they have awakened, offering an oblation.
3. Bear down, you who know, on the one spread out: impregnated, at once she produces the stallion. Having a reddish mane - dazzling is his body - the son of the libation has been born at the right time.
4. In the place of the libation, at the navel of the earth, we shall set you down, Jātavedas, for you to convey the oblation, Agni.
5. Churn the sage, fellows - the one free of duplicity, the wise, the immortal, of goodly face, first beacon of the sacrifice in the east! Make Agni, the very dear one, to rise up, fellows!
6. When they churn with their arms, he shines forth like a prized horse, reddish in the wood. Unimpeded, like the Áśvins' splendid chariot in its course, he shuns the stones, burning the grass.
7. When born, Agni shines well-known, the prized one, the seer, praised by the sages, having goodly gifts; whom the gods established as the conveyor of the oblation at the sacrifices, worthy to be called on, the all-knower.
8. Sit down, O priest who know, in your own spot! Set down the sacrifice in the abode of good works! Inviting the gods, to the gods sacrifice with an oblation, O Agni, bestow great strength upon the worshipper!
9. Make abundant smoke, friends! Go unhesitating to the prize! Here's Agni, the victor in battle, goodly hero, by whom the gods overcame the Dasyus.
10. This is your timely abode, whence born you shone: knowing it, Agni, sit down, then make our songs to increase!

11. The lordly one, as an embryo, is called Tanūnapāt. He becomes Narāśamśa when he is born here and there. When, as Mātariśvan, he was formed in his mother, he became a gust of wind on issuing forth.
12. Churned by a goodly churning, set down by a goodly setting down, as the sage, Agni, perform goodly sacrifices: sacrifice to the gods for one who is devoted to the gods!
13. Mortals him the immortal have produced, him of unfailling birth, moving ahead, sturdy-toothed. Ten sisters unwed, altogether, embrace him, a male just born.
14. Attended by seven invokers, he shone forth from of old, when he gleamed in his mother's lap, at her breast. Joyful, he closes not his eyes, day after day, since he was born of his father's body.
15. Fighters against the foe, like the forces of the Maruts, the first-born know all of the sacred word: The Kuśikas have uttered the splendid sacred word. Each in his own abode, they have kindled Agni.
16. Since today, as the sacrifice was starting out, O invoker who know, you we chose here - constantly have you sacrificed, constantly toiled - knowing and wise, do approach the Soma!

Notes

1. In order to understand this stanza it is necessary to know how fire was made for the sacrifice. Essentially the process consisted of creating friction between two pieces of wood by vigorously twirling or churning the one, held vertically like a drill, in the other, in which a depression or hollow had been made to keep the vertical stick in place while it was being rotated. Some wooden shavings had to be placed near the depression to catch the sparks resulting from the friction. The sparks having been thus communicated to the tinder, the tinder would burst into flames, and this flaming mass was then somehow transferred to the kindling wood on the altar. This method of producing the sacrificial fire was

viewed as an act of divine procreation, in which the upper and lower sticks functioned as male and female generative organs (so Velankar, *Ṛksūktaśaṭī*, p. 148). This must presumably have been the process that was followed in the very earliest Vedic period, but later, possibly after the composition of this hymn, a more efficacious means of rotating the upper firestick came into use, which involved fitting it like a carpenter's bit into a wooden stock, which was turned by means of a cord drawn back and forth by two priests, while another pressed the apparatus firmly downward to keep it in place.

'Here is the churning-instrument': This rendition of the technical term *adhimánthana* is based on what appears to be Sāyaṇa's interpretation, *i.e.* the more elaborate mechanism mentioned above, in which is fitted the upper firestick, like a bit into a brace. But if the simpler method is meant, the 'churning-instrument' must be understood to consist only of the upper firestick, which was turned in the lower either by means of a cord or perhaps the hands of the priest. There is, however, much divergence among translators as to the precise meaning of the technical terms used in this stanza.

'Here is the tinder made ready': Here too, there is a difference of view as to what exactly is denoted by the technical term *prajānana* (literally 'producer' or 'means of producing'). Sāyaṇa clearly interprets it as 'tinder,' explaining that it is a 'bunch of *darbhá*-grass serving as the means of generating the fire,' though he alternatively suggests the 'sort of depression' into which the upper firestick is inserted. Velankar, however, thinks it is the upper firestick that is fitted into the churning-instrument. No useful purpose would be served by enumerating all the other interpretations of these two technical terms.

'Bring hither the mistress of the people': This curious expression, which is hardly a technical term, but rather just a poetic periphrasis, apparently refers to the *lower* firestick - really more a board than a stick - into which the upper one is vigorously twirled or churned. It is from this lower firestick, as has been said, that the sparks burst forth during the rotatory process and are caught on the tinder. It is regarded as the mother of the fire. It (or she!) is called the 'mistress of the people' as being their guardian and benefactress through Agni, whose existence is dependent upon her.

2. 'Concealed in the firesticks, Jātavedas is well-placed, like an embryo in pregnant women': Agni is said to be concealed in the two firesticks since they are gotten from a tree (the upper firestick from the *ásvatthá*, *i.e.* the *Ficus Religiosa*, and the lower from the *śámti*, *i.e.* the *Prosopis Spicigera*), which, like all trees and plants, obtains its nourishment from water wherein Agni dwells in his particular form called Apāñ Napāt. Agni is, then, inherent or concealed in all wood, much like an embryo in the womb of its mother, which, under particular conditions, comes forth and grows to fulness. On Agni's concealment in all wood *cf.* V.11.6. On the name Jātavedas, which occurs also in stanza 4 and often elsewhere in the Ṛgveda, *v.* note on I.50.1.

3. 'Bear down, you who know, on the one spread out': This instruction is addressed to the priest who is occupied with the very strenuous operation of producing the fire from the sticks of attrition. Pressure has to be exerted on the vertical firestick or drill as it is being turned in the horizontal or lower firestick, which, in continuance of the imagery described above in the notes to stanza 1, is conceived as a female to be impregnated by the male or upper firestick.

'impregnated, at once she produces the stallion': In this act of divine procreation the lower or female stick (or slab) is 'impregnated' by the upper or male stick and immediately gives birth to Agni, called a stallion, as often (on this cf. II.35.6: 'In them, *i.e.* the Waters, is the birth of this one, the horse').

'son of the libation': The libation or offering is here conceived as the mother of Agni.

'at the right time': The rendition is uncertain, as the Vedic word, though of fairly frequent occurrence, is of doubtful meaning and much discussed by scholars. It seems to have gone from an original sense of 'guide, guideline, line' to 'course, way, right way' and finally, on a temporal plane, to 'right time, appointed time,' the meaning taken here; for a short, but useful discussion of the Vedic word v. T. Burrow, review of M. Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen*, Lieferungen 19-22, in *Kratylos* 15.1 (1970 [1972]), pp. 52-53.

5. 'Churn the sage': Agni, as has been pointed out, is often referred to as a sage; so cf. I.1.5, where he is called 'the invoker who has the powers of a sage,' on which v. note; also I.12.6, 7 and V.11.3.

6. 'he shines forth, like a prized horse, reddish in the wood': The words 'reddish in the wood' go with both the subject and object of the comparison, thus: He (Agni) shines forth reddish in the wood, *i.e.* in the tinder, just as a prized horse reddish in the wood, *i.e.* the forest.

8. 'in your own spot': that is, the receptacle on the altar, in which the fire burns; cf. I.1.8: 'growing in your own abode.'

'Set down the sacrifice in the abode of good works': Though this statement is certainly vague, it seems to imply that merit was felt to accrue to the worshipper for the performance of the sacrifice, which Agni is asked duly to credit to him in some otherwise unspecified 'abode of good works.'

10. 'This is your timely abode': that is, his abode at the times of the day when the sacrifices are performed.

'make our songs to increase': that is, cause them to lead to the desired result.

11. Three forms of Agni are enumerated here. Tanūnapāt, literally 'son of his own body,' is the name by which Agni is known before he is born as the sacrificial

fire, that is, while he is still hidden as embryo in the firesticks which serve as his body on earth. By a wrong analysis of this compound *Sāyaṇa* fancies it to mean 'he who does not (*na-*) fell (*-pat*), i.e. burn up, the bodies (*tanu-*) [of his worshippers]!' But he alternatively and equally fantastically explains it as 'Son of the Waters,' a synonym of *Apām Napāt*, by taking *Tanū-* as a word for the 'Waters,' from the root meaning to 'stretch' or 'spread' (*tan*), because the Waters are spread out in the intermediate region!

On the name *Narāsaṃsa* v. note thereon at II.38.10.

Mātariśvan may originally have been a separate deity when he brought fire from heaven to the *Bhṛgu*s, but he is often, as here, identified with *Agni* and perhaps the two were never really distinct, *Mātariśvan* having been but a personification of a particular aspect; v. note on *Mātariśvan* at I.143.2. Were it not for the past tenses 'was formed' and 'became,' which contrast strangely with the general present tenses in the preceding sentences, it could be assumed that *Mātariśvan* is here the name by which *Agni* is known at the moment when he issues from the lower firestick as a spark, after which he becomes 'a gust of wind,' as the spark is communicated to the tinder. But the past tenses seem not to be conducive to this interpretation. Apparently in exasperation at making satisfactory sense of this stanza, Hillebrandt states: 'The explanation of the forms of *Agni* as the stanza gives them is so weak, that one may doubt whether even the poet himself understood their correct meaning.'¹

13. 'of unfailing birth': The meaning of the Vedic word, which hardly occurs elsewhere, is disputed. It seems to mean more or less literally 'not subject to miscarriage,' hence, whose birth at the right time and under certain conditions is always to be depended upon.

'moving ahead, sturdy-toothed': Fire is relentless in its advance and all-consuming.

'Ten sisters unwed, altogether, embrace him, a male just born': The ten sisters are the ten fingers of the priest by whom the fire, just burst forth from the tinder, is nourished with additional fuel and transferred to the altar. They are probably called 'sisters' because the word for fingers in the Vedic language is of the feminine gender; presumably they are the sisters of the new-born *Agni*. They may be 'unwed' because their embracing him 'altogether' can only be possible of unmarried sisters who are still living together, the married ones being obliged to live apart in their husband's home. A similar, but not identical notion is expressed at I.95.2, where 'ten maidens' are said to have produced him: 'Ten maidens untiring produced this child of *Tvaṣṭṛ*, who is carried hither and thither (i.e. to where the sacred fires are to be lighted); him of pointed aspect and splendor of his own, shining brightly, they carry about among the people.'

¹ Die Erklärung der Formen *Agnis* wie sie der Vers gibt, ist so matt, dass man zweifeln kann, ob der Dichter noch selbst ihre rechte Bedeutung verstanden hat (p. 11, Anm. 3).

14. 'when he gleamed in his mother's lap': that is, at the depression in the lower firestick, whence the sparks fly out to the tinder.
 'since he was born of his father's body': This probably refers to the upper firestick in which Agni is hidden as Tanūnapāt; v. 11 above.
15. The Kuśikas were an extremely prominent family of Vedic seers, so named after their forefather Kuśika. The most eminent member was Viśvāmitra, to whose composition all of Maṇḍala Three is traditionally ascribed. They are called 'first-born' no doubt because of their ancient lineage. Passingly it may be noted that Indra himself is styled 'Kauśika' ('belonging to the Kuśikas') because he was their especially favored deity.
16. The last stanza is addressed to Agni, who is called the invoker who knows, on account of his omniscience in sacrificial matters; cf. I.12.1: 'We choose Agni as messenger, as invoker, the all-knower, who has goodly knowledge of the sacrifice' and V.11.4: 'In choosing Agni, they choose one who has the wisdom of a sage.'

Apāṁ Napāt

The worship of Apāṁ Napāt is a heritage of the period of Indo-Iranian unity, since a deity of the same name is found also in the Avesta. But while in the latter he is a spirit of the waters, in the Ṛgveda he is identified with Agni in Agni's manifestation as the lightning hidden in the thundercloud. This curious fusion of two deities seemingly so diverse and incongruous by nature is due to the Vedic Indian's belief that fire is inherent in water. Accordingly, apart from the lightning which issues from the water in the cloud, the sacrificial fire itself may be said ultimately to derive from water, because the tree whence comes the wood in which the fire-drill is turned is nourished by water! Conversely, fire is extinguished by water, into which, therefore, it is absorbed to remain there in latent form. Stemming from notions such as these, the identification of the old Indo-Iranian water-spirit with the Vedic god Agni was probably also influenced by the tendency of identifying Agni with various deities,¹ fire being the focus of the Vedic sacrifice and the natural basis underlying some of the principal phenomena of the cosmos.

But although Apāṁ Napāt in the Ṛgveda is to be regarded as a particular form or manifestation of Agni, his aqueous origin is everywhere prevalent in the only hymn that is wholly dedicated to his praise. Thus, Apāṁ Napāt abides in the Waters, they being treated as his mothers and he as their offspring, and yet, by a curious sort of paradox peculiar to the Ṛgveda, he is also said to have produced himself in these Waters.² Elsewhere the Waters are looked upon as youthful maidens surrounding the youthful god.

The name Apāṁ Napāt means literally 'Son of the Waters,' a fitting enough appellation for a water-spirit and readily adapted to the representation of Agni in his special role as the lightning emanating from the raincloud. But *napāt* also means 'grandson,' the more usual meaning in the later language, so that Indian commentators like Sāyaṇa are wont to interpret the name as 'Grandson of the Waters' (in spite of the genealogy presented in the hymn itself!), because the fire issuing from the wood under the fire-drill is, after all, a more distant offspring of the Waters than the lightning proceeding from the raincloud.

¹ As suggested by Hermann Oldenberg, *Die Religion des Veda* (Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1977), p. 119.

² Cf. ṚV X.90.5: 'From that (*i.e.* Puruṣa), Virāj was born: from Virāj, Puruṣa;' also X.72.5: 'From Aditi was born Dakṣa, and from Dakṣa, Aditi.'

It is interesting to note that *napāt* is cognate to Latin *nepōs* (for **nepōt-s*), originally 'grandson,' but later 'nephew,' whence English *nepotism*, a term applied to the unsavory practice of favoring one's own nephews (and other close relatives) in hiring. This having been said, it may be finally noted that the English *nephew* was borrowed from this Latin *nepōs* through the intermediary of Old French *neveu*, so that ultimately the English *nephew* and Vedic *napāt* are related words.

II.35

Apāṁ Napāt

1. Desirous of gain, I have poured forth this, my eloquence: may the son of the streams find pleasure in my songs! Won't Apāṁ Napāt, impeller of swift horses, make them well-adorned? For he will relish them.
2. Verily would we say this prayer well-fashioned from the heart: won't he take heed of it? Apāṁ Napāt, the lord, through the might of his divine lordship, has produced all beings.
3. Some streams flow together, some flow to the ocean: they the same receptacle fill. Around Apāṁ Napāt shining brightly, that pure one, the pure Waters stand.
4. The Waters, shy young maidens, around him, the youth, flow, ever cleansing him. He with bright and potent rays shines richly upon us, without fuel, garmented in ghee in the Waters.
5. Three women wish to bestow food upon him - goddesses upon the intrepid god: for he keeps moving toward them as to nurses in the Waters. He sucks the milk of those who first bore him.
6. In them is the birth of this one, the horse and the sun: protect our patrons from contact with deceit, with harm! Far away, in the unbaked citadels, not to be forgotten, no hostilities, no untruths will reach him.
7. He, in whose own abode is the cow that affords goodly milk, swells his inherent power and eats excellent food. That one, Apāṁ Napāt, getting strength within the Waters, shines far and wide for the giving of wealth to the one worshipping him.
8. He who shines far and wide in the Waters with pure, divine light, adhering to the Ṛta, undecaying - as mere branches of him arise other beings and plants with their products.
9. As Apāṁ Napāt has mounted the bosom of them aslant, he erect, clothing himself in lightning, the youthful maidens, bearing his supreme greatness, flow gold-colored around him.

10. Of gold form is he, of gold appearance: Apāṁ Napāt - he alone is gold-colored: when he has sat down from his golden home, the givers of gold give food to him.
11. That face of his and the fair name of Apāṁ Napāt in secret grow. The one whom the young maidens kindle thus - of him the gold-colored ghee is the food.
12. Him, nearest friend of many, with sacrifices we would worship: with homage, with oblations. His back I stroke. I wish to present him with shavings of wood. I present him with food. I extol him with hymns of praise.
13. As a bull, he produced in them a seed: as their child, he sucks them, they lick him. This Apāṁ Napāt of unfading color, works here as though with another's body.
14. 'Round him standing in that highest place, ever shining with undimmed rays, the youthful Waters fly, to Napāt bearing ghee as food, they themselves with garments of ghee.
15. To my people I have offered goodly dwelling, Agni; for the bountiful I have offered a goodly hymn of praise. Auspicious is all that which the gods favor: loudly would we speak at the assembly, having goodly heroes.

Notes

1. 'the son of the streams': an alternative name for Apām Napāt.
 'impeller of swift horses': A similar epithet, *viz.* 'whose horses are swift,' is applied to Apām Napāt in the Avesta¹ and might originally have had reference to the waves under the figure of horses; in Greek mythology Poseidon is often associated with horses, on which point *v.* Louis H. Gray, 'The Indo-Iranian Deity Apām Napāt' in *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*, III.35, pp. 34-55.
 'make them well-adorned': that is, make the songs well-adorned. This probably has a twofold meaning, *i.e.* adorned with beauty of expression and felicitous phraseology and hence well-rewarded with gifts alike from his patron and Apām Napāt.
3. The sense appears to be that whatever the course of the streams, which, in any case, flow into the great ocean, they all surround Apām Napāt.
4. 'shy': The translation is uncertain; most render by 'unsmiling,' the appropriateness of which seems even less evident.
 'rays': This word is not actually expressed, but has been supplied from the context, as in stanza 14 ('ever shining with undimmed rays').
 'without fuel': used but once elsewhere, also of Apām Napāt, at RV X.30.4: 'The one who, without fuel, shone within the Waters, whom the seers call on at the sacrifices, O Apām Napāt, you shall give the honied Waters, whereby Indra grows for his heroic feat.'
 'garmented in ghee': Said several times of Agni, with reference to the generous quantity of ghee that is poured on him as the sacrificial fire.
5. 'Three women wish to bestow food upon him': By this are probably meant the Waters in the three worlds, *viz.* earth, middle region or atmosphere and heaven. The exact meaning, however, is obscured by the uncertainty of whether *these* three divine women are identical with the Waters portrayed in stanza 4 as flowing around Apām Napāt. In RV III.56.5 Agni is said to be 'three-mothered' and 'maidens of the Waters' numbering 'thrice three' are mentioned. But the context is too opaque due to excessive numerical jugglery to afford any help to this passage concerning Apām Napāt.

¹ In Yashts II.5; V.72; XIX.51 and 52; but used also of the sun in the Avesta, *e.g.* Yasht X.90 and XII.34.

‘those who first bore him’: This must refer to the ‘three women . . . goddesses,’ *i.e.* the Waters. Agni as Apām Napāt is their first-born; that Agni was the first-born of the Waters is implicit also in ṚV X.121.7: ‘when the lofty Waters came, bearing all as the egg, generating heat (*i.e.* Agni), then he alone (*i.e.* Prajāpati) was evolved as the life essence of the gods.’

6. ‘In them is the birth of this one, the horse and the sun’: That is, in these Waters are born both Agni and also the sun, which is but another form of Agni. Agni is here called a ‘horse’ by a somewhat peculiar equivalence derived, in part at least, from the figure of the sacrifice as a chariot to which the sacrificial fire, *i.e.* Agni, is yoked and in part from various metaphorical phrases based on Agni’s likeness to a horse, whether due to his swift movement or to his sound when he is raging.
 ‘in the unbaked citadels’: the great masses of monsoon clouds fancied as fortresses, high and remote - but, of course, not constructed of baked brick like their earthly counterpart.
7. The ‘abode’ is the clouds, and the ‘cow’ the Waters residing therein, which supply the food that Apām Napāt in his aqueous aspect needs for the enhancement of his power. The last sentence of the stanza partly restates this: ‘That one, Apām Napāt, getting strength within the Waters, shines far and wide.’
8. ‘plants with their products’: Plants seem to be added as though they formed a separate category, more intimately associated with the offshoots of Apām Napāt, probably due to the dependence of their growth on a sufficiency of water; ‘their products’ are, of course, their flowers and fruits.
9. The picture presented here, which recurs partly in the same words at ṚV I.95.5, seems to be of Apām Napāt standing in the midst of the Waters, which are lying flat, whence he sends forth his flashes of lightning.
10. ‘when he has sat down from his golden home’: that is, when Apām Napāt has come to the place of sacrifice to partake of the sacrificial meal.
 ‘the givers of gold give food to him’: The patrons of the sacrifice, who bear all its expenses, including generous fees to the priests, are meant. Patrons are not usually called ‘givers of gold,’ however, this particular expression surely being used here just because of the fondness of the Vedic poets for manifold repetition of the same or related words in a stanza; *cf.* repetition of ‘brilliant’ and ‘glittering’ in VI.6.7 and note thereon. The ‘food’ the patrons give is the sacrificial offering.
11. ‘That face of his and the fair name of Apām Napāt in secret grow’: His golden aspect as the lightning and ‘the fair name of Apām Napāt,’ *i.e.* his individual essence as evoked by his name, grow in secret - in those remote cloud-citadels

of his, where his presence is concealed from man. Such seems to be the purport of these enigmatic words, but interpretations vary. Some refer the whole stanza to the terrestrial or sacrificial fire; *e.g.* Geldner in *Rig-Veda in Auswahl*, but in the note in his translation he seems to mitigate this somewhat: 'Das entzündete Opferfeuer immer wieder mit Beziehung auf seine Urform, den A.N. [Apāṁ Napāt],' p. 322.

'The one whom the young maidens kindle thus - of him the gold-colored ghee is the food': The focal point here is the terrestrial aspect of Apāṁ Napāt, as he manifests himself when his flames first burst into view between the two fire-sticks, the one of which is twirled in the other by the vigorous manipulation of the priest's fingers, picturesquely conceived as 'the young maidens.' The food of Apāṁ Napāt is 'the gold-colored ghee.'

12. 'nearest friend of many': literally 'lowest,' because Apāṁ Napāt in his terrestrial role as contrasted with his atmospheric role is meant; with 'many' might be supplied either 'gods' or 'men,' in the former case because as identified with Agni he is the most intimate of all the gods, the center of the sacrificial ritual and the domestic fire, and in the latter case because he is in fact the friend of all mankind.

'His back I stroke': said with regard to passing the hand over the fire with the ladle containing the ghee, which is poured into the fire. But some interpret with reference to cleaning the place of the fire or altar; *e.g.*, Velankar, who translates oddly 'I polish his top' (*Ṛksūktaśatī*, p. 142).

13. Apāṁ Napāt is here presented as at once father and son, as he takes the form of a seed or embryo in the Waters, whence he is born as their child and is suckled by them, and they lick him as does a cow her calf. The Waters are, then, both his wives and mothers.

'This Apāṁ Napāt . . . works here as though with another's body': Here on earth, as the sacrificial fire or the terrestrial fire generally, Apāṁ Napāt is embodied in the wood, whence he is 'extracted' by the twirling of the firestick. It is through the intermediary of the wood that Apāṁ Napāt comes to man.

14. There is now a shift from the terrestrial Apāṁ Napāt to the celestial. The ghee that the Waters bring to him is presumably that which has been offered to *them* in the sacrificial fire. Unless this is meant, it is not apparent whence they obtained the ghee which they offer to him. The youthful Waters would seem to

be sharing the ghee with Apām Napāt as their husband. That the garments of the Waters are of *ghee*, is an addition in translation based on Lüders' interpretation.²

15. Note that the last stanza is addressed specifically to Agni.

'To my people I have offered goodly dwelling': Probably meant is a sense of security and well-being resulting to the poet's community from this hymn offered to Apām Napāt.

'the bountiful': the patrons of the sacrifice.

'Auspicious is all that which the gods favor': One has the impression that this or some similarly worded sentiment was a common saying.

'loudly would we speak at the assembly, having goodly heroes': a frequent ending line of hymns of the Second Maṇḍala; cf. II.16.9 and 33.15; on the much discussed 'assembly' v. note at V.63.2.

² Heinrich Lüders, *Varuṇa* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), I (1951), p. 146, Anmerkung 8.

Indra

By any measure Indra is certainly the most important deity in the Ṛgveda. Approximately a quarter of the entire collection of 1,028 hymns is dedicated to his praise. Yet it would perhaps be wrong to say that he is the principal god of the Ṛgvedic pantheon, since without question Agni, as the very basis of the sacrifice, must be said to fill that role. Not only is Indra the most frequently celebrated of all the gods, but he is also the most popular and may practically be styled the national god of the Indo-Aryans. Although it cannot be denied that some of the finest outpourings of Vedic poetical genius have gone into the composition of hymns to other gods, as, for example, those to Varuṇa and Uṣas, nevertheless, the hymns to Indra can hardly be matched for the strength of their fervid devotion, the broad scope and sweep of their adoration and the intimacy between god and worshipper which they reflect, while yet lacking somewhat in the floridity and finesse of style of the best hymns of the Ṛgveda.

As a conqueror of an endless array of demons and malignant creatures, Indra is a great and popular hero, a protector of men and gods alike and most worthy of the worship that is accorded to him. The defeat and annihilation of certain of these demons is absolutely essential to the survival of all life, indeed to the origin of the cosmos in its present form. Principal of these demons, many of whom bear names, is Vṛtra, certainly the best known of all demons in the Ṛgveda. His destruction, which is mentioned innumerable times and graphically described, is undoubtedly the greatest of all the great deeds performed by Indra. Vṛtra, whose name etymologically means the 'Encloser,' is portrayed as a mighty serpent, who encloses in his immense belly not only the Waters that give and sustain all life, but also the basic elements of the cosmos, the sun, moon, heaven, earth, etc. He is, then, not an actively destructive demon who ravages the countryside, like Grendel or the dragon in *Beowulf*, but an embodiment of passivity and negativity, the anti-thesis of creativity. For with his destruction Indra is able to bring the world into being. Another demon whose defeat Indra brought about is Vala, who captured the cows and hid them in a great cave, which seems to have been Vala himself or at least under his control. In post-Vedic times, it may be worth noting, when Indra's pre-eminence began to recede as other gods came to the fore, a fading memory of his mightiest deeds, the slaying of Vala and Vṛtra, persisted in the common epithet 'Slayer of Vala and Vṛtra,' often found in the epics in lieu of his name. In his incessant contests with these forces of darkness and malignancy Indra is oftentimes aided by other gods, among whom ought especially to be mentioned the Maruts and Agni.

In addition to being an invincible slayer of demons, Indra is a great warrior and champion of the Indo-Aryans in their frequent battles with the aboriginal peoples, called *Dāsas* or *Dasyus*. It is Indra above all whose aid is sought in battle against them and other hostile forces. A super, swashbuckling hero-god, whose immense powers put him in a class by himself, he is almost beyond the order of things, within the world, yet exceeding it, able to do what he wishes, especially when fortified with the vast quantities of Soma, which he is wont to imbibe before his engagements with his foes and in the addiction to which he surpasses all the other gods. His fondness for this exhilarating drink is alluded to in almost every hymn in which Indra is celebrated and constitutes one of his characteristic traits. One has the impression that, were it not for his ample imbibition of Soma, he would not be capable of the greatest of the exploits attributed to him. In one remarkable hymn (X.119), a monolog in which he is supposed by tradition to be the speaker (and the author!), Indra enumerates the effects the Soma has induced in him in a crescendo of sweeping assertions, each followed by a refrain in which he asks whether he has not drunk the Soma.

Apart from his creative and martial functions and yet partially connected with them is Indra's role as god of thunder and rain. He is the god of the thunderstorm *par excellence*: the clouds of the monsoon sky are envisioned as great fortresses in the possession of demons, from whom they have to be wrested, so that the water they contain may be released for man. These strongholds are constantly assailed by Indra, armed with his special weapon, the *vajra* or thunderbolt, usually said to have been fashioned for him by his father *Tvaṣṭṛ*, wherewith he shatters them with awesome streaks of lightning. It is with the thunderbolt that Indra slew *Vṛtra*, and perhaps his most typical epithet is 'wielder of the thunderbolt' or some other synonymous expression.

That Indra was not a creation of the Indo-Aryans is apparent from the occurrence of his name in the Avesta, where, however, he is represented as a demon, quite devoid of any of the characteristics which he possesses in the *Ṛgveda*. He is also one of the Indic gods mentioned in the treaty between the Hittites and the Mitanni preserved in the clay tablets of the 14th century B.C. found in Asia Minor. It is an unsolved question, however, whether Indra was known to the Indo-Europeans prior to their dissemination or whether he is of later origin.

Very many attempts have been made to affiliate the name Indra with words in other Indo-European languages, but no really satisfactory or convincing equation has yet been put forth. Though it is by no means free from objections, the possibility that it is related to the Greek *άνήρ* (genitive *άνδρός*) 'man' and therefore cognate also to the Sabinian proper name Nero (the

Roman Emperor) and Oscan *nerum* 'of the men,' is not entirely to be ruled out. The etymological sense would then be 'The Man, The Manly One.'

I.32

Indra

1. Now I shall proclaim the heroic feats of Indra, which the holder of the thunderbolt performed first: he slew the serpent, bored after the waters, split open the flanks of the mountains.
2. He slew the serpent reclining on the mountain. Tvaṣṭṛ fashioned for him the resounding thunderbolt. Running like lowing cows, the waters went quickly down to the sea.
3. Desiring manly strength, he chose the Soma: he drank of the extract in three brown vessels. Maghavan took his missile, the thunderbolt, slew him, the first-born of serpents.
4. When, Indra, you slew the first-born of serpents and then reduced to naught the wiles of the wily, causing to be born the sun, the heaven and the dawn, since then you have found no enemy at all.
5. With the thunderbolt, his great weapon, Indra slew Vṛtra, the arch-Vṛtra, the shoulderless: like a tree-trunk split asunder with an axe, the serpent lay flat on the ground.
6. For infatuated, like one who has not fought before, he challenged the great hero, distresser of the mighty, the onrusher. He did not survive the impact of his weapons: faceless from the clash, he whose enemy was Indra was completely crushed.
7. Footless, handless, he fought Indra. He struck his thunderbolt upon his back. An ox wishing to be a match for the bull, Vṛtra lay scattered here and there in many a place.
8. Man's waters, having risen, went over him lying that way, like a broken reed: Vṛtra lay at the foot of the waters which he had encompassed through his might.

9. She whose son was Vṛtra had lost her strength: Indra bore down upon her his weapon. Above was the mother, below the son: Dānu lay like a cow with her calf.
10. His body was deposited amidst the cloudbanks that stood not still, with no place to settle down: over Vṛtra's loins the waters flowed hither and thither. He whose enemy was Indra lay upon long darkness.
11. The waters whose master was a Dāsa, whose guardian was the serpent, had been penned up, as were the cows by Paṇi. Having slain Vṛtra, Indra opened up the orifice of the waters which had been closed.
12. You became a horse's hair, Indra, when he struck his fangs against you - you the one and only god! You won the cows, you won the Soma, O hero! You let go the seven streams to flow.
13. For him neither the lightning nor the thunder availed, nor the mist and the hail which he bestrewed. When both Indra and the serpent fought each other, Maghavan won out also for future days.
14. Whom did you see as the serpent's avenger, Indra, that fear entered your heart after you slew him and you crossed ninety-nine streams, as a frightened eagle the aerial spaces?
15. Indra is king of what moves and what has gone to rest, and of the tamed and the horned - he who has the thunderbolt in his arm. He indeed rules as king of the peoples: as a felly the spokes, he encompasses them.

Notes

1. 'he slew the serpent': The serpent which Indra slew is Vṛtra, who is not mentioned by name until stanza 5. The slaying of this archdemon is the feat of Indra most often mentioned among his exploits. Vṛtra, in accordance with his name, which etymologically means 'Encloser,' is a demon who withholds from man the water necessary for his survival and, apart from his representation as a serpent, is envisioned as a cloud with all the accoutrements of thunder, lightning, mist and hail (stanza 13). These two images are often inextricably blended together and, by a further extension of the metaphor, the cloud is called a mountain, upon which Vṛtra is said to recline (stanza 2), as though the two were separate, so that he is depicted under a number of different forms, which are often, as in this hymn, simultaneously mentioned.

'bored after the waters': as though with a spear or similar instrument, the waters being contained within Vṛtra's body.

'the flanks of the mountains': Here the cloud, one of the two primary metaphors by which Vṛtra is depicted, is itself presented under a metaphor, a mountain, into whose sides Indra thrusts his spear.

2. 'Tvaṣṭṛ fashioned for him the resounding thunderbolt': Tvaṣṭṛ is the skilled workman or artificer of the gods, in which aspect he may be likened to the Greek Hephaestus or Roman Vulcan. His name literally signifies 'Fashioner.'

'Running like lowing cows,' etc.: The appropriateness of the simile is somewhat inapparent, because not all the elements are expressed, as is so often the case in the Ṛgveda. Fully stated it would read: 'Just as cows, their enclosure having been opened, go lowing to their pasture (or water-hole), so did the waters, the cloud-mountain having been split open, go down with a roar to the sea.'

3. 'Desiring manly strength, he chose the Soma': In order to stimulate and strengthen him in his contests against various demons, particularly against Vṛtra, Indra is said to imbibe vast quantities of Soma; in X.119, a monologue in which he is the speaker, Indra describes the effects the drinking of Soma has on him.

'he drank of the extract in three brown vessels': The interpretation of the Vedic word here rendered 'in three brown vessels' is uncertain, several quite different views having been advanced. As to the quantity of Soma Indra drank prior to his violent confrontations, it is often said that he drank 'three lakes' of Soma!

Indra is regularly styled Maghavan 'abounding in gifts, liberal' in the Ṛgveda, although it is not exclusively his epithet, being applied to other gods also as well as to the institutor of the sacrifice for his liberality in the dispensation of gifts to the Brahmans. In the later language Maghavan is only another name for Indra.

4. 'reduced to naught the wiles of the wily': The demons of the Ṛgveda regularly resort to deception and trickery in their battles with the gods, who, quite the contrary, depend on the power inhering in truth. It is perhaps worth noting that in the religion of Zoroaster the demonic forces are collectively termed the 'Lie.'

'causing to be born the sun, the heaven and the dawn': In consequence of his slaying of Vṛtra, Indra brought forth not only the waters, but also the sun, heaven and the dawn, so that he appears to be not merely a slayer of demons, but a creator-god, a view which derives some substantiation from the reiteration of these particular creative accomplishments as well as others elsewhere in the Ṛgveda. He is actually called the 'All-Maker' or 'Creator' in VIII.98.2. It may, then, be possible that Indra was, at some remote time, a central figure in a creation myth, which later, however, became overlaid with other matter that came to be more emphasized in various retellings, the old creational aspects remaining only as a shadowy reminiscence of an independent myth. On Indra as a creator-god v. W. Norman Brown, 'The Creation Myth of the Ṛg Veda' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 62 (1942), pp. 85-98.

5. 'Indra slew Vṛtra, the arch-Vṛtra': It must be remembered that etymologically Vṛtra means 'Encloser' or 'Coverer,' a meaning certainly always in the mind of the Vedic poets when they composed hymns dealing with the Vṛtra myth; what is here rendered by 'arch-Vṛtra' is really the comparative degree of 'Vṛtra,' the suggestion of which is 'one who is more of an encloser [than any other similar creature].'

'shoulderless': so because Vṛtra is thought of as a serpent; similarly with 'footless' and 'handless' in stanza 7.

6. The first half of this stanza gives the cause of Vṛtra's downfall portrayed in the foregoing lines.

'faceless from the clash': that is, Vṛtra's face was disfigured in the ensuing battle.

7. It should be noted in this narrative of the battle between Indra and Vṛtra, that the individual details are not presented sequentially. Thus, we have already been told in 6 that Vṛtra was completely crushed, but here, as though the contest were still in progress, that Indra struck his thunderbolt upon Vṛtra's back. It is a characteristic feature of the Ṛgveda that the details of a myth are rarely given in their sequence: each stanza presents some facet, whatever may be its temporal or causal relation to what precedes or follows, and it devolves upon the hearer to put the pieces together and, where necessary, fill in the gaps from his knowledge of the myth. It must not be supposed, of course, that in this mode of telling a myth the Vedic poets were being consciously haphazard in their presentation and chary of detail. They knew that their hearers were perfectly

familiar with all the myths as part and parcel of their heritage. So their poems needed only to refer succinctly to this or that to be understood.

'He struck his thunderbolt upon his back': The usual method of killing a serpent is to break its back.

'An ox . . . the bull': The contrast is important, *Vṛtra* being depicted as emasculated and so wanting in all the characteristics of a male, as embodied in *Indra*.

8. 'Man's waters, having risen, went over him': that is, the waters which properly belonged to mankind, but had been withheld from him.

'lying that way': said with a note of disdain.

'at the foot of the waters': a somewhat bold expression, but really no more so than our 'at the foot of the tree' or 'at the foot of the mountain.'

9. The narrative now momentarily shifts to *Dānu*, the mother of *Vṛtra*, who, curiously enough, excepting here, is hardly mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*.

'Above was the mother, below the son': *Dānu* lay above her son in order to protect him from the further onslaught of *Indra's* weapons.

10. 'lay upon long darkness': was immersed in or engulfed by eternal darkness.

11. 'The waters whose master was a *Dāsa*': The *Dāsas* were the aboriginal inhabitants of India, whom the Aryans found living there when they arrived. They are described as dark-skinned, noseless (by which is probably meant 'flat-nosed'), and of contemptible speech. The term *Dāsa* is often used as a synonym of the enemies of the Aryans, and it is applied also to individual demons that were slain by *Indra*, e.g., *Namuci*, *Śambara*, *Pipru* and, as here, to *Vṛtra*. The *Dāsas* were often captured in battles that took place between them and the Aryans and were then made into slaves. In the later language *Dāsa* became a common noun for a slave or a servant and is found as the final member of personal names in the sense of 'servant of so-and-so'; e.g., '*Kālidāsa*,' the name of the famous dramatist, which means 'servant of (the goddess) *Kālī*.'

'The waters . . . had been penned up, as were the cows by *Paṇi*': The *Paṇis*, who in origin were possibly a sort of robber folk, are depicted in the *Ṛgveda* as a group of demons who steal cows and pen them up in their remote retreats (v. the narrative hymn of *Saramā* and the *Paṇis*, X.108). Here, as occasionally elsewhere in the *Ṛgveda*, *Paṇi* is used in the singular apparently as a representative of the whole class, just as we say: 'The Hun was defeated.'

12. 'You became a horse's hair': presumably to be taken literally, i.e., transformed himself into a horse's hair by his skill in magic, so that *Vṛtra* would find it almost impossible to attack him, even if he could see him. In the later mythology

Indra's skill in magic comes much to the fore, and indeed the term *Indrajāla* 'net of Indra,' first occurring in the Atharvaveda, becomes the general word for 'magic' in Sanskrit.

'You won the cows, you won the Soma': Perhaps by cows here are meant figuratively the waters, which in 2 are said to have run 'like lowing cows,' *i.e.*, from within the belly of *Vṛtra* where they had been penned up. More difficult to explain is the acquisition of Soma here, unless it too, may be figuratively used for the waters.

'the seven streams': perhaps with reference to the five rivers of the Panjab along with the Indus and another river (*v.* the hymn to the rivers, X.75), but very likely the expression, which occurs elsewhere in the *Ṛgveda*, is not meant to be so specific, but is simply a designation for the rivers of the Panjab, the number seven being a favorite with the poets of the *Ṛgveda*.

13. 'For him': that is, for *Vṛtra*, who being a cloud-demon had all these weapons at his disposal.
14. 'Whom did you see as the serpent's avenger,' etc.: Doubtless a rhetorical question, equivalent to a negative statement: 'You saw no one as the serpent's avenger,' so as to bring fear to your heart and cause you to cross the ninety-nine streams like a frightened eagle the aerial spaces (which is, after all, an unimaginable thing).
'ninety-nine': used merely for an indefinite number.
15. 'as a felly the spokes, he encompasses them': that is, he keeps everything under his rule and perfectly in line. It would be hard to find a more apt simile.

II.12

Indra

1. The one who, foremost and possessed of wisdom when born, a god, he the gods sought to protect with his strength; before whose impulse both worlds were afraid, due to the greatness of his virility: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
2. The one who made firm the unsteady earth; who brought to rest the unquiet mountains; who has measured out wider the intermediate region; who propped up the heaven: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
3. The one who, having slain the serpent, made to flow the seven streams; who drove out the cows by undoing Vala; who produces fire between two rocks; winner in battles: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
4. By whom all things here were made moving; who has put in hiding the lowly Dāsa color; who, like a player that has won the wager, has taken the enemy's possessions: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
5. The awesome one, about whom they ask: 'Where is he?' and they say of him: 'He doesn't exist!'; he reduces the enemy's possessions like stakes at a game: put your trust in him: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
6. The one who is stimulator of the fatigued, of the weak, of the priest who is in need, the singer; the one with goodly moustaches, who is the favorer of him by whom the stones have been readied, who has pressed the Soma: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
7. The one under whose control are horses, cows, villages, all chariots; who has produced the sun, the dawn; who is leader of the waters: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
8. The one whom the two rival hosts, coming together, call upon separately: the superior and the inferior, both foes; even the two who have mounted the same chariot call upon him individually: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
9. The one without whom people do not conquer; whom, when fighting, they call on for his favor; who is a match for everyone; who is the shaker of the unshakable: - he, O peoples, is Indra.

10. The one who slays with his missile, one after the other, the unexpected who do great wrong; who does not permit the arrogant his arrogance; who is the slayer of the Dasyu: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
11. The one who, in the fortieth autumn, found out Śambara abiding in the mountains; who has slain the serpent showing off his might, Dānu lying down: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
12. The one who, with seven reins, a powerful bull, let go the seven streams to flow; who, thunderbolt in arm, spurned the son of Rohiṇī as he climbed up to the heaven: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
13. Even the heaven and the earth bow to him; before his impulse even the mountains are afraid; the one who, known as the Soma drinker, has the thunderbolt in his arm; who has the thunderbolt in his hand: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
14. The one who with his aid favors him who presses, him who bakes, him who praises, him who has toiled; whose strength is the prayer, the Soma, this gift: - he, O peoples, is Indra.
15. You who, impetuous though you are, distribute nourishment to him who presses, to him who bakes - as such a one you are surely true. We, ever dear to you, Indra, having goodly heroes, would speak to the assembly.

Notes

Each stanza, except for the last, ends in the refrain 'he, O peoples, is Indra.' According to the interpretation followed by Sāyaṇa, which stems in part from the Bṛhaddevatā, these words are addressed by Gṛtsamada, the author of the hymn, to a group of *asuras* or demons who had come to kill him, mistakenly thinking he was Indra! The poet, however, managed to deflect them from thus killing himself in error by reciting to them this hymn about Indra's greatness. If this interpretation is followed, it would be necessary to limit the scope of the refrain by rendering 'he, O men (or 'fellows'), is Indra.'

2. 'who brought to rest the unquiet mountains': Sāyaṇa states that the mountains 'moved here and there' because they were provided with wings, an explanation which can be amplified from the Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā. According to the legend related there (I.10.13), the mountains, which formerly had wings, flew about wherever they wished, until Indra cut off their wings and fixed the mountains permanently in place on the earth. Thereupon the wings became clouds, which to this day hover over the mountains whence they owe their origin. By thus rendering the mountains incapable of flight and anchoring them, Indra weighed down the 'unsteady' earth and made it stable.

'who has measured out wider the intermediate region': Previously the heaven lay flat upon the earth, and Indra separated them, thus creating the 'intermediate region.' Standing between them, he extended himself to the full and so propped them apart; so Thieme, *Gedichte*, p. 24, Anm. 3.

3. 'having slain the serpent, made to flow the seven streams': The serpent meant here is the archdemon Vṛtra, to the slaying of whom ṚV I.32 is devoted; on the 'seven streams,' which were pent up in Vṛtra's belly, subsequently to be released by Indra, v. note on I.32.12. The bringing forth of these streams is again mentioned in stanza 12 of the present hymn.

'who drove out the cows by undoing Vala': Vala, who is yet another of the notorious demons with whom Indra contended, is conceived not as a serpent like Vṛtra, but as a vast cave or cavern in which he encloses the cows that Indra drives out. But since the word *vala* in ordinary usage means literally a 'cave,' the degree of personalization or concretization is not necessarily invariably clear. Thus, in this passage 'by undoing Vala' might equally mean 'opening up the cave,' in which the cows were kept, or 'bringing to nought Vala' in the personal sense of the demon himself.

'produces fire between two rocks': According to Sāyaṇa 'clouds' are meant, a metaphor that is sufficiently transparent to anyone who has observed the many fantastic shapes that clouds may assume. Lightning was naturally imagined to be generated by the friction of one cloud-rock against another, just as sparks are produced by striking two rocks vigorously together. It was to Indra, as chief of the atmospheric gods, that the production of these pyrotechnics fell.

4. 'has put in hiding the lowly Dāsa color': that is, subjugated the Dāsas, the predecessors of the Aryans in India, from whom they differed in color; for details v. note at I.32.11. They are also called Dasyus, the term used in stanza 10.

'like a player that has won the wager': It may be of passing interest to note that the word rendered by 'player' means etymologically 'dog-slayer', 'dog' here being gambling slang for the unlucky throw in dice, which the skillful player manages to avoid. Among the Greeks and Romans too, the worst throw was

known as the 'dog'. Sāyaṇa, however, wrongly taking this compound to mean a 'hunter' by analyzing it as 'one who kills [his prey] with his dogs', interprets the passage thus: 'the one who, having won his goal, takes the enemy's possessions, as a *hunter* [surrounds a deer with his dogs in order to capture it]'.¹

5. These are the typical utterances of the sceptic and the atheist: the one seeks to know where the god is, while the other denies his existence altogether.
6. 'with goodly moustaches': There has been a great deal of discussion among scholars concerning the precise meaning of the Vedic word rendered by 'moustaches'; among the many meanings proposed are 'jaws' (so Sāyaṇa and Veṅkaṭasvāmin, followed by Ludwig and Hillebrandt), 'mouth' (Lommel), 'chin' (Velankar), 'lips' (Macdonell and Renou). But, closely related to a word for 'tail', it seems that from the literal sense 'that which wavers or moves to and fro', it then means a 'plume' serving as a sort of headdress, and finally, by transfer, the 'moustaches', but presumably what are usually designated 'handle-bar moustaches'; cf. Thieme 'der Schönbärtige'.²
 'him by whom the stones have been readied': that is, who has started to crush the Soma-stalks by pounding with stones the wooden boards between which the stalks are placed.³
7. 'has produced the sun, the dawn': Yet other creative acts are attributed to him, not only here and in stanza 2, but often elsewhere in the Ṛgveda, e.g. at III.34.4, where v. note.
 'leader of the waters': because he brought them forth from Vṛtra's belly.
8. 'the two who have mounted the same chariot': that is, the driver of the chariot and the warrior, but Velankar identifies them as the warrior and the priest who accompanies him in battle.
10. 'the unexpected who do great wrong': that is, those who commit great sins, but do not expect to be struck down by Indra's missile in punishment.

¹ v. Wilhelm Schulze, 'Etymologisches' in *Zeitschrift für vergleichende Sprachforschung auf dem Gebiete der indogermanischen Sprachen* 27, n.F. 7 (1885), under *cvaghnin*, pp. 604-605.

² v. the exhaustive treatment of this Vedic word in the article 'RV. *çīpra*' by Hjalmar Frisk in his *Kleine Schriften zur Indogermanistik und zur griechischen Wortkunde* (Göteborg, 1966), pp. 232-43.

³ For the details of the process v. Heinrich Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben: die Cultus der Vedischen Arier nach der Saṁhitā dargestellt* (Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1879), pp. 277-78.

Selected Hymns

‘who, in the fortieth autumn, found out Śambara abiding in the mountains’: Śambara is yet another of the many demons with whom Indra did battle. The words ‘in the fortieth autumn’ are hardly to be taken literally: probably only a long period of time is intended.

‘who has slain the serpent . . . Dānu lying down’: This is another reference to the demon Vṛtra, here rather loosely called ‘Dānu’, which is really the name of Vṛtra’s mother. That his *mother* is not meant is proved by the fact that the participle ‘lying down’ (as is the natural wont of a serpent!) is in the masculine, not the feminine gender, although, of course, this distinction is lost in English. On the parentage of Vṛtra cf. I.32.9: ‘She whose son was Vṛtra had lost her strength: . . . Above was the mother, below the son: Dānu lay like a cow with her calf.’

‘with seven reins’: Indra may be so characterized merely because of the seven streams he led forth, as though each required an additional pair of reins; moreover, the Vedic poets are fond of particular numerals like three, seven, ninety-nine, etc., with which they delight in spinning out enigmatic and arcane utterances.

‘a powerful bull’: All of the Ṛgvedic gods are called ‘bulls’ as a way of indicating an excess of virility and courage, the bull having been considered the embodiment of these qualities. It must not be supposed, however, that any of the deities when thus designated was thought to be in the least taumorphic.

‘let go the seven streams to flow’: The same sentence occurs at I.32.12, except that it is couched in the second person (‘You let go’ etc.); v. note thereon.

‘spurned the son of Rohiṇī’: This demon, whose name is given in the form of the metronymic Rauhiṇa, is known from but one other passage in the Ṛgveda, I.103.2, which, however, affords no additional information about him.

‘him who presses, him who bakes, him who praises, him who has toiled’: These are the principal officiants of the Vedic sacrifice: the one who presses out the juice from the Soma-stalks, who prepares the special sacrificial cakes, who recites the hymn of praise, and lastly the one who performs the more purely manual aspects of the ceremony.

‘We, . . . having goodly heroes, would speak to the assembly’: a slight modification of a favorite ending of hymns of the Gṛtsamada family, to whom the composition of Maṇḍala Two is ascribed by tradition; cf. the final line of II.16 and 33: ‘loudly would we speak at the assembly, having goodly heroes.’ On the difficult word rendered ‘assembly’ v. note on V.63.2.

III.34

Indra

1. Indra, splitter of strongholds, overcame the Dāsa with bolts of lightning, finding wealth, dividing up his enemies. Impelled by prayer, expanded in body, with plentiful gifts he filled up both worlds.
2. As an impulse for you, the vigorous, the robust, I raise my voice, adorning it for an immortal. O Indra, you are the leader of men's races and the hosts of the gods.
3. Indra, guided by his forces, enclosed the Encloser Vṛtra; guided by his forms, he reduced to nought the wiles of the wily. Burning with desire, he slew the shoulderless one in the woods; he revealed the cows of the night.
4. Indra, winner of the sun, who causes the days to be born, is victorious along with the ardent ones, the conqueror of armies. He caused the beacon of the days to shine for man, he found the light to his great delight.
5. Indra enters the fracas with vigor, like a man, performing manly deeds. He made known these thoughts to the singer, he promoted their pure quality.
6. Of that mighty Indra they laud the great deeds, well done, many: with artifice the artful ones he has crushed; with wiles the Dasyus, he whose strength lay in his superiority.
7. In battle Indra with his might has cleared the path for the gods, the true lord, fulfiller of men. In the seat of Vivasvat the wise sages sing these feats of his with hymns.
8. Indra ever resisting, object of desire, bestower of strength, who has won the sun and the waters of heaven, who has won the earth and this heaven - in him they delight who take pleasure in devotions.
9. He has won the horses and he has won the sun, Indra has won the cow that gives abundant nourishment, and he has won golden wealth. By slaying the Dasyus, he protected the Aryan color.

10. Indra won the plants, the days, he won the trees, the intermediate space. He has split open Vala, chased away disputants. And so he became the tamer of the haughty.
11. For prosperity would we call upon the bountiful Indra in this combat, the manliest, for the sake of winning the spoils; Indra who listens, the mighty, for the sake of help in contests; Indra, who smites the Vṛtras, conqueror of riches.

Notes

1. 'splitter of strongholds,' an epithet peculiar to Indra, which in various translations such as 'destroyer of cities' and 'fort shatterer' has suggested to some scholars a reference to the destruction of the cities or strongholds of the Indus Valley people by the incoming Aryans. The hypothesis is, of course, perfectly tenable, though unprovable in the present state of our knowledge of the connections between these two peoples. It is, in any case, most probable that by 'strongholds, forts, citadels' etc. is here meant figuratively the masses of clouds which Indra rent apart in order to release their pent up waters for man.

The Dāsas or Dasyus were the aboriginal peoples with whom the Aryans came in contact as they entered India from the northwest. They are frequently mentioned in the Ṛgveda, as foes of the Aryans and even of demoniac character. They are depicted as being of black color, noseless (by which it is meant that their noses were not prominent, as would be implied in the designation 'flat-nosed'), of contemptuous speech and irreligious. It is generally assumed that these peoples of differing characteristics from the Aryans were the forebears of the Dravidians, doubtless intermingled with other ancient peoples, who may have been the founders of the great Indus Valley civilization. For further details see the remarks under 'Aryan color' at stanza 9.

'dividing up his enemies': that is, distributing them as booty or spoils of battle.

'Impelled by prayer': that is, in all probability, induced to perform these heroic feats in consequence of the hymns of praise addressed to him.

'expanded in body' may have reference to the effect of his copious consumption of the Soma juice, to which frequent allusion is made in the hymns to Indra.

'with plentiful gifts' implies not only that he *has* many gifts, but that he *dispenses* them freely to the worshipper.

2. That Indra is the leader of men and gods is in consonance with statements elsewhere in the Ṛgveda that he is the lord of all that moves and breathes and with his lofty position, practically speaking, as the national god and hero of the ancient Indo-Aryans, a quarter of the hymns of the Ṛgveda being dedicated to his worship.
3. 'guided by his forces': by the word 'forces' is here intended a double sense, *i.e.*, powers or prowess as well as the forces or hosts of the Maruts who are so often depicted as Indra's allies in his confrontation with the demon Vṛtra. The Vedic word may mean either 'strength' or a 'host' or 'company,' somewhat like the English word 'force,' which, apart from its basic meaning of 'power,' may signify also 'military force, soldiery, troops.'

Indra's greatest feat, certainly that most frequently alluded to in the Ṛgveda, is his slaying of the serpent-demon Vṛtra, which is described at some length in I.32. The word 'Vṛtra' means etymologically 'that which encloses or obstructs,' and the Vedic poets were quite conscious of this etymology and, as here ('enclosed the Encloser Vṛtra'), played upon the connection between the verb and its derivative. The word 'Encloser' is supplied in the translation in order to suggest the etymological play between 'enclosed' and 'Vṛtra', which would otherwise be lost.

'guided by his forms': that is, through the help of the various forms Indra was capable of assuming, thereby eluding his foe; *e.g.*, in I.32.12 Indra takes the form of a horse's hair!

Vṛtra is called 'shoulderless,' as in I.32.5, because he was conceived as a serpent. It is hard to say exactly what is meant by 'in the woods.' The waters withheld by Vṛtra are often figuratively called 'cows' by the Vedic poets, and the obscure phrase 'of the night' possibly has reference to their having been enclosed in the darkness of Vṛtra's belly.

4. Indra's victory over the arch-demon Vṛtra marked the beginning of the world as the Ṛgvedic man knew it. Prior to this epoch-making contest all was darkness, and the life-giving waters were withheld from man and beast alike. But with the destruction of Vṛtra all the elements that constitute the visible universe were brought forth: the sun, days, the light, dawn, the waters, heaven, earth, plants, trees, cows, horses, etc., though not all of these are enumerated in this particular hymn. He would appear, then, to be a creator-god, quite apart from his narrower role as a great god of battle, vanquisher of demons, the Dāsas or Dasyus, and supreme lord of atmospheric phenomena. In ṚV VI.24.5 it is said: 'One action today, another tomorrow, and Indra makes the non-existent existent in a moment.'

In his confrontations Indra is often assisted by other gods, especially troops of gods, such as the Maruts, who are probably meant here by the 'ardent ones.'

7. 'In the seat of Vivasvat': that is, the place of sacrifice. Vivasvat, to whom no hymn in the Ṛgveda is addressed, is a rather nebulous deity, a shadowy reminiscence of the age when the Indo-Aryans had not yet become separated from their brethren in Iran, as the name in the form *Vivañhvāt* occurs frequently in the Avesta. Possibly originally a designation of the sun, Vivasvat means etymologically 'shining forth' or 'shining in different directions,' and in the expression 'seat of Vivasvat' it may perhaps be just a synonym for fire, in particular, of course, the fire of the altar where the sacrifice was performed.
9. 'By slaying the Dasyus, he protected the Aryan color': by 'Aryan color' is almost certainly meant simply the Aryan people, as opposed to the pre-Aryans or Dasyus, who, as pointed out in the note on the first stanza, were of black color in contrast to the white or light color of the alien Aryans. The idea, then, is that Indra favored the Aryans over the Dasyus (or *Dāsas*) and championed them in battle. It is extremely unlikely that by 'Aryan color' the upper three castes are intended.
10. Vala was a demon, like *Vṛtra*, who was defeated by Indra, and he too, is depicted as enclosing the cows within himself. He is conceived not as a serpent, however, but as a vast cave or cavern, the word *vala* meaning literally a 'cave' or 'enclosure,' which is rent asunder by Indra in order to let out the cows imprisoned within its dark recesses.
11. This stanza occurs also at the end of ṚV III.30, 31 and 32, all compositions of the same poet, *Viśvāmitra*.

I.53

Indra

1. Goodly words we bring forth in full measure to the mighty one: songs of praise to Indra in the seat of Vivasvat. Never, surely, has he gotten treasure for those who seem to be asleep: no ill-expressed praise is favored among the givers of riches.
2. Giver of horses, giver, O Indra, of cows you are, giver of barley, of wealth a mighty lord, man's helper of old, not disappointing us in our desires, a friend to friends - to him do we sing now.
3. Endowed with might, doer of many feats, Indra, O most effulgent, to you alone belongs this wealth all around, we know: therefore, having gotten it together, foremost one, bring it hither; let not be deficient the desire of the singer who longs for you!
4. Kindly disposed on account of these flames, on account of these Soma-drops, staving off our need with cows, with wealth of horses - through Indra rending asunder the Dasyu with Soma-drops, may we, rid of our foe, be provided with refreshing food!
5. With riches, Indra, with refreshing food may we be provided, with prizes of victory, all-resplendent, heavenly! With divine favor that has strength in heroic sons, headed by cows, along with horses, may we be provided!
6. These exhilarants exhilarated you, these virile powers, these draughts of Soma, in your clashes with Vṛtra, O good lord, when without your equal you crushed ten thousand Vṛtras for the singer with sacred grass.
7. Battle upon battle you enter with boldness; citadel upon citadel you strike down here with might, when from afar with Namī your ally you crushed the wily Namuci by name.
8. You slew Karañja and Parṇaya with Atithigva's sharpest wheel-rim. You split, not giving in, Vaṅṛda's hundred citadels, beleaguered by Ṛj-íśvan.

9. These twice ten kings of men who came upon friendless Suśravas you cast down with your ill-falling chariot-wheel, O famous one, along with their sixty thousand and ninety-nine.
10. You have favored Suśravas with your favors, Tūrvayāṇa with your protective forces, Indra. You made Kutsa, Atithigva, Āyu subject to him, a young and mighty king.
11. God-protected at the conclusion, Indra, we who wish to be your most fortunate friends, wish to praise you, through you possessing heroic sons and gaining longer life far ahead.

Notes

1. 'in the seat of Vivasvat': that is, the place of the sacrifice, an expression used several times in the Ṛgveda (*e.g.*, III.34.7, on which *v.* note). Vivasvat is a shadowy figure in the Ṛgveda, although the name in the form Vivanhvata is common in the Avesta, where he is said to have been the first man to prepare the Haoma, *i.e.*, Soma. To judge from the etymology of his name, which means literally 'shining forth' or 'shining in various directions', Vivasvat may originally have been an epithet of the sun, hence the sun itself, or of the fire, with which, in any case, he is closely connected. But in view of his role as the first mortal to prepare the Haoma-Soma and thus as the first sacrificer, it is possible that his name had become a prototype for the sacrificial priest, all the subsequent priests merely continuing the office he initiated.
 'Never, surely, has he gotten treasure' etc.: that is, he never confers treasure upon the lazy, who, practically speaking, are asleep.
 'no ill-expressed praise': the praise that is directed to a god, a bestower of wealth, must be appropriately phrased to achieve the desired result.
2. 'to him do we sing now': the shift from the second person to the third is a ubiquitous feature of the Ṛgveda.
4. There is an abrupt change in grammatical construction here, which the English rendition is intended to reflect: 'kindly disposed' and 'staving off' refer, of course, to Indra, *not* to the subject of the main verb 'may we be provided.' But the poet, starting with 'Indra' in mind as the subject, suddenly switched his focal point from Indra to the recipients of Indra's help in 'may we be provided,' thus

leaving the two qualifiers 'kindly disposed' and 'staving off' dangling. Similar anacolutha are not rare in the Ṛgveda; cf. II.21.3.

'rending asunder the Dasyu': the Dasyu were the indigenous inhabitants of India with whom the incoming Aryans frequently clashed in battle. They are also called 'Dāsa'; v. the note on them at III.34.1.

'with Soma-drops': Indra is constantly depicted in the Ṛgveda as drinking great quantities of Soma-juice, through the exhilarating effects of which he is able to perform his mighty deeds; cf. also stanza 6.

'refreshing food': probably 'sacrificial food' to be used in the sacrifices to the gods is meant.

5. 'With divine favor that has strength in heroic sons': that is, the gods' favor in the form of heroic sons or, more directly, that bestows heroic sons.

'headed by cows': by cows here may be meant those that are bestowed upon the priest as his fee or present for the performance of the sacrifice; or cows in the more general sense as the most frequent and valued object of the Ṛgvedic Indian's petition.

6. 'These exhilarants exhilarated you': note the juxtaposition of etymologically related words, of which the poets of the Ṛgveda were extremely fond; cf. 'you have favored Suśravas with your favors' in stanza 10. It is certainly *in part* this love of word-play that sowed the seeds of etymological and grammatical speculation of the post-Vedic period. The 'exhilarants' are, of course, the draughts of Soma subsequently specifically mentioned; similarly, 'these virile powers', as stimulating the imbiber to perform heroic or manly deeds.

'without your equal': that is, without anyone on the enemy's side equal to him.

7. 'with Namī your ally': possibly Namī may be the name of a king who arrayed himself on Indra's side in the fight with Namuci, if this Namī is the same as Namī Sāpya mentioned in the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa as a 'king of Vedeha.'

'the wily Namuci by name': Namuci, a demon who is said to have been beheaded by Indra. The name means literally the 'non-releaser,' probably as designating a demon who, like Vṛtra, would not release the life-giving, fructifying waters for man.

8. Karañja, Paṇaya and Vaṅḡda are the names of demons slain by Indra who, it is presumed, must have ridden over them with the chariot belonging to Atithigva, apparently a king, also called Divodāsa, who elsewhere also in the Ṛgveda is said to have assisted Indra. Like Atithigva, Rjīśvan too, allied himself with Indra. Both may have been historical figures, but there is no way the matter can be proved.

9. 'came upon friendless Suśravas': that is, assailed or attacked him. Suśravas, who is mentioned also in stanza 10, may like Ṛjīśvan have been a historical figure.

'ill-falling': if this translation is correct, it is with reference to the chariot-wheel's ill-boding nature for the twenty kings and their sixty thousand and ninety-nine warriors.

10. Some scholars think that Tūrvayāṇa may be identical to Suśravas, and the tenor of the passage seems to favor this view, otherwise the pronoun 'him' in the second half of the stanza must logically be taken as referring to Tūrvayāṇa, the last mentioned name, and this would leave Suśravas somewhat inconclusively dealt with, causing us to wonder what happened to him after Indra's assistance. But it does not seem possible to make any final assertion about this.

Kutsa is generally depicted in the Ṛgveda as a great friend of Indra, but occasionally, as here, as his enemy. Similar contradictory treatment is accorded to Atithigva in this hymn: in stanza 8 Indra's enemies Karañja and Paṇaya are struck down with Atithigva's chariot, but here in 10 Atithigva is subjected to the young king (Suśravas or Tūrvayāṇa, or Suśravas-Tūrvayāṇa). In Ṛgveda II.14.7 Indra is said to have struck down the heroes of the same triad, Kutsa, Atithigva and Āyu.

11. 'God-protected': others translate 'protected by the gods.' But although it is not possible to be certain whether the singular or plural is meant, since, as in this literal translation, 'god' is the first member of a compound and therefore ambiguous as to number, the sense seems to suggest that it refers to Indra alone and not the gods in general.

'at the conclusion': that is, at the conclusion of the sacrifice at which this hymn is recited.

II.21

Indra

1. To the one who conquers all, who conquers wealth, who conquers the sun, who always conquers, who conquers men, who conquers the earth, who conquers horses, who conquers the cows, who conquers the waters - to Indra, who is worthy of worship, bring the precious Soma!
2. To him who is over and above, who breaks to pieces, who wins, the unconquered, the one who conquers, the creator, mighty devourer, the charioteer, hard to surpass, always conquering - to Indra say homage!
3. Always conquering, folk-devouring, folk-conquering, the overthrower, the warrior, grown strong at his own pleasure, the assembler of armies, the conqueror, lauded among the people - Indra's heroic deeds I shall proclaim.
4. He who does not give in, the bull, the slayer of the malevolent, he who is profound, lofty, whose poetic wisdom is unattainable, the stimulator of the fatigued, the shatterer, the steadfast, the vast - Indra, to whom goodly sacrifices are offered, produced the dawns, the sun.
5. Through the sacrifice the wise Aṅgirasas, traversers of the waters, have found the way, sending unto him their inspired thoughts; seeking his favor through invocation and sitting down at the altar, unto Indra sending their inspired thoughts, they have gotten cows, treasures.
6. O Indra, the most excellent treasures bestow on us, insight of the intellect, good fortune, abundance of riches, security of limbs, sweetness of speech, pleasantness of days!

Notes

- 1-3. These three stanzas consist of a succession of epithets, largely repetitive, indicative of Indra's immense power, for which he should be worshipped and accorded homage. While most of the epithets are generalizations of his power, some refer to specific feats, as, for example, 'who conquers the cows,' which refers to Indra's retrieval of the cows imprisoned by the cave-demon Vala; 'who conquers the waters,' which has reference to his greatest victory, *i.e.*, that over the serpent-demon Vṛtra, so often mentioned among the god's exploits. On the other hand, unless the epithet 'who conquers horses' is just a general statement, it must refer to some feat otherwise unknown, for nowhere in the Ṛgveda is there any mention of Indra conquering horses or wresting them back when stolen by some malevolent creature.

In stanza 3 there is a sudden shift of grammatical construction (anacoluthon) at the end of the long series of epithets, which is thereby left dangling. The poet ought to have continued in some such fashion as ' . . . Indra is extolled for his heroic deeds,' but instead he altered his train of thought so as to leave the foregoing adjectives with nothing to qualify by saying 'Indra's heroic deeds I shall proclaim.'

4. Indra is called a 'bull' partly since the bull was regarded as typifying great virility and partly as the impregnator of the earth with the fructifying waters he released by slaying the demon Vṛtra.

'the stimulator of the fatigued': The same epithet, whose meaning, however, is not entirely free from question, occurs also at ṚV II.12.6. Indra's production of the dawn (or dawns) and the sun is frequently mentioned in the Ṛgveda, *e.g.*, I.32.4, where after slaying Vṛtra, he is said to have produced the sun, the heaven and the dawn, and also II.12.7, where the sun and the dawn are mentioned.

5. The Aṅgirases are a race of semidivine beings who are often associated with Indra in various of his feats, as here in the conquest of Vṛtra, as is implied in the epithet 'traversers of the waters,' *i.e.*, winners of the waters enclosed in Vṛtra's belly. The Aṅgirases were noted for their singing, which seems to be referred to by the repeated phrase 'sending unto him (unto Indra) their inspired thoughts.'

II.16

Indra

1. To the best of you that are I offer a goodly song of praise, like an oblation in the kindled fire. For protection we call upon Indra, who is not liable to decay, the causer of decay, strengthened, from of old a youth.
2. Without this mighty Indra there isn't anything at all: in him are combined all heroic powers. In his belly he bears the Soma, in his body strength, might, in his hand the thunderbolt, in his head wisdom.
3. Not by heaven and earth can your power - Indra's power! - be encompassed, nor by the seas and the mountains your chariot, nor can anyone come near your thunderbolt - when with your swift horses you fly many a mile.
4. Since all lay before him their intent to worship - him who is worthy of worship, dauntless, the bull - and adhere to him, do you, Agni, as a bull worship him on our behalf with an oblation, you who are the most knowledgeable! - Drink the Soma, Indra, along with the bull, the radiant flame!
5. The trough of the bull, the wave of honey, flows clear for the bull to drink, whose nourishment is the bull. The two adhvaryus are bulls, the pressing-stones are bulls: they press the bull Soma for the bull.
6. A bull is your thunderbolt, and a bull your chariot. Bulls are your two bay horses, bulls your weapons. Of the bull, the exhilarating drink, O bull, *you* are the lord. O Indra, have your fill of Soma the bull!
7. Forth to you, like a ship, I launch an eloquent song in the contest. With a prayer I approach you at the pressings, bold as I am. - I hope he will listen to this word of ours! We will draw upon Indra, as a reservoir of wealth.
8. Before we are stricken be come hither unto us, as a cow swollen with fodder unto her calf! Straightway with your good will, O you of a hundredfold powers, may we be firmly united, as husbands with their wives!

9. Now may that bountiful gift-cow of yours yield milk to the singer according to his desire, O Indra! Be kind to your praisers: let not fortune pass us by! Loudly would we speak at the assembly, having goodly heroes!

Notes

1. 'like an oblation' etc.: that is, just as the fire is increased and strengthened by the offerings of ghee cast into it, so is Indra to be strengthened by this laudatory hymn.

'strengthened': *i.e.* from draughts of Soma to which Indra is notably addicted; or the word might be rendered 'grown up' and then taken concessively with the following words, thus: '(though) grown up, (yet) from of old a youth.'

3. The word used for 'power' here is etymologically related to the name Indra, so that there is a play between it and the god's name, thus: 'Not by heaven and earth can your Indracic-ness be encompassed.' The insertion of the parenthetic 'Indra's power' in the translation is an attempt to bring out the implication that the power here is something peculiar and intrinsic to Indra.

The when-clause at the end is probably to be taken with all the assertions, not just the final one about the thunderbolt.

4. This stanza is variously explained. The interpretation given here assumes that Agni, the supreme priest of the sacrificial rite ('the most knowledgeable') is asked, as liaison between men and gods, to offer worship to Indra on behalf of the sacrificer, and Indra, in turn, is requested to drink the Soma-extract along with Agni (in RV I.21.1, a hymn directed to Indra and Agni as a pair, they are called the 'greatest drinkers of Soma').

Indra is frequently called a 'bull' in the R̥gveda as an indicator of immense virility and strength, but the term is applied also, though less commonly, to other gods, as here to Agni and subsequently in 5 and 6 to Soma.

- 5-6. In these two stanzas the application of the epithet 'bull' is extended freely and with remarkable consistency, so that not only are Indra and Soma called bulls, but so also are his chariot and the pair of horses by which it is drawn, his thunderbolt and other weapons, as well as the priests at the sacrifice and the stones employed in pressing the Soma-stalks. So diverse an application of this epithet is possible because of the literal meaning attributed by the R̥gvedic poets

to the various words for bull (*vṛṣabha*, *vṛṣan*) which they fancied to derive from the common verbal root meaning 'rain' (*vṛṣ*) with its figurative connotations 'inseminate, shower down abundantly, bestow gifts,' and so on. Thus, these words for bull, conceived to mean literally the 'rain-er' or 'inseminator,' might equally be taken to mean 'rainer of gifts, one that gives abundantly.' As applied to Soma here, the epithet 'bull' could be based on several nuances: thus, Soma might be a 'rain-er,' *i.e.* a bull, because the juice 'rains' into the vats after passing through a filter to remove its impurities, or because of the sound, similar to the fall of rain, the drops make as they fall into the vats or troughs; or rather is Soma called a bull *without* reference to the fancied etymology 'rain-er,' merely because it makes a bellowing or roaring sound in falling into the troughs, a phenomenon often alluded to in the Ṛgveda. The pressing-stones are called bulls (or 'rainers') because the juice flows out feely from them as the stalk is crushed. The adhvaryu priests are those who were concerned with certain manual aspects of the sacrificial ceremony, among other things, the pressing of the Soma, for which reason they are probably called bulls. The thunderbolt, weapons, chariot and horses are probably called bulls because they are associated with Indra who, as the bountiful one, is regularly portrayed as the bestower of gifts, so that they too, in a sense, are 'bestowers.'

'The trough of the bull' means primarily the wooden vat into which the drops of Soma trickle after going through the sheep's hair filter, and secondarily the extract or juice of the Soma, as shown by the appositional phrase 'the wave of honey,' which is just a kenning for Soma. 'Flows clear' is said with reference to the removal of impurities by the filtering of the Soma. 'Whose nourishment is the bull' is applied to Indra, whose chief or favorite drink was the (bull) Soma.

The Ṛgvedic poets are fond of this sort of word-play, which is made possible by the structural transparency of Sanskrit, because of which it is easy to separate out word-building elements from root elements, which, in turn, may be seen (or thought to be seen) in other words formed with different suffixes. Their delight in this word-play is surely at least in part due to the paradoxical statements to which it readily leads and partly also to the repetitious sound effects (with slight variations due to different suffixes and grammatical endings), which result from this predilection.

7. The 'pressings' refers, of course, to the pressings of the Soma, of which there were three every day.

Indra is ubiquitously depicted in the Ṛgveda as a bestower of wealth upon the pious worshipper, in consequence of which liberality he is called by such epithets as 'the bountiful one' or 'the lord of wealth.' Here Indra is figured as a well or reservoir of riches, elsewhere as an ocean, whence the worshipper hopes to draw forth his share.

8. 'Before we are stricken': probably refers to any sort of distress or calamity, but the poet may have in mind more particularly that resulting from battles with the enemy, as suggested by Sāyaṇa.

'you of a hundredfold powers': This epithet, which is of frequent occurrence in the Ṛgveda and almost exclusively applied to Indra, might also be translated 'you who have the power(s) of a hundred.' In either case, it no doubt refers not only to Indra's physical powers, which his many victories and feats of bravery prove to have been immensely great - certainly greater than those of a hundred! - but also to his powers of insight and possibly to his magical powers, whereby he could transform himself, as, for example, into a horse-hair in his fight with Vṛtra, as told in ṚV I.32.12.

9. This stanza is found also at ṚV II.11.21, and the final verse beginning 'Loudly would . . .' in the translation occurs also at ṚV II.33.15, a hymn to Rudra. All the hymns of the Second Maṇḍala are ascribed to the poet-sage Gṛtsamada.

Perhaps 'fortune' might better be written with a capital letter, as there is a minor deity so named in the Ṛgveda, who is conceived as a dispenser of wealth, and other deities are often apostrophized in the same hymn. But the point is really of small importance.

III.45

Indra

1. Come hither, Indra, with your bay horses that bring us joy, with hair like the peacock's! May none hold you back, as trappers a bird! Go past them, as past a desert-land!
2. Devourer of Vṛtra, splitter of Vala, burster of strongholds, driver of the waters, mounter of the chariot at the neighing of his two bay horses - Indra is the shatterer of even the steadfast.
3. As the deep oceans, you increase your strength, as do cows. As cows with a good cowherd to their fodder, as irrigation ditches to a pool, they have gone.
4. Bring unto us offspring, wealth, as the share to one who makes a promise! As a man with a crook a tree bearing ripe fruit, shake down sufficient wealth, Indra!
5. You are self-sufficient, Indra, your own ruler, commanding, the more glorious by your own achievements: as such, growing in strength, O much-lauded one, do be our best listener!

Notes

1. 'with hair like the peacock's': merely in allusion to its sheen or glossiness. 'Go past them, as past a desert-land': that is, 'avoid those that would hinder your passage, as one would avoid entering a desert.'
2. 'Devourer of Vṛtra,' etc.: these are all allusions to actions commonly said of Indra: his destruction of the serpent-demon Vṛtra, splitting open the cave of Vala, bursting the strongholds, by which is probably meant the great monsoon clouds which may be imagined to assume the shape of fortresses, and driving out or releasing the waters contained within them, often figuratively represented as cows kept imprisoned in the cloud-fortresses or cloud-caves by demons.

3. In the English translation of this stanza an attempt has been made to retain as much of the abbreviated, elliptical character of the original as is possible. To render it intelligible some such amplification as the following is needed: 'As [you increase] the deep oceans [with water], you increase your strength [with Soma], as do cows [their strength with fodder]. As cows with a good cowherd [go] to their fodder, as irrigation ditches [go] to a pool, they [*i.e.*, the drops of Soma] have gone [to you].'
4. Since in the phraseology of the Ṛgveda the conjunction 'and' is frequently omitted, it is not possible to say with certainty whether 'offspring' and 'wealth' are two separate categories: 'Bring unto us offspring and wealth' or whether 'offspring' is simply explanatory of 'wealth': 'Bring unto us wealth (in the form of) offspring.' Perhaps this latter construction is the more likely in view of the request for a shower of wealth in the second half of the stanza.
 'as the share to one who makes a promise': this is obscure, but in spite of Sāyaṇa's explanation of a father giving a share of his wealth to his son who has just come of age, it may mean more simply 'as the share due to us, the worshippers, who make a promise,' *i.e.*, a vow to offer regular sacrifices, etc., the sacrifice being viewed as a sort of contract between a particular god and the worshipper.
5. 'growing in strength': certainly through ample potations of Soma.

VIII.65

Indra

1. Whether, O Indra, you are called from the east, west, north or south by men, come hither with your speedy horses;
2. or whether in heaven's fountain Svarṇara you rejoice or whether in a sea of Soma juice!
3. Upon you, vast, mighty, with songs I call, as a cow to pasture, O Indra, to drink of the Soma.
4. Transporting your majesty, Indra, your greatness, O god, let your bay horses bring you hither in your chariot!
5. Indra, you are sung and you are praised as great, powerful, as one who makes us rich: come hither, drink our extract!
6. Provided with the extract and the sacrificial meal, we call upon you to sit down on this our sacred grass.
7. Since you are the common lord of all, Indra, as such we do call upon you.
8. This nectar of Soma the men have milked for you with the stones: pleased, Indra, do drink it!
9. Look beyond all the niggardly seers: come hither quickly! Upon us bestow great fame!
10. The king is the giver of dappled cows to me, bedecked with gold: may the bountiful one be unharmed, O gods!
11. Besides the thousand dappled cows I have received gold: gleaming, high-piled, abundant, pure.
12. The grandsons of Durgaha, offering me goodly gifts by the thousand, have gained renown among the gods.

Notes

1. 'by men': possibly 'people' in general are meant or, what is more likely, those in charge of the sacrifice, as must be the case in stanza 8 below. If this is the meaning, we shall have to render 'by the men.'
2. Svarṇara is apparently a proper name, the name of a fountain or spring in the highest heaven, whence issues Soma.
 'sea of Soma juice' may simply be hyperbole for a vast quantity of Soma juice. It is also possible that this is a figurative expression for the cup of Soma juice to be offered at the sacrifice or the trough into which the juice flows after passing through the strainer.
4. By the two abstract nouns 'majesty' and 'greatness' are, of course, meant Indra himself, who is endowed with those qualities.
8. 'This nectar of Soma:' literally, 'this honey consisting of Soma' or 'this honey of Soma,' Soma often being called honey in the Ṛgveda. By 'the men' is meant the priests engaged in the manual aspects of the sacrifice, the *adhvaryus*.
10. 'The king': that is, not Indra, but the earthly king who instituted the particular sacrifice for which this hymn was composed. He has presented the priest with cows festooned or decorated with gold as well as gold in some other form not here specified, as we are told in the next stanza. In return for these lavish gifts the poet entertains the gods that his bountiful patron be unharmed, that is, suffer no hardship or grief of any kind. The sudden apostrophe to the gods in general in a hymn otherwise directed to a specific god is a common phenomenon in the Ṛgveda. Frequently the apostrophe may be to another god or series of gods, as though they were all mere aspects of one and the same god.
12. As a result of these gifts, the poet tells us that the grandsons of his generous patron King Durgaha, who apparently continued the liberality of their grandfather, have acquired fame in the eyes of the gods. It is a fair certainty that this Durgaha was a historical figure, among whose descendants was Trasadasyu, king of the Pūrus, a tribe alleged elsewhere in the Ṛgveda to have been the most powerful of ten tribes conquered by Sudās, king of the opposing Bharatas, on the banks of the Paruṣṇī (for which river see ṚV X.75.5). The Kurus of much later times, whose kingdom embraced partly the old land of the Bharatas and ten tribes, are found to number both Bharata and Pūru, eponymous heroes of the Bharatas and Pūrus, among their ancestors. The name Bharata is, incidentally, reflected in 'Bhāratavarṣa' ('Land of the Descendants of Bharata'), one of the traditional names of India.

X.119

Indra

1. My inclination is thus: 'I would obtain a cow, a horse.' - 'Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
2. 'As winds the trees that resist, the drops of Soma, when drunk up, have uplifted me. - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
3. 'When drunk up, they have uplifted me, as speedy horses a chariot. - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
4. 'A hymn of praise has come to me, as a cow to her beloved calf. - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
5. 'As a wheelwright the well of a chariot, I bend 'round the hymn in my heart. - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
6. 'Surely the Five Tribes have not seemed even so much to me as a mote in the eye! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
7. 'Surely the two worlds - the twain - are not even equal to one half of me! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
8. 'I have surpassed the heaven by my might, this mighty earth too! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
9. 'Look! This earth - I'll set it down either here or here! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
10. 'In but a flash I'll tread the earth either here or here! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
11. 'In the heaven there's one half of me, I've dragged the other down below. - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
12. 'I am mighty great: I've been raised to the clouds! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'
13. 'Home I'm going well-adorned, the oblation-bearer to the gods! - Haven't I drunk of the Soma?'

Notes

This hymn is a monolog by some one while under the effects of Soma. Tradition identifies the speaker as Indra in the form of Lava (a quail!), so that he is simultaneously the deity to whom it is ascribed and its author. The matter of the hymn is somewhat reminiscent of RV X.136, the hymn of the ascetic experiencing a state of trance induced by imbibing some hallucinogenic potion apparently in use by early followers of the god Rudra.

3. 'they have uplifted me, as speedy horses a chariot': the experience alluded to is perhaps the rising off the ground of a vehicle that is being drawn with very great speed.
5. 'I bend 'round the hymn': apparently the 'well of the chariot' (or perhaps the 'seat,' if that is rather the meaning of the Vedic word), being curved required careful bending of the wood by the wheelwright. In the same way a properly fashioned hymn has to be shaped in the seer's mind or heart. The focal point of this stanza in the monolog seems quite clearly to be that of a mortal poet rather than the god Indra, who could not be expected to voice sentiments such as these about composing a hymn.
6. The 'Five Tribes,' whose identities are not certainly known, presumably represent the aggregate of Vedic peoples, hence the world as a whole. Perhaps they are the same as the 'Five Peoples' mentioned at I.89.10 and III.59.8, on which latter v. note.
- 7, 11. Those who prefer to look upon this hymn as a monolog of Indra derive support for that view by translating 'wing' instead of 'half,' the Vedic word admitting of either meaning. The wing, of course, would then refer to Indra in his shape of the quail (*lava*).
13. The first line of this stanza has occasioned much discussion among Vedic scholars. The translation given here, *viz.*, 'Home I'm going well-adorned,' seems the most reasonable of the conflicting views, but wholly possible is the translation 'A house well-furnished, I am going,' this curious condition of seeming to be a house being then regarded as yet another example of the expansive effects resulting from imbibing the Soma.

'the oblation-bearer to the gods': *i.e.*, Agni, whom Indra (or the mortal poet of the hymn) fancies himself to be in his intoxication.

VI.57

Indra and Pūṣan

1. Indra and Pūṣan now I would invoke for friendship, well-being, the gaining of strength.
2. The one has sat beside the Soma, to drink what is pressed in the mortar; the other wants his gruel.
3. Goats are the drawers of the one, two bays, yoked together, of the other: with these he slays the foes.
4. When Indra, the most bull-like, led forth the mighty waters flowing, then Pūṣan was along.
5. That good will of Pūṣan and Indra we grasp at like the branch of a tree.
6. We draw up Pūṣan, as the charioteer the reins, and Indra for mighty well-being.

Notes

1. 'the gaining of strength': Probably some sort of vital strength is meant; Sāyaṇa gives 'food or strength,' but the precise meaning of the Vedic word, which occurs frequently, is elusive.
2. 'the other wants his gruel': Gruel or *karambha*, as it is called, is Pūṣan's special food, apparently some kind of grain, perhaps pounded into meal and mixed with milk or water to make it into a mash or paste. Sāyaṇa explains it as an 'oblation consisting of grits sprinkled with ghee,' but whatever its precise recipe, it must have been a typical food of rural people so as to conform with the god's pastoral nature and so was offered to Pūṣan as his sacrificial meal, just as the Soma to Indra and the other gods. On one occasion (at ṚV III.52.7) it is prepared also for Indra when accompanied by Pūṣan.
3. 'Goats are the drawers of the one': Goats are the regular means by which Pūṣan's chariot is drawn in contrast to the other gods, whose vehicles are drawn by horses, and one of Pūṣan's distinctive epithets is 'who has goats for horses' or, as the Ṛgveda puts it, 'who has goat-horses' (cf. ṚV VI.55.3 and 4).

4. 'the most bull-like': Various gods in the Ṛgveda are called 'bulls' to denote the possession of excessive virility, and Indra, being the most masculine, is especially often so called. This common epithet is here elevated to the superlative degree. At ṚV I.32.7, which describes the great contest between the demon Vṛtra and Indra, the virility of the latter, who is termed a 'bull,' is contrasted with the total absence of virility on the part of his assailant, who is referred to as an 'ox.'

'led forth the mighty waters flowing': with reference to the battle between Indra and Vṛtra, just mentioned, which terminated in Indra's complete victory over the demon, whose vast belly he pierced, thus bringing forth the waters and other elements of the cosmos; for the details v. ṚV I.32, where, however, Pūṣan is not mentioned, his involvement in the contest certainly being an accretion of the later mythology designed to place Pūṣan on the same level as Indra, the greatest of the Indo-Aryan gods.

6. 'We draw up Pūṣan' etc.: The sense of this simile seems to be that, just as a charioteer draws his reins in (or up!) to bring his horses to a stop or slow them down, so the worshipper here is causing Indra and Pūṣan to pause in their course across the sky long enough to confer blessings upon him.

Soma

The deified Soma plant occupies a central position in the religion of the Ṛgveda. He is mentioned about 1000 times, and no fewer than 120 hymns are devoted to his worship. After Indra and Agni there are more hymns to Soma than to any other deity in the Ṛgveda. The entire ninth book consists of hymns to Soma.

Worship of the Soma plant and the juice extracted from it was not peculiar to the Aryans in India: Soma, under the cognate name Haoma, was worshipped also in ancient Iran by the Zoroastrians, and the Haoma cult shared many traits in common with that depicted in the Ṛgveda, as may be seen from the Avesta. It is possible, though perhaps not provable, that the imbibing of the juice of the Soma plant harkens back to the period of Indo-European unity.

Though Soma sacrifices continued to be performed for centuries after the arrival of the Aryans in India and are still performed sporadically, in the course of time the extract was no longer prepared from the same plant as in the Ṛgvedic period. Apparently the cultivation of it was confined to mountainous areas, a certain Mt. Mūjavat being specifically mentioned, and never widespread. As the Aryans advanced from the northwest into the plains of northern India, it became more and more difficult to procure Soma, and, as substitutes were more frequently employed, the original plant was forgotten.¹

Numerous attempts have been made in the past hundred or more years to determine the identity of the original Soma plant. Recently it has been identified by the mycologist, R. Gordon Wasson, with the mushroom *Amanita muscaria* L., popularly called the 'fly-agaric.' Much may be said in favor of this identification: the fact that, in spite of other minute descriptive allusions in the Ṛgveda, nothing is ever said about the plant's leaves, branches, blossoms, roots, or its fruit or seed; the reddish brown color of the extracted juice; some of the epithets and fanciful imagery that are applied in great profusion to Soma; the effects it is alleged to produce on those who partake of its essence, which suggest some sort of hallucinatory drug. Nevertheless, though these and yet other particulars do seem to fit a mushroom rather than any of the other plants that have been advanced as candidates, not all scholars are fully convinced by the identification of Soma with the fly-agaric. Clearly the matter needs to be studied further in spite of the attractiveness of the evidence.

¹ A hint at the growing scarcity of the Soma plant may be reflected at ṚV X.85.3: 'Having drunk, he thinks it is Soma, because they press a plant: what the priests know as Soma, no one enjoys'.

The hymns addressed to Soma are couched in metaphors and similes of highly imaginative character, and probably no flights of fancy have ever soared higher than those of the poets of the ninth book of the Ṛgveda. Amid this elaborate and fanciful imagery there is a constant shift from one bold figure to another and a peculiar combination of the literal and figurative, an interplay which is capable of leading to great obscurity of expression and what oftentimes appears to be nothing but a confused jumble of unrelated ideas. The occurrence of words of uncertain meaning and especially of words which are found but once in the Ṛgveda contributes a full share of additional obscurity to these difficult passages.

Soma was regarded as the drink of immortality, which it could confer upon both gods and human beings. It was imbibed with relish by all the gods as well as the Fathers, though some, such as Indra, are mentioned with particular frequency for their fondness of Soma. It was alleged to deliver men from sickness and languor and to have other beneficent effects.

VIII.48

Soma

1. I, of good understanding, have partaken of the sweet potion, the well-minded, the best finder of bliss, which all the gods and mortals, calling it 'honey', seek.
2. When you have proceeded within, you shall become Aditi, the appeaser of divine wrath. Enjoying the companionship of Indra, O Indu, as an obedient span of horses the wagon-pole, may you promote us to wealth hereafter.
3. We have drunk the Soma. We have become immortal. We have gone to the light. We have found the gods. What shall hostility do to us now? What, O immortal, shall the malice of mortal do?
4. Be comfort to our heart, when imbibed, O Indu, very kind, Soma, as a father to his son. Thoughtful as a friend to a friend, do you, of praise far and wide, extend our life, Soma, that we may live!
5. These splendid, freedom-giving drops, which I have drunk, have girt me together in the joints, as straps a chariot. May these drops protect me from the slipping of my foot and may they keep me from sickness!

6. Make me to flame like a kindled fire! Make us to see clearly, make us richer! For then, in my intoxication with you, O Soma, I'll think: 'As a rich man, move forward unto prosperity!'
7. With eager heart we would partake of your extract, as of one's father's wealth. O Soma, O king! prolong our lives, as does the sun the days of spring!
8. O Soma, O king! be gracious unto us for our well-being! We are devoted to you: of this be sure! Ill-will is arising and anger, O Indu: do not give us away to our foe, according to your pleasure!
9. For, as protector of our body, Soma, you have settled down in every limb as man's observer. When we infringe upon your ordinances, be gracious unto us as a good friend, O god, for our betterment!
10. With a tenderhearted friend would I associate that, when imbibed, would not harm me, O Indra, possessor of bay horses. This very Soma which has been deposited in us, for that I go to Indra in order to prolong my life.
11. Away have stayed those languors and diseases: they trembled, favoring the darkness, they were afraid. Wide-stimulating Soma has risen up within us: we have come to where life is prolonged.
12. That drop, O Fathers, which, when drunk in our hearts, enters us mortals, itself immortal, to that Soma we would offer worship with an oblation. In his mercy, in his good graces may we be!
13. Joining together with our Fathers, O Soma, you have extended unto heaven and earth: to you as such we would offer worship with an oblation. May we be possessors of riches!
14. As our protectors, O gods, speak for us! Let not sleep overpower us nor idle chatter! Ever friends of Soma, endowed with goodly heroes as sons, we would celebrate a sacrifice.
15. You are the giver of strength to us on all sides, O Soma. You are the finder of the heavenly light: enter us as man's observer! You, O Indu, in conjunction with your aids protect us behind as also in front!

Notes

1. 'well-minded,' the effect being made an epithet of the cause; cf. Shakespeare's 'all the drowsy syrups of the world' (*Othello* III.3.331), 'insane root' (*Macbeth* I.3.84), 'sweet oblivious antidote' (*ibid.* V.3.43).

'best finder of bliss': The word translated 'bliss' is etymologically more akin to 'room, free scope' and perhaps might be adduced as lending support to the identification of Soma with the hallucinogenic mushroom *Amanita muscaria* L.

In the *Ṛgveda* Soma is often called by the word *madhu*, usually loosely translated 'honey,' as here. But *madhu* really means 'something sweet,' and it was probably applied by the Indo-European peoples, in various cognate forms, to a number of diverse foods and beverages, honey being only one of them.

2. Aditi, a goddess frequently mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*, to whom, however, no entire hymn is ascribed, is apparently in origin the personification of an abstraction, as the name means literally 'boundlessness,' *i.e.*, freedom. Her identification is accordingly on a very broad scale, including the sky and air, earth, all that has been and will be. She is often invoked to release the worshipper from sin or guilt, and the reference to Aditi in stanza 2 is in connection with her ability to fulfill that function.

Soma is very frequently called 'Indu,' a word whose precise meaning is somewhat doubtful, though it probably means 'drop' or 'juice.' It is commonly employed in addressing Soma, almost like a name, and when so used, it is kept in the English translation. In this stanza it is juxtaposed with the name 'Indra,' partly for its alliterative effect.

The translation of the last part of this stanza is uncertain because the original contains a word of doubtful meaning which occurs but once in the *Ṛgveda*. If the rendition given here is correct, the sense is that Soma should enjoy the close companionship of Indra as the two horses that pull the wagon enjoy the wagon-pole, and Soma with Indra should bring wealth and prosperity to the worshipper. Indra in his exploits against the demons is dependent on great draughts of Soma (cf. *ṚV* I.32), and the close association of Indra and Soma is reflected in two hymns where they are addressed conjointly as a pair.

4. The translation 'when imbibed' here and in 10 is preferred to 'when drunk,' which, though formally correct, might lead to a misunderstanding.
5. 'May these drops protect me from the slipping of my foot:' Sāyaṇa takes the word rendered by 'foot' in the sense of '(religious) performance' and interprets: '. . . protect me from slipshod performance,' the idea thus being that the imbibing of Soma prevents this.

7. The opening words could be equally correctly translated 'We would partake of you (who have been) pressed with an eager heart.'
 'the days of spring': perhaps 'the days of summer,' or even 'the shining days,' the Vedic word, though much discussed, being of uncertain meaning.
10. The 'tenderhearted friend' is, of course, Soma, the reference being somewhat confused by the sudden apostrophe to Indra.
 'possessor of bay horses': Indra is so-called because he travels in a chariot drawn by bay horses.
 'for that I go to Indra in order to prolong my life': The meaning appears to be 'I go to Indra, *i.e.*, ask Indra, to extend my life in order that I may be able to continue enjoying Soma.'
11. Soma is viewed as capable of keeping away all sorts of disease and darkness.
 'we have come to where life is prolonged': These same words form the final verse of stanza 16 of ṚV I.113 a hymn to Uṣas, goddess of the dawn: 'Rise up! The living spirit has come unto us. The darkness has gone away. The light is coming hither. She (*i.e.*, Uṣas) has opened the path for the sun to go. We have come to where life is prolonged.' In the Uṣas hymn this verse seems to be another way of saying 'We have come to another day in our lives' with the return of the dawn. But in this Soma hymn these words are used with a slightly different twist: from drinking the Soma, which has now pervaded and quickened us, 'we have come to a point where our life is prolonged,' *i.e.*, we have come to a renewal of our life.
- 12-13. The Fathers, who live in the highest step of Viṣṇu, are extremely fond of drinking Soma and are addressed here to witness the worship that is being accorded to Soma.

IX.3

Soma

1. This god immortal, like a bird, flies to the vessels to settle down.
2. This god Pavamāna, made with inspired thought, runs past the meshes of the strainer, not to be led astray.
3. This god Pavamāna by singers, by patrons, a reddish brown horse is groomed for the contest.
4. This Pavamāna, like a hero going with his warrior-attendants, desires to acquire all treasures.
5. This god Pavamāna goes in a chariot, grants us his favor, lets be known his voice.
6. This god, lauded by the poets, plunges into the water, bestowing gifts upon the worshipper.
7. This Pavamāna rushes off to the heaven across the spaces in a stream, loudly resounding.
8. This Pavamāna, to whom is offered a good sacrifice, has reached the heaven across the spaces, irresistible.
9. This one, a god pressed for the gods in accordance with ancient custom, goes into the strainer reddish brown.
10. This very one, whose ordinances are many, when born causing refreshment to be born, flows in a stream when pressed.

Notes

1. The vessels are the vats or buckets into which the Soma juice trickles as it is filtered through woolen strainers.
2. Most of the hymns addressed to Soma are to Soma pavamāna 'Soma flowing clear,' *i.e.*, flowing clear through the strainer after being pressed between stones,

thence into the vessels or vats. This epithet *pavamāna* 'flowing clear' is used with such frequency, often independently from the actual process of extracting the juice from the plant, that it has, practically speaking, become another name for Soma, just as *indu*, literally 'drop.' In this translation, then, it is capitalized and treated as a proper name.

By 'made' is meant 'made ready' or 'prepared.'

It is not perfectly certain what the word translated 'inspired thought' means. The primary meaning of the root-element on which it is based seems to be 'tremble, be excited, inspired,' hence the sense 'inspired thought' adopted here.

3. The Soma juice is supposed to be yellowish, brown, or reddish brown, the precise color being uncertain, as color-words in Sanskrit tend to span a whole spectrum of shades. The word used in this stanza for the color of Soma may also mean a 'horse of yellow or reddish brown color,' so that there is an implied comparison with a horse, and this figure is continued throughout this stanza and into the following. In the English translation it was felt preferable to say 'a reddish brown horse' in order to make the metaphor explicit. A double entendre is intended by 'is groomed,' as in addition to this literal sense, the Vedic word also means 'is cleansed,' with reference to the admixture of water with the Soma juice; v. note on 5-6 below.

The connection of Soma with warriors and battle-contests might with considerable probability be due to his intimate connection with Indra in the latter's battles with various demons, especially *Vṛtra* (cf. *ṚV* I.32), for which reason Soma seems also to have gotten the appellation 'slayer of *Vṛtra*.'

- 5-6. The words 'lets be known his voice,' more literally rendered 'manifests his voice,' refer to the sound made by the Soma juice as it trickles through the strainers into the vats, where it is mixed with water, which is alluded to in 6 by the somewhat bold figure 'plunges into the water.' Some translators have seen here the metaphor of a pearl-diver plunging into the water in search of pearls, but this rather fanciful interpretation necessitates the translation 'pearls' for the word here rendered more generically by 'gifts.' It is, moreover, founded upon the doubtful assumption that the Vedic Indians were familiar with diving for pearls.
7. Soma's connection with water is hyperbolically developed in many ways, so that as a god he is called lord and king of streams in various hymns and is even said to bring the rain from heaven.

IX.13

Soma

1. Soma flowing clear goes a thousand-streamed past the sheep-filter, Vāyu and Indra's place of meeting.
2. O you who desire his favor! sing the praise of Pavamāna, the sage, who has been pressed for the enjoyment of the gods.
3. Clear for the acquisition of strength flow the Somas, thousand-bodied, praised in song for the enjoyment of the gods.
4. And for us for the acquisition of strength flow clear to abundant nourishment, to a brilliant host of heroic sons, O Indu!
5. May those divine drops, after the pressing, cause to flow hither unto us thousandfold wealth, a host of heroic sons!
6. Like horses driven by their drivers, they have been sent forth for the acquisition of strength, speedsters to the sheep's hair.
7. Lowing go the drops, as cows to a calf: they have run between the hands.
8. Dear to Indra, exhilarating, O Pavamāna, crying aloud, all hatreds strike away!
9. Striking away the ungenerous, flowing clear, beholding the heavenly light, in the abode of the Ṛta be seated!

Notes

1. 'flowing clear' *i.e.*, purifying itself as it flows through the sheep-filter.
 'past the sheep-filter': very literally 'past the sheep,' by metonymy, or more particularly synecdoche, for the filter made from a sheep's wool.
 'Vāyu and Indra's place of meeting' might simply be a periphrasis for 'heaven' or perhaps the vessels designated to hold the Soma for Vāyu and Indra.

3. Instead of 'for the acquisition of strength' some translate 'for the attainment of victory' or 'victory-prize'; Sāyaṇa has 'for the attainment of food.' While the Vedic word thus variously translated 'strength,' 'victory,' etc. may indeed have these meanings, the context, especially stanza 4, seems more naturally to suggest 'strength' or 'vigor,' possibly 'food.'

The plural 'Somas' of the original has been retained, though the use sounds somewhat strange in English; 'drops of Soma' or 'Soma juice' are, of course, meant.

The compound translated 'thousand-bodied' involves a Vedic word, the precise sense of which has been much disputed. If it means 'body,' the view accepted here, and therefore the compound means 'thousand-bodied,' then this epithet hardly differs from 'thousand-streamed,' about which there is no doubt, as seen in ṚV IX.74.6.

4. 'flow clear to abundant nourishment' is a literal rendition: the meaning is 'flow . . . so as to provide nourishment.'
6. In this comparison with 'horses driven by their drivers' there is implied the picture of the drops of Soma juice being discharged from the vessels by the officiating priests, who bear the same relation to the Soma drops as the drivers to the horses. In fact, it is worth observing that the root-element of the word used for 'drivers,' perhaps more literally 'senders,' is employed in the technical language of the ritual for the 'sending,' *i.e.*, pouring forth, of the Soma juice from the vessels to the trough below.
7. 'Lowling go the drops': The sound of the Soma drops trickling from the woolen filters into the troughs is fancifully likened to the lowling of cows and the drops themselves to cows in quest of their calves; *cf.* the comparison with a bull in ṚV IX.40.2 and 6.
9. 'beholding the heavenly light': *cf.* ṚV IX.74.1 and 7. Note that the deified Soma is invested with the same powers as other gods to ward off enemies. The abode of the Ṛta is, of course, the highest heaven, which figuratively has been reached by the Soma drops when, fully purified, they have entered the trough.

IX.40

Soma

1. Flowing clear, he has marched against all adversaries, the active one. They adorn the sage with eulogies.
2. To his place the reddish one has risen. May the bull go to Indra after the pressing! On a firm seat he sits.
3. Now bestow upon us great wealth, Indu! For us, O Soma, from everywhere make it flow hither thousandfold!
4. All riches, O Soma Pavamāna, bring hither, Indu! May you get thousandfold nourishment!
5. Flowing clear, bring hither to us wealth: for the one who praises a host of heroes; make the singer's songs increase!
6. Flowing clear, Indu, bring hither wealth, O Soma, that has double strength, worthy of praise by us, O bull, Indu!

Notes

1. 'Flowing clear' for Vedic *punāna*, which like pavamāna (v. note on ṚV IX.3.2) is said of the Soma juice as it flows through the woolen filter into the trough below. The 'sage' refers to the Soma, whom the officiating priests 'adorn with eulogies.'
2. The 'place' to which Soma has risen is probably the trough, which is also figuratively looked upon as the 'heaven.' Soma is termed 'reddish' from the color of the juice and a 'bull' by a fanciful extension of the sound the juice produces as it trickles through the woolen filter. Soma is here entreated to go to Indra, who is particularly fond of drinking Soma juice. In the final sentence Soma is viewed as having already arrived in his heavenly abode beside Indra, as though the entreaty were instantly fulfilled.
3. On the word 'Indu' v. note on ṚV VIII.48.2.
4. 'Soma Pavamāna' here retained as in the translation of ṚV IX.3.
6. 'wealth . . . that has double strength,' probably, as Sāyaṇa says, as coming from both heaven and earth.

IX.74

Soma

1. Like a new-born child he cries out in the wood, when he, the reddish stallion, desires to reach the heaven. He mingles with the seed of heaven, increased with milk. To him, our far-extending protection, we go with good will.
2. The stalk, pillar of the sky, well-extended prop of the earth, which, filling up the trough, moves round everywhere - may he worship these two great worlds according to the ritual! He, the sage, maintains them both together as nourishment.
3. Great is the feast of Soma, well-made and sweet. Wide is the domain of Aditi for him who goes to the Ṛta, who is master of the rain from here, the reddish bull, the leader of the waters, who bestows help from here, worthy of praise.
4. From the living cloud ghee and milk are milked. The navel of the Ṛta, the nectar, is produced. All together they of goodly gifts gratify him: the men, fructifiers, urinate him made ready.
5. The stalk uniting with the wave has cried aloud. It swells for man the god-inviting skin. It deposits its seed in the lap of Aditi, whereby we shall produce children and descendants.
6. May they pour down on the thousand-streamed one unceasing! May they abound in offspring in the third region! The four openings are concealed beneath the heaven: dripping with ghee they convey the immortal offering.
7. He assumes a white color when he wishes to attain the heaven. Soma, the bountiful lord, knows the world. Due to our devotion and effort he grants us his favor swiftly. May he burst heaven's cask abounding in water.
8. Therefore, to the white trough, anointed with milk, he has come, having attained it, a horse to its goal in a race-course. Serving the gods with devotion, they send cows unto Kakṣivat of a hundred winters.

9. Your essence, O Soma, when you are mingled with water, runs off to the strainer of sheep's wool, O Pavamāna. Being cleansed by the sages, O most exhilarating one, be pleasant-tasting for Indra to drink, O Pavamāna!

Notes

1. By 'wood' is meant the wooden trough into which the Soma juice is strained and where it is mixed with water and milk. The 'seed of heaven' is the rain and, by extension, the water with which the Soma juice is mixed. It is said to be 'increased with milk' because of the admixture with milk in the wooden trough.
2. If the identification of Soma with the mushroom *Amanita muscaria* L., the so-called 'fly-agaric,' is correct, it is easy to see how, in the highly figurative language of the Ṛgveda, epithets like 'pillar of the sky,' 'well-extended prop of the earth' would be applied to it. But these highly poetic projections are mixed, as here, with allusions to various aspects of the process involved in preparing the Soma, so that there is in all the Soma hymns a constant interplay of the figurative and the literal, often developed in a most perplexing and elusive fashion. Here the Soma juice, referred to metaphorically by its stalk, which is in turn extended into the bold figure of 'the pillar of the sky,' is said to 'move round everywhere,' *i.e.*, we may presume in the confines of the trough.
3. By Aditi is here probably meant merely the heaven, with which, among many other things, she is identified; for further details *v.* note on ṚV VIII.48.2.
In this stanza Soma is identified with the rain, whose domain is his because he adheres to the Ṛta, the Cosmic Law, and with which, in the form of water, he intermingles and flows in the trough, viewed by mythological transfer as the heaven. Incorporated into this identification with the rain is the metaphor of Soma as a 'reddish bull,' which is supposedly founded upon the color of the Soma juice and the sound it emits while entering the trough from the woolen strainer.
4. Evidently here we are to picture the officiating priests as holding the vessels of Soma juice over the trough where, after passing through the woolen strainer or filter, it is to be mixed with milk or water. The 'cloud,' then, is the vessel or pot held by the priest, from which pours forth the rain in the form of Soma. Or perhaps the 'living cloud' is rather to be taken as the Soma plant.

Like the 'pillar of the sky' in 2, here the expression 'navel of the R̥ta' or more freely 'navel of the Truth,' may, if we accept the identification of the Soma plant with the mushroom, have originally been suggested by the mushroom's physical appearance, but this need not have been the case, as it could simply have been a natural extension of a commonplace expression like 'navel of the earth' or 'navel of the world,' far more fanciful extensions being a ubiquitous feature of the Ṛgveda.

By 'nectar' is, of course, meant the Soma. It might have been rendered more literally by 'ambrosia,' as being the drink of the gods.

'they of goodly gifts,' elsewhere in the Ṛgveda used of the Maruts, the storm-gods, as bringers of rain, is here applied to the priests, who are in a way identified with the Maruts, and as they pour down the Soma juice from their vessels into the trough below, they are said (like the Maruts) to urinate it. The Vedic word translated by 'fructifiers' has occasioned endless discussion among scholars. Probably it means literally 'causing to swell, causing to be exuberant' and hence, by extension, 'fructifying.' That the 'men' or priests should be called 'fructifying' or 'fructifiers' seems to be a way of saying that they are impregnating or infusing the Soma with milk and water.

5. As in 2, 'stalk' means the Soma juice and the 'wave' with which it unites is the water that is added.

'has cried aloud', as 'cries out' in 1, refers to the trickling sound made by the juice as it enters the trough, upon which are based some of the most extravagant metaphors.

The 'skin,' *i.e.*, the woolen filter, through which the juice passes into the trough and which presumably becomes swollen or thickened as the juice spreads over it and percolates through it. It is possible, alternatively, that the 'skin' might be a figurative expression for the trough, which is made to 'swell' with the influx of the Soma juice.

By the 'lap of Aditi' may be meant the trough itself, viewed as the heaven (Aditi), on which *v.* above in the note under 3.

The 'seed' which the Soma deposits is probably its 'essence,' which comes to earth as rain, whence all vegetation and life itself.

6. One of the most difficult and obscure stanzas in the hymn, partly due to the brevity of expression and the number of ways some of the words may be construed and partly also because one of the key words, that translated by 'openings,' occurs only in this passage, for which reason its meaning is uncertain. Another difficulty is the pronoun 'they' in 'May they . . . pour down' etc. It is assumed in this interpretation that the 'they' looks ahead to the 'four openings.' The stanza seems to continue the figure of the Soma as the fructifying rain of

heaven (the third region?), the 'four openings' possibly being the four principal directions whence flow the rains. The directions are said to be dripping with ghee, that is with water.

7. The 'white color' it assumes is due to the milk with which the Soma juice is mixed; *v.* also the next stanza. There is no word for 'heaven' in the original, but it is supplied here from stanza 1, where the phraseology is not so condensed.
8. The 'white trough,' primarily the trough into which the juice has trickled from the filter, as shown by the amplification 'anointed with milk' (literally 'with cows!'), but figuratively also the 'heaven,' the attainment of which, alluded to in 7 as a desire, is here said to be fulfilled. By a simple metaphor the Soma, having reached its goal (the trough-heaven) is called a horse that has reached its goal in a race-course.

It is supposed that the pious ones referred to are the patrons of the sacrifice, who are offering cows to *Kakṣīvat*, the author of the hymn, as *dakṣiṇā*.

9. The mingling with water mentioned here must refer to an admixture of water prior to that in the trough, perhaps during the pressing of the plant.

'Being cleansed' might refer either to the filtering of the juice, a process which was supposed to remove its impurities, or to the addition of water and milk.

Indra is constantly described as consuming great quantities of Soma in his exploits with various demons.

Varuṇa

Varuṇa is without question one of the most important gods in the Ṛgveda, though, as with the great Indra, he recedes into the background in the post-Vedic period, as other notions come to the fore to displace him from his high and lofty rank. Varuṇa was the guardian and protector of Truth, which was viewed by the Vedic Indian as the principal force in the universe, the very focal point of Vedic religion, whereby every aspect not only of the material world, but also of the inner world of the individual was regulated. There could be no opposition to its ceaseless operation, and without it all would be chaos and confusion. In this comprehensive sense Truth or Ṛta, as it is called in the Ṛgveda, was viewed virtually as a magical power, entrusted into the hands of Varuṇa, who, like an immensely powerful earthly king, was ever watchful that his ordinances should be obeyed, to which end he dispatched spies everywhere among the people to investigate and report the minutest deviation from the strict adherence to his law. As the greatest power, Truth was, in the final analysis, the cause of all existence, the seat of which was in the celestial waters in the highest heaven, the navel of the world - a fount of eternal light, of which the sun is but the merest reflection. As Truth or Ṛta was concealed within the celestial waters, the waters were conceived as Varuṇa's element, in which he moved or abided, and since all the waters on earth, whether in the form of streams or seas, or the rain of the monsoon, were thought ultimately to derive from the celestial waters, Varuṇa was everywhere present in them, even in the smallest drop. Whenever, therefore, an oath was taken, which by its nature involves reliance upon truth, a vessel of water, symbolical of Varuṇa's presence, was there as an intrinsic part of the ceremony. Varuṇa's intimate connection with the water in later times became his dominant feature, as the function of Truth came gradually to be replaced by other concepts like Tapas or the World-Self (Brahman-Ātman). In this way Varuṇa was reduced to overlordship of the sea and became the Neptune or Poseidon of Indian religion.

Varuṇa belongs to the class of deities known as Ādityas or 'Sons of Aditi', generally numbering six, all of whom are in reality deified abstractions. Of these Ādityas Varuṇa was certainly the most important, and in his guardianship of Truth stood in the closest relationship with Mitra, embodiment of the Contract, and also with Aryaman, who personified the relationship between guest and host. The closeness of Varuṇa's relationship with Mitra, who hardly differs from him, is such that for the most part the two gods are worshipped conjointly, as a pair called Mitrāvaruṇā, to whom many hymns are addressed.

The hymns to Varuṇa are everywhere marked by an ethical character, a feeling by the worshipper that he has committed some sin or wrong, whether consciously or not, in consequence of which he fears the visitation of Varuṇa's punishment: the snares in which he shall be bound or some disease, generally dropsy, an affliction characterized by a superfluity of bodily fluid, probably because the fluid was thought to be water, thus involving Varuṇa's presence in the body of the perpetrator of falsehood.

This great emphasis on Truth is not peculiar to the religion of the Ṛgveda, but is shared with the religion taught by Zoroaster, the prophet of ancient Iran, and the more diffuse religion embodied in the latter part of the Avesta, and hence can be regarded as essentially the common heritage of the Aryans. Curiously, however, in Zoroastrianism Truth or Ṛta, called Aša, is not under the guardianship of Varuṇa, whose name does not appear at all in the Avesta, but is conceived, under the name Aša Vahišta (the 'Best Truth'), as one of a hierarchy of personified abstractions emanating from Ahura Mazdā, the 'Wise Lord', the supreme deity of Zoroastrianism.

The nature of Varuṇa has often been misunderstood, and by some scholars of the Ṛgveda he has been variously portrayed as a moon-god, a god of the sea, and most commonly as originally a god of the broad expanse of heaven, his name Varuṇa having been equated with the Greek οὐρανός 'heaven, sky'. But even if the phonetic difficulties entailed in this equation of the two names could be overcome, there would remain the difficulty of explaining the considerable divergence of meaning between 'god of heavenly expanse' on the one hand and 'god of Truth' on the other. Yet there is a single thread that may bind the two together: Varuṇa is, as has been noticed, an Āditya, a word which etymologically signifies 'son of Aditi', which means literally 'unboundedness, infinity', perhaps also 'infinite expanse', which is close to the Greek οὐρανός. Possibly, then, if these two words are ultimately related and so go back to a common source, it will be necessary to formulate some hypothesis capable of bridging the gap from an 'infinite expanse' or 'god of the infinite expanse' to 'god of Truth'.

I.25

Varuṇa

1. Whatever law of yours, divine Varuṇa, we violate day after day, as people do,
2. subject us not to your deadly weapon when you are offended, nor to your wrath when you are angered!
3. For mercy we would unbind your heart with songs, as does the charioteer his bound horse.
4. Away from me they fly, free of your wrath, out of desire for betterment, as birds to their nests.
5. When shall we bring him hither, whose kingdom is his glory, the hero Varuṇa, the far-seeing, for mercy?
6. This they have both gotten in common. Caring, they are not indifferent to the worshipper adhering firmly to the law.
7. He who knows the path of the birds that fly through the air; who, abiding in the sea, knows it of a ship;
8. who, adhering firmly to the law, knows the twelve moons with their offspring; knows the one that is born thereto;
9. knows the course of the wind: wide, high and lofty; knows who are sitting above:
10. - Varuṇa, adhering firmly to the law, sits down in his mansions for the exercise of his universal sovereignty, god of goodly wisdom.
11. Therefrom the wise god looks o'er all the unusual things that have been done and will be done.
12. May that Āditya, of goodly wisdom, always make goodly paths for us! May he lengthen our lives!
13. Wearing a golden mantle, Varuṇa has put on his finery. Round about him his spies have sat down:

14. the god whom those seeking to deceive, deceive not, neither do the foes of the people, nor the hostile,
15. and who bestows no half-hearted honor upon men - in our bellies!
16. Off go my prayers, like cows to their pastures, seeking after the far-seeing one.
17. Let us now talk together again, as the beloved honey has been brought hither for me and, like the invoking priest, you'll partake of it.
18. May I now behold him who ought to be beheld by all! May I behold his chariot upon the earth! May he relish these songs of mine!
19. Hear this invocation of mine, Varuṇa, and have mercy! Seeking your favor, I long for you.
20. You rule o'er everything, wise god, both heaven and earth: harken unto me, then, on your way!
21. Release our highest bond! Unbind the midmost bond! Off with the lowest ones, for us to live!

Notes

2. 'your deadly weapon': It is difficult to say what is meant by this, if indeed anything specific; perhaps disease or other physical affliction, but more probably just an embodiment of the god's wrath.
4. 'Away from me they fly, free of your wrath': The songs referred to in the previous stanza are meant; 'free of your wrath' in the sense that they produce freedom from Varuṇa's wrath, the songs being characterized by the quality they bring about; with this use of an epithet which imputes to a thing an effect that the thing is supposed to produce, cf. 'well-minded' at RV VIII.48.1 and the note thereon.
6. 'This they have both gotten in common': 'This' refers to the 'kingdom' in 5, which the gods Mitra and Varuṇa share in common. As a pair they are addressed far more often than any other similar combination in the Ṛgveda.

7. 'abiding in the sea': It should be borne in mind that Varuṇa's home is in the water, the ultimate locus of which is the highest heaven, whence all atmospheric and terrestrial water originates. But Varuṇa must in no sense be thought of as a personification of the water, as is Agni of fire: water was merely his element, and it was his intimate association with it which, in the later mythology, became predominant and made of him an Indian Neptune.
8. 'the twelve moons with their offspring': that is, the twelve months and the days belonging to each, here poetically called their offspring, which Varuṇa 'knows,' since every operation of the cosmos is within his purview.
 'the one that is born thereto': a rather cryptic or, at least, oblique way of referring to the *extra* month that had to be added to the twelve at certain intervals to make up for the incongruence of the lunar year with the solar, so as to bring the former in line with the latter. This practice was common among ancient peoples, and failure to insert the extra days from time to time could lead to chaos, as may be seen in the history of our own calendar in Roman times.
9. 'who are sitting above': most certainly the gods.
10. 'in his mansions': probably with reference to the waters.
11. 'all the unusual things': Some say 'hidden,' but in either case what deviates from the general norm is surely the idea.
13. Just as an earthly king has spies to keep him thoroughly abreast of everything that is going on in his kingdom, so Varuṇa, as the universal sovereign, has his spies to inform him of those who have transgressed the truth. It must be remembered that Varuṇa was primarily the god of Truth in all its implications, and untruth of any kind constituted a sin against what he represented. The same dichotomy of truth and untruth is to be seen in the religion of Zoroaster in ancient Iran, where Ahura Mazdā represents the embodiment of Truth and righteousness in diametric opposition to the Lie.
15. 'who bestows no half-hearted honor': By 'honor' is very likely meant simply food, as stated by Sāyaṇa, which is pointed to by the abrupt change to the first person in the pendant phrase 'in our bellies.'
17. 'the beloved honey': The Soma is frequently called honey in the Ṛgveda.
18. The celebrant here wishes to have a 'view' or 'vision' of Varuṇa, as though that in itself might exercise some beneficent effect upon him. Doubtless parallel to this is the concept of *darśana* in modern India, literally 'beholding, seeing' (or 'causing to behold, causing to see'), from the same root as that used in this stanza, with reference to viewing, however momentarily, a famous and respected

personage, as though some positively salutary power were intrinsic to the process.

21. The bonds of Varuṇa are often alluded to; usually rendered 'fetters,' these bonds are some sort of snares applied by Varuṇa to wrongdoers. Doubtless they are really their wrongs conceived of materially, like the bonds or manacles of a prisoner or perhaps rather like the snares of a hunter used to trap his prey. Their division into three varieties in this stanza seems to be based on the degree of severity of the sinner's wrong.

V.85

Varuṇa

1. To the universal sovereign sing a lofty, profound hymn, dear to Varuṇa, the far-famed, who, as a sacrificer a pelt, has struck asunder the earth to spread it out for the sun.
2. Upon the woods he has spread out the intermediate region, speed unto the coursers, milk unto the ruddy cows; in the hearts Varuṇa placed wisdom, in the waters fire, in the sky, the sun, Soma on the mountain.
3. A cask with mouth downwards Varuṇa pours out o'er the two worlds and the intermediate region. With it, as king of the whole world, he drenches the ground, as the rain barley.
4. He sprinkles the broad earth and the sky, when Varuṇa desires milk; then indeed were the mountains clothed in clouds; the heroes, showing their prowess, let themselves go.
5. This mighty magical power of the lordly Varuṇa I'll proclaim, who, standing in the intermediate region, has measured out the earth with the sun, as with a measuring cord.
6. This mighty magical power of the god, greatest of seers, none has matched, whereby the glistening streams, flowing hither into one sea, fill it not with their water.

7. Whatever wrong we have done to a guest-friend, Varuṇa, or an ally, or a companion, or ever indeed to a brother, or a neighbor, to one of our own, Varuṇa, or an outsider - free us of that!
8. When, like gamblers at play, we have cheated, whether truly or whether we know it not, all this unbind like things loose, O god! Then to you may we be dear, Varuṇa!

Notes

1. 'To the universal sovereign sing a . . . hymn': The poet is addressing himself. It is also possible to translate 'I sing' or 'I shall sing.'
 'as a sacrificer a pelt': that is, as the priest who slays the sacrificial victim removes its skin; the word rendered by 'sacrificer' is commonly rendered 'butcher,' but it is almost certainly not to be understood in the sense that is ordinarily conveyed by butcher in English, but entirely in the milieu of the sacrifice.
2. 'Upon the woods he has spread out the intermediate region': Apparently merely a way of saying that, among his creative acts, he made the space necessary for the trees and other plant life to grow and expand.
 'in the waters fire': Fire is often said to abide in the waters, and one of the forms of Agni, the deity Apāṁ Napāt, as shown by his name, which literally means 'Son of the Waters,' is precisely this particular aspect of fire, which manifests itself as the lightning shooting from the clouds in a thunderstorm. It manifests itself also during the process of cooking, when the water becomes hot and manifests heat.
 'Soma on the mountain': The Soma plant is several times in the Ṛgveda said to grow in the mountains, a certain mountain called Mūjavat, otherwise unknown, being mentioned as its habitat (so ṚV X.34.1).
3. 'A cask with mouth downwards Varuṇa pours out': The raincloud is thought of as a huge cask or barrel which is inverted to empty out its contents, a feat here attributed to Varuṇa.
4. When Varuṇa wants water or 'milk,' to use the poet's word, for the sustenance of plant and animal life on earth, the mountains are clothed with clouds, whereupon the storm-gods or Maruts, here called the 'heroes,' exhibit their rain-shedding powers and cause the rain to fall. The mixture of tenses and the

deferral of the name of the subject to the following subordinate clause (we would say: 'Varuṇa sprinkles . . . when he desires') are peculiarities of Vedic style.

5. While it is clear that it is Varuṇa's great magical power that made it possible for him, while standing in mid-air, to measure out the earth, using the sun as a measuring device, it is not apparent *why* he measured the earth. Perhaps he did so to determine what dimensions it should be in all its parts, after he had struck it asunder like a pelt (stanza 1). Another possibility is that in determining the path that the sun, which he had placed in the sky (stanza 2), should follow, he had to take measurements of the earth, to which end he used the sun as a means of ascertaining distances. The words in themselves are sufficiently clear, but their precise import seems elusive.
6. One is reminded of *Ecclesiastes* I.7: 'All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full.'

VII.86

Varuṇa

1. Wise are creatures due to the might of him who even the two wide worlds has propped asunder; high and lofty has he pushed up the firmament, doubly the sun, and he has spread out the earth.
2. And to myself this I say: 'When, pray, shall I be near Varuṇa? What offering of mine would he relish unangered? When shall I, of good cheer, behold his mercy?'
3. I ask myself about this sin, Varuṇa, in my wish to find out, I go unto those that know to make inquiry. The very same thing even the sages say to me: 'This Varuṇa is angry with you.'
4. What has been my wrong, Varuṇa - the chief one! - that you seek to smite the one who praises you, your companion? This do tell me, you who are hard to deceive, O self-dependent one! Sinless, I would come readily unto you with homage.
5. The misdeeds of our fathers release for us, release the ones which we have done by ourselves! Like a cow-stealing thief, O king, like a calf from his bond, release Vasiṣṭha!
6. It is not my own will, it is infatuation, drink, anger, dice, ignorance. There is an elder in the younger's transgression. Even sleep keeps not away untruth.
7. Like a slave I shall do service unto the bounteous - I, free of wrong, unto the angry god. The noble god made the unthinking to think: the wiser one, he spurs the clever to wealth.
8. May this song of praise be well received into your heart, Varuṇa self-dependent! May there be prosperity to us in possession, prosperity to us in acquisition too! Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

1. 'Wise are creatures due to the might of him': due, of course, to the might of Varuṇa, who also in stanza 7 is said to have 'made the unthinking to think.'

‘even the two wide worlds has propped asunder’: This cosmic feat is attributed to various gods in the Ṛgveda. By the two worlds are meant the heaven and earth, which were originally conceived as joined together.

‘doubly the sun’: The expression is obscure and differently explained; in this rendition it is interpreted to mean that he raised up the sun twice as high as the firmament. But others with equal justification translate ‘pushed up . . . the sun *as well*’ (or similarly), the etymological sense of ‘doubly’ being attenuated to denote mere addition.

2. ‘near Varuṇa’: that is, in communion with Varuṇa and freely so translated by some.

‘of good cheer’: The appropriateness of this epithet is strictly as a consequence of Varuṇa’s bestowal of mercy upon the poet, as may be seen in a re-phrasing of the sentence: ‘when shall I behold his mercy and as a consequence be of good cheer.’ The same anticipatory use may be seen in the words ‘high and lofty’ in stanza 1 above, which are in consequence of the action of pushing up the heaven from the earth, until it is high and lofty.

5. ‘Like a cow-stealing thief’ etc.: These similes are expressed rather laconically and may be expanded thus: ‘Just as one releases a cow-stealing thief from his bond (*i.e.*, after he has been bound for his crime) and just as one releases a calf from his bond (*i.e.*, his tether), so, O Varuṇa, release me, Vasiṣṭha, from my bond (*i.e.*, the sins I have committed).’ The Vedic word rendered here by ‘cow-stealing’ is, curiously enough, susceptible of quite another interpretation, *viz.* ‘cow-satisfying,’ in which case the meaning is ‘like a thief satisfying or pleasing the cow he has stolen by offering it bits of grass and, if it accepts them, being thereby absolved of the theft.’ This form of expiation or release from the theft of a cow is contained in the Mānavadharmasāstra (XI.196), to be sure, but though Sāyaṇa assumes this to be the interpretation in his comment on this word, it is doubtful whether this method of atonement was in practice at so early a time. But it is also not beyond the realm of possibility that *both* meanings are intended by the poet, granting the currency of this custom for the Ṛgvedic period.
6. In this stanza the poet attempts to account for his wrong and in so doing blames it on various vices over which he had no control and on an elder who led him astray. To this summation he adds the general observation that even in sleep the wrongs one has done do not leave him.
8. ‘May there be prosperity to us in possession, prosperity to us in acquisition too’: that is, prosperity with regard to what they actually have in hand as well as with regard to what they will acquire.

VII.87

Varuṇa

1. Varuṇa traced the paths for the sun. Forth went the floods of the rivers to the sea, as does a charger unpenned to the mares. Conforming to the Ṛta, he has made the mighty courses for the days.
2. Your breath, the wind, roared and roared throughout the atmosphere, like a wild beast in search of fodder in the pasture. Within these two mighty, lofty worlds all your manifestations, Varuṇa, are dear.
3. Varuṇa's spies, simultaneously dispatched, look around both well-established worlds - sages, adhering to the Ṛta, versed in the sacrifice, mindful who shall send a prayer.
4. Varuṇa has said to me the understanding: 'Thrice seven names the cow bears: let the one who has knowledge of the word tell them, like secrets - a sage helpful to the next generation!'
5. The three heavens are deposited within him, the three earths below, forming an arrangement of six. The wise king Varuṇa has made this golden swing in the sky for himself, in order to shine.
6. Like the day, Varuṇa has settled down to the sea - like the bright drop, a powerful beast. He, for whom there is profound praise, the traverser of the atmosphere, who has dominion over the sea - he is king of that which is.
7. May we be free of wrong toward Varuṇa, who will have mercy upon him who has done any wrong - we prospering in Aditi's ordinances! Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

1. Here, as elsewhere in the Ṛgveda, various creative acts are attributed to Varuṇa; cf. especially VII.86.1, where several of them are enumerated.
2. The wind, as Varuṇa's breath, is regarded as the life-force or sustainer of all beings; so according to Sāyaṇa's view. The space between the two worlds, *i.e.*, the heaven and the earth, thus animated by Varuṇa's breath, is the arena of his principal activities or manifestations, *e.g.*, the bringing of rain, and said to be 'dear' because, without them, there could be no life at all.
3. Varuṇa's spies, like the 'eyes and ears' of the Achaemenian kings, scour their sovereign's realm, spot the doers of evil and report them. As sages, strictly observing the Ṛta, they are intimately familiar with the intricacies of the sacrifice and take note who send prayers to their lord and who do not.
4. 'Thrice seven names the cow bears:' etc.: This is a sort of riddle. It is not the *cow* that has 21 names, but the *word* 'cow' in the sense of earth, for which there are 21 synonyms in the Ṛgveda, all gathered together in the old list of Vedic words called the Nighaṇṭu, the very first entry in which is this group of 21 words for earth. Since the first word in this group is the common Vedic word for cow, used metaphorically for earth, it may be said that 'thrice seven names the cow bears.' Probably these lists of words that make up the Nighaṇṭu were compiled even in Vedic times or at least in the early post-Vedic period and handed down from generation to generation as a simple device for committing synonyms and other categories of words to memory.

Other interpretations of this difficult stanza, however, are given, by one of which the 'cow' is supposed to be 'speech,' *i.e.*, the Veda, with reference to the 21 sacrifices alleged to be found therein; by another the 'cow' is the goddess Aditi or Pṛṣṇi along with 21 Maruts, whose number, however, is variously given in the Ṛgveda. But these and yet other interpretations that have been advanced are hardly satisfactory, as they offer no really meaningful explanation to the riddle that is posed.

5. 'The three heavens are deposited within him' etc.: That is, the entire world is contained within him, he being even greater than that. Triads of heavens and earths, occasionally also of atmospheres, are mentioned in the Ṛgveda in connection with various gods, not Varuṇa alone. This curious treble cosmology may have started from the postulation of one heaven each for the sun, moon and stars, one within the other or superimposed upon one another, after which the notion of three could have been extended from the triad of heavens to the earth and the atmosphere, the other two Vedic worlds. The next stage in the process might have been to conceive of one triad as superimposed on the other, just as the individual constituents of the triad of heavens. Another possible

explanation of these triads of the Vedic worlds is suggested by the common practice of pluralizing one of them, *e.g.*, the heaven, to represent all three, whereby the 'three heavens' means the 'heaven, atmosphere and earth;' this usage then, either by a sort of numerical jugglery or by a misunderstanding of the usage, could have been reinterpreted as the 'three heavens,' 'three earths,' etc.

On the sun as a 'swing' *v.* note on ṚV VII.88.3.

6. The first sentence is obscure. Varuṇa seems to be equated with the Soma, elsewhere called a 'drop' and a 'beast,' the sea figuratively representing the water, with which the Soma juice was mixed in the vats after being pressed from the stalks. But the imagery is confused by the simultaneous equation of Varuṇa with the day as it sets in the sea.

VII.88

Varuṇa

1. To Varuṇa offer an immaculate prayer, one most dear, O Vasiṣṭha - to him the bounteous, who shall bring hitherward the lofty bull, worthy of worship, possessor of a thousand bounties!
2. Having just now gone into his sight, of Agni I thought the face of Varuṇa. The light in the sky and also the darkness - may he, as sovereign, take me to see their wonder.
3. When Varuṇa and I mount the ship, when we propel it forward to mid-ocean, when we move over the crests of the waters - happily shall we swing on the shining swing.
4. Varuṇa has put Vasiṣṭha in his ship, made him a seer, he of goodly works through his powers - the sage his praiser! - on a goodly day of days, for as long as the heavens shall last, for so long as the dawns.
5. Where are those companionships of ours? When we've been together before, I've gone unscathed to your lofty home, O Varuṇa self-dependent - to your house of a thousand doors.
6. Your everlasting friend, Varuṇa, who, dear as he is to you, may do unto you wrongs, is your companion. Full of sin, may we not suffer at your hand, O worker of magic: as a sage, extend protection to him who praises you!
7. Dwelling in these sturdy dwellings, we say unto you: 'May Varuṇa release his bond from us!' while winning favor from Aditi's lap. Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

1. The poet is here addressing himself. Vasiṣṭha is the reputed author of the whole of Maṇḍala VII.

'an immaculate prayer': a prayer pure and free of blemish and so acceptable to the god.

'the lofty bull': Sūrya or the sun is meant; 'bull' is used of any god to denote the

epitome of manliness and here also figuratively, from the great fructifying powers of the bull, to imply the vivifying and life-giving qualities of the sun; hence, the further epithets 'worthy of worship' and 'possessor of a thousand bounties;' *cf.* remarks on the word bull at ṚV V.83.1, where its application to the rain-god Parjanya is especially fitting.

2-4. In these stanzas the poet describes the intimate companionship he once enjoyed with Varuṇa, his mystic vision of the god, his initiation into the wonders of the light and darkness that alternate daily under Varuṇa's purview and his subsequent elevation to seership during a tour of the solar regions in the god's own vessel.

2. 'of Agni I thought the face of Varuṇa': By Agni in this context is presumably meant the sun, to which Vasiṣṭha likens Varuṇa's aspect because of its bright effulgence. But quite possibly the fiery quality of unpersonalized fire is meant.

'The light in the sky: that is, the sun, which we learn from ṚV V.85.2 and VII.87.5 was placed there by Varuṇa. Some scholars are insistent upon rendering 'in the stone' or 'in the rocky cave' instead of 'in the sky (or heaven),' because they feel the Vedic word had not at so early a time acquired the meaning of 'sky, heaven,' and by way of explanation they resort to the myth whereby the sun was imprisoned in a cave by the demon Vala. But this insistence seems invalidated by the occurrence of the cognate of the Vedic word in the Avesta and in the Old Persian inscriptions in the meaning of heaven.

3. 'When Varuṇa and I mount the ship': The waters are Varuṇa's element, and this is perhaps sufficient to explain the 'ship' that Vasiṣṭha claims in his vision to board and in which, in the company of Varuṇa, to sail out to the middle of the ocean, there to 'swing on the shining swing.' By 'the shining swing' is meant the sun, as is apparent from ṚV VII.87.5, where it is stated that 'The wise king Varuṇa has made this golden swing in the sky for himself, in order to shine,' perhaps, it is tempting to add, as a sort of dooly for himself, in which to ride across the celestial waters.

7. 'from Aditi's lap': The goddess Aditi, who seems in the Ṛgveda to be a sort of summation or embodiment of all things (*cf.* I.89.10: 'Aditi is the heaven; Aditi is the intermediate region; Aditi is mother, she is father, she is son; Aditi is the All-gods, the Five Peoples. Aditi is what has been born, Aditi is what shall be born.'), her exact nature being elusive and difficult to define, is often implored to release the worshipper from the bonds of sin, as is regularly her son Varuṇa, and it is probably this capacity of hers to remove sin that has induced the poet to speak of winning her favor here.

'Protect us always with well-being': The verb is plural, this plea being directed to the gods generally, not to Varuṇa alone. It is a frequent finale in the hymns of Vasiṣṭha.

VII.89

Varuṇa

1. On no account, Varuṇa, let me go to the earthen house, O king! Have mercy, you of goodly rule, be the cause of mercy!
2. As I go almost bursting, like a puffed up water-skin, O holder of the stone, - have mercy, you of goodly rule, be the cause of mercy!
3. From want of wisdom I have somehow gone astray, O pure one. Have mercy, you of goodly rule, be the cause of mercy!
4. Thirst has found me, your praiser, standing in the midst of water. Have mercy, you of goodly rule, be the cause of mercy!
5. Whatsoever wrong, Varuṇa, we as human beings do here against the host of gods; out of ignorance what law of yours we have infringed, harm us not, O god, on account of that offense!

Notes

To judge from stanzas 2 and 4, the reciter of this hymn is suffering either from dropsy (usually called edema nowadays) or some similar affliction, which involves a great deal of fluid retention by the body. It is, then, an appeal to Varuṇa to relieve him of this disease, which he reasons is due to the transgression of Varuṇa's ordinances.

1. 'to the earthen house': that is, to the grave. The sense is, of course, 'do not let me die'. Some translate by 'to the house of clay' and refer this to the burial urn in which the ashes of the cremated body were kept. But this need not be the case, as in the Ṛgveda both interment and cremation were known.
2. 'As I go almost bursting, like a puffed up water-skin': that is, since he goes about ready to burst, as seems to be the case with a water-skin completely filled with water. By a water-skin is meant the entire skin of an animal, usually a goat or a sheep, which was used and is still used in Oriental countries for the storage of water; cf. remarks made at RV VII.103.2 and V.83.7, where the same term occurs. This description of a victim of dropsy, along with the reference to extreme thirst in stanza 4, both vivid and accurate in spite of its brevity, is

perhaps the earliest description of this disease which has come down to us from ancient times.

'O holder of the stone': The appropriateness of this epithet to Varuṇa, to whom it is applied only here in the Ṛgveda and elsewhere almost exclusively to Indra, is not clear. As an epithet of Indra it may refer to one of the weapons with which he shatters the demons against whom he constantly battles, perhaps a sort of hurling stone or discus; perhaps it refers to the stone caves or strongholds in which the cows, subsequently released by Indra, were imprisoned, so that in this sense it would mean something like 'holder of the stone caves or strongholds'. Neither of these meanings is suitable to Varuṇa, and therefore it may be simply an instance of the transfer of an epithet, not rare in the Ṛgveda, from one deity to another.

4. 'Thirst has found me . . . standing in the midst of water': The thirst in spite of the abundance of water in the body is a paradoxical symptom of dropsy, by which the victim is afflicted with excessive thirst, although his body is bloated with fluid. Since Varuṇa is, in part at least, a deity of the waters, which he regulates as he does the other elements of the cosmos, it is wholly natural that a watery affliction like dropsy should have been regarded as a punishment specifically visited by him upon the worshipper guilty of thwarting his ordinances. Thus, then, this rather impassioned plea to Varuṇa, terminating in what amounts to a confession of guilt in stanza 5.

Mitra

The true nature of Mitra, as also of the god Varuṇa, with whom he is closely allied, has been a subject of infinite discussion among Vedic scholars. Whereas it used to be almost ubiquitously asserted that he was a solar deity on the basis of certain allusions in the Ṛgveda and his development in the later mythology, it has by now been firmly established that Mitra was originally simply a personification of the covenant or contract - really Contract with a capital 'C' - his name being uttered whenever an agreement was entered into, whether between individuals in any sort of mutual arrangement at all or between princes or kings of neighboring peoples.¹ It is of interest to note that in archaeological excavations conducted at Boghazköy, Turkey, at the beginning of this century clay tablets were found containing a treaty between the Hittite king Šuppiluliuma and Matiwāza, king of Mitanni, in which, among the gods called to witness, are Mitra, Varuṇa, Indra and the two Nāsatyas (or Aśvins). The fact that Indian (or Indo-Iranian?) gods were invoked by the ruling clique of the Hurrians in so distant a region as eastern Anatolia in the 14th century B.C. is in itself, of course, a matter of intrinsic historic interest. What is of concern here, however, is rather the ineluctable conclusion that these particular gods were invoked because their specific functions must have involved safeguarding agreements and punishing those who violated their provisions, a conclusion which is indeed confirmed by the evidence afforded by the Ṛgveda, the Avesta and scattered mention of swearing formulae used among the ancient Persians as recorded by the classical authors Xenophon and Plutarch.

In the Ṛgveda only one hymn is wholly addressed to Mitra, although his name is often mentioned, quite apart from the many hymns in which he is praised jointly with Varuṇa. The dearth of hymns to Mitra is probably to be explained in the light of his close approximation to Varuṇa, who, as the god of Truth, really usurped Mitra's purview to a considerable extent, any compact by nature being founded upon truth, lest it be altogether meaningless. On the other hand, in the Iranian Avesta Mitra's counterpart, there called Mithra, is

¹ The idea that Mitra was the personification of the power inherent in a covenant or contract seems first to have been proposed by Antoine Meillet in 'Le dieu indo-iranien Mitra', *Journal Asiatique* 10 (1907), pp. 143-159. His explanation was accepted by several Iranists, but generally not by Vedic scholars. It was much later endorsed by Georges Dumézil in *Mitra-Varuṇa* (Paris, 1940), and in recent times his theory has been developed and supported by Paul Thieme in 'The "Aryan" Gods of the Mitanni Treaties', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 80 (1960), pp. 301-317.

a figure of great prominence, a very long hymn or yasht being devoted to him.² The cult of Mithra in Iran, inherited from the period of the unity of the Indo-Iranian peoples and one of the chief ingredients of Zoroastrianism, with the passage of the centuries attained a certain degree of independence from Zoroastrianism and spread widely and rapidly during the early centuries of the Christian Era, embracing the Roman Empire as far as Britain. Indeed such were the popularity of its worship and the fervor of its adherents that Mithraism very nearly eclipsed the much younger Christian religion, then but striving for supremacy.

In both the Avesta and the Ṛgveda the name Mithra/Mitra is also used as an ordinary noun meaning 'compact' and the like, without implied personification. This must surely have been the original sense of the word, which may be easily gotten from either of the most probable etymologies that have been proposed, viz. that it is from the root *mi* 'fix, fasten, establish', hence 'what is fixed or established' or from another, homonymous root *mi* 'exchange'.

² On the Iranian Mithra v. the very important work by Ilya Gershevitch, *The Avestan Hymn to Mithra, Text with English Translation and Notes* (Cambridge, 1959). Concerning the Vedic and Iranian god generally v. Mary Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*, vol. I: The Early Period (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1975), p. 24 ff.

III.59

Mitra

1. Mitra, being called, brings about agreements among people. Mitra sustains earth and heaven. Mitra watches with eye unwinking over the tillers. To Mitra pour an oblation rich in ghee!
2. May that mortal, Mitra, be ahead, endowed with food, who in accordance with his vow serves you, O Āditya! He is not smitten, he is not conquered, who is favored by you. Harm comes not to him from near, not from afar.
3. Free of illness, rejoicing in refreshment, firm-kneed on earth's expanse and abiding by the Āditya's vow, may we be in Mitra's good will!
4. This Mitra is worthy of homage, very dear. King of goodly rule, he has been born an upholder. May we be in the good will of him who is worthy of worship and in his auspicious good graces!
5. Mighty is the Āditya: to be approached with homage, who brings about agreements among people, to the singer very dear. For him the most praiseworthy, for Mitra, pour out this welcome oblation into the fire!
6. Gaingiving is the favor of the god Mitra, sustainer of the folk. His heavenliness is the most brilliant in glory.
7. Far-spreading is Mitra, who by his greatness surpasses the heaven and by his glories the earth.
8. To Mitra, whose power it is to protect, the Five Peoples submit themselves. He supports all the gods.
9. For the person who has spread out the sacred grass, among gods, among mortals, Mitra has made refreshment, for which vows are required.

Notes

1. 'Mitra, being called, brings about agreements among people': Mitra's principal function is to witness or supervise any sort of contractual arrangement between two or more parties and protect its sanctity by meting out punishment to those who prove to have sworn falsely to it. By 'being called' is, of course, meant 'invoked, called upon by name,' as is in fact reflected in this stanza, where each sentence (each line of the original) begins with Mitra's name. It may be noted in passing that Mitra's seat or element was apparently fire, as Varuṇa's was water, and therefore compacts were concluded before a blazing fire and oaths before water.

'Mitra sustains earth and heaven': All the Vedic gods, apart from their specific functions, have attributed to them general cosmic functions, and thus is probably to be explained Mitra's sustentation of earth and heaven here.

'Mitra watches with eye unwinking': because he must constantly be on the lookout for infringements against contracts, which have been sworn in his name and are his purview. In the Avestan hymn to Mithra (Yasht X.7) Mithra is called 'sleepless, wakeful.'

2. 'endowed with food': This may be used either attributively or predicatively; thus, in the former case, signifying 'presenting food' in the form of the oblation to Mitra; in the latter, 'receiving food' in the form of a reward from Mitra for his faithful adherence to the contract. Doubtless the reward would be rain and the abundance of crops resulting from it.

'in accordance with his vow': that is, in accordance with the compact agreed upon under Mitra's watchful eye between the worshipper and his counterpart in the agreement.

'O Āditya': Both Mitra and Varuṇa belong to the class of deities known as Ādityas, who number six, all of them, like Mitra, in origin personifications of abstractions, the chief ones being Mitra, Varuṇa and Aryaman.

The second half of this stanza ('He is not smitten' etc.) is just a way of saying that one who is faithful to his contract is rewarded, a notion continued in stanza 3.

3. 'rejoicing in refreshment': that is, in the benefits that are consequent upon adhering to a contract sworn to before Mitra. Refreshment from rain may be meant or both rain and the food deriving from it; cf. the predicative sense discussed under 2 above and again 'refreshment' in stanza 9.

'abiding by the Āditya's vow': adhering to the contract witnessed by the Āditya Mitra.

4. 'he has been born an upholder': The rendition 'upholder' is uncertain, although the word is very common in the Ṛgveda; most translate by 'disposer,' but the ultimate affinities of the Vedic word are unclear. That 'he has been born,' *i.e.*, just born, presumably refers to the kindling of the fire before which contracts were concluded (*v.* note to stanza 1), an aspect of Agni as Mitra; *cf.* ṚV V.3.1: 'You, Agni, are Varuṇa when you are born, *when kindled you become Mitra.*'
7. 'Far-spreading': The word is deliberately ambiguous and may refer equally (or simultaneously!) to his ubiquity in his role as guardian of the contract or to his far-spreading celebrity in the same capacity.
8. 'whose power it is to protect': that is, to protect the contract from any kind of infringement.

'the Five Peoples': It is not certain what is meant by this expression, explained by Sāyaṇa as the four classes (Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras) in addition to the Niṣādas or non-Aryans. It is unlikely, however, that a single expression that includes the Dāsas or Dasyus would be used, as these non-Aryan peoples are elsewhere always held distinct from the Aryans. It is rather a designation for the Aryans, *exclusive* of the Dāsas or Dasyus, based on the five names of peoples: Anus, Druhyus, Yadus, Turvaśas and Pūrus, mentioned in some hymns and perhaps regarded as constituting the Vedic peoples.

Mitrāvaruṇā

Varuṇa and Mitra are praised far more often conjointly as a pair than any other deities in the Ṛgveda, with the exception of Indra, who is thus associated in joint praise with half a dozen or more gods. Perhaps this frequent close association of Varuṇa and Mitra is due to the intrinsic homogeneity of their functions, Mitra's personification as the Compact being inseparable from the Truth, which must underlie any compact and which was in the care of Varuṇa. This is undoubtedly why Mitra's personality is somewhat shadowy, less sharply demarcated than that of Varuṇa.

As a pair Varuṇa and Mitra are called Mitrāvaruṇā, a peculiar sort of compound, characteristic of the Ṛgveda, in which each member is put in the dual number, here indicated by the long -ā, which ends each name. Since it is the practice in these compounds to put a word of fewer syllables before a longer one, Mitra's priority of position in this compound does not imply priority of rank over Varuṇa, who, on the contrary, was the greater and more powerful god. In order to suggest the unity of function and personality implicit in the Vedic compound, in the following translation the compound Mitrāvaruṇā is retained instead of being resolved into 'Mitra and Varuṇa' or rendered with a hyphen as 'Mitra-Varuṇa' or 'Varuṇa-Mitra' with the members in reversed order.

V.63

Mitrāvaruṇā

1. Guardians of the Ṛta, you two, whose law is true, mound your chariot in the highest heaven. The one here, whom you, Mitrāvaruṇā, favor for him the rain flows abundantly from heaven like honey.
2. As universal sovereigns, you two rule o'er this world, Mitrāvaruṇā, shining like the sun in the assembly. Rain, your gift, we obtain: undyingness. The thunderers are moving far and wide over heaven and earth.
3. Awesome universal sovereigns, bulls, lords of heaven, of earth are Mitrāvaruṇā, the wide-traversing. With clouds gleaming you two attend the roar: you make the heaven to rain with the magic power of a lord.

4. Your magic power, Mitrāvaruṇā, in the heaven resides: the sun, the luminary, is moving - a gleaming weapon. You hide it in the heaven with cloud, with rain. Your drops, rich in honey, Parjanya, are starting out.
5. Their fine-axled chariot the Maruts in splendor yoke, Mitrāvaruṇā, like a hero in battles. Over the gleaming spaces are moving the thunderers far and wide. Besprinkle us, O universal sovereigns, with heaven's milk!
6. His word, Mitrāvaruṇā, well does Parjanya speak: full of refreshment, gleaming, along with flashes. The Maruts will clothe themselves well with clouds by your magic power. Make the heaven, the ruddy, the spotless to rain!
7. By your law, wise Mitrāvaruṇā, you two protect vows with the magic power of a lord. By the Ṛta you rule all the world far and wide: the sun you put in the heaven - a gleamy chariot.

Notes

1. 'for him the rain flows abundantly': Since Truth, as the basic operating principle of the universe, is under the purview of Mitrāvaruṇā, and the water is Varuṇa's element, the production of rain is ultimately due to them as a pair, although Parjanya, god of the thundercloud, and the Maruts, gods of the storm, are, of course, the more immediate bringers of rain. This hymn is, then, a prayer to Mitrāvaruṇā for the production of rain, probably at a time when the monsoon rains are failing.
2. 'shining like the sun in the assembly': What precisely is denoted by the Vedic word here rendered by 'assembly' has for years been a subject of unremitting discussion by scholars of the Veda, but like so many other Vedic words, in spite of its frequent occurrence, its meaning continues to be elusive. It seems to signify some sort of assembly or gathering in which matters of communal interest were raised and disposed of, possibly along the lines of some tribal councils of the American Indians. Since in such assemblies, whatever may have been their exact preoccupations, contractual arrangements and oaths must have, by the nature of the case, formed a part of the proceedings, the gods

Mitra and Varuṇa - or their unification into the pair Mitrāvaruṇā - had inevitably to be invoked. The epithet 'shining like the sun' seemingly is said with reference to the brightness and purity of the Truth which they symbolize in those proceedings.

'Rain, your gift, we obtain: undyingness': Rain is the gift provided by Mitrāvaruṇā and Parjanya and the Maruts who function under their Ṛta. As a result of the rain they provide, the worshippers have their crops and livestock, whereon depends their life. It is misleading to translate by 'immortality,' as almost invariably done here, that concept being irrelevant in the context.

'The thunderers are moving far and wide': The Maruts or stormgods are meant.

4. 'a gleaming weapon': Why the sun should be called a weapon is unclear.
5. 'Over the gleaming spaces': The spaces are gleaming, just as the clouds in stanza 3, because of the lightning associated with the storm.
6. Parjanya's voice is, of course, the thunder, which is accompanied by rain or refreshment and intermittent flashes of lightning. Notice the shift of tense in the next sentence, where it is said that the Maruts *will* clothe themselves with clouds through the magic power of Mitrāvaruṇā. Such shifts of time sphere are extremely common in the style of the Ṛgveda.
7. 'you two protect vows': Compacts or oaths, such as must be concluded before Mitra and Varuṇa, must surely be meant, rather than 'ordinances' according to the usual rendition, as ordinances would emanate from Mitra or Varuṇa, not from mortals and hence need no protection.

VII.61

Mitrāvaruṇā

1. Of you two gods, Mitrāvaruṇā, the eye resplendent goes forth, the spreading sun. He who shines upon all beings, he perceives the intention among mortals.
2. Adhering to the Ṛta, this sage, Mitrāvaruṇā, heard afar, sends up hymns for you two, whose prayers may you, of goodly wisdom, favor, that you may fill his autumns with wisdom, so to say.
3. Forth from the broad earth, Mitrāvaruṇā, forth from the high, lofty heaven, you two, of goodly gifts, put spies among plants and settlements, who go about singly, you two who protect unwinkingly.
4. Praise the power of Mitra, of Varuṇa, their strength pushes apart the two worlds with might. May the months go by without sons for the non-sacrificers: may he who is intent upon sacrifice extend his clan!
5. Wise ones all are you, O bulls: these are yours, wherein appears no marvel, no mystery. Deceits follow upon the untruths of people: not from you two have they been hidden, not to be perceived.
6. Your sacrifice I will magnify with homage: I invoke you two, Mitrāvaruṇā, in earnest. For you there are hymns to praise you, new ones. May these prayers that have been made be pleasing!
7. This priestly service, O gods, for you both, Mitrāvaruṇā, has been made at the sacrifices. Take us across all hardships! Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

1. 'Of you two gods . . . the eye': It is stated elsewhere too, in the Ṛgveda that the sun (Sūrya) is the eye of Mitra and Varuṇa, as, for example, in the hymn to Sūrya, I.115.1: 'The bright face of the gods has risen, eye of Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Sūrya, soul of what moves and stands, has filled heaven and earth and the space between.'

‘He who shines . . . he perceives the intention among mortals’: Here the sun and Mitrāvaruṇā seem to be identified. They observe men’s intentions to discover any impending breaking of a contract, falsification of an oath, etc.

2. ‘this sage, heard afar’: that is, Vasiṣṭha, author of this hymn; ‘heard afar’ is ambiguous, referring either to Vasiṣṭha’s fame or to the fact that his recitation can be heard at a distance.
‘that you may fill his autumns with wisdom, so to say’: ‘autumns’ is put for ‘years’ in a general way, as is in fact done also in English poetry with both ‘autumns’ and ‘winters;’ the apologetic ‘so to say’ seems to be added in order to mitigate the request for wisdom, so as to avoid any implication that the poet would, granting the request, be equatable with the divine pair.
3. ‘put spies among plants and settlements’: hardly more than a way of saying that the spies are ubiquitous.
4. ‘their strength pushes apart the two worlds with might’: With this cosmic act attributed to the pair Mitrāvaruṇā *cf.* what is said of Varuṇa at VII.86.1: ‘Wise are creatures due to the might of him who even the two wide worlds has propped asunder.’
5. This stanza is difficult, and interpretations vary. The principal difficulty is what is meant by ‘these,’ which has no antecedent to which it can be referred. Some scholars supply ‘praises’ or an equivalent word after it, following the interpretation of Sāyaṇa; others understand ‘people,’ which, however, is of incongruent gender with ‘these’ (which is feminine in the original!) and, in any case, scarcely yields any sensible meaning. Others, in desperation, wreak havoc upon the order of words by extracting ‘deceits’ from the second half of the stanza, which also does not lead to a meaningful solution. Perhaps, after all, it is best to accept Sāyaṇa’s interpretation and read ‘these (praises) are yours’ etc. In this case, the sense of the passage would seem to be to the following effect: ‘Wise and mighty gods: I give you two these words of praise, which contain nothing strange or peculiar, *i.e.*, only the unadulterated truth. Untruths lead inevitably to additional lying or deceit, none of which would escape your notice.’
7. It was pointed out in the note to ṚV VII.88.7 that the final sentence in that hymn, ‘Protect us always with well-being!’ which is in the plural and so directed to the gods generally, is a favorite finale of Vasiṣṭha.

Viṣṇu

Viṣṇu's true nature and function are far from apparent in the relatively meagre evidence afforded by the Ṛgveda, where he is celebrated in but few hymns. His chief characteristic, mentioned with some frequency, is that he takes three strides. In these three great strides are said to dwell all beings. It has generally been supposed that these strides refer to the course of the sun across the sky, although even from ancient times opinion has been divided as to whether the strides represent the rising, culmination and setting of the sun or its movement through the three divisions of the world prevalent in Ṛgvedic cosmology, *viz.* the earth, intermediate region and heaven. By either of these interpretations, however, Viṣṇu would be a solar deity, although there is little else available about his nature from the hymns to advance or support this view, in consequence of which an almost endless array of suppositions has been forthcoming from scholars. Viṣṇu's third or highest step is said to be beyond the sight of men and the flight of birds, where men devoted to the gods rejoice, that is, the domain of the Fathers or departed spirits who live in co-revelry with Yama and the gods.

Whatever may have been the original conception behind Viṣṇu's nature, his role in the Ṛgveda, while certainly not insignificant, is hardly the dominant one which he came to play in later Hinduism as a member of the great trinity along with Śiva and Brahmā. In this respect his rise to paramount eminence is remarkably parallel to that of Śiva, who, under the name Rudra, is also not a deity of front rank in the Ṛgveda.

Although the usual derivation of Viṣṇu from the root *viṣ* 'be active' with the suffix *-nu*, hence the 'active one', is formally unobjectionable, it implies that *activeness* is the peculiar characteristic of Viṣṇu as compared with other gods, which is hardly tenable. Recently it has been suggested that the name may rather be taken from the root *vi* 'draw lines, guide straight' with *s*-extension, the etymological meaning then being suggestive of Viṣṇu's measured course across the sky.¹

¹ So by H. W. Bailey, 'The Second Stratum of Indo-Iranian Gods' in *Mithraic Studies, Proceedings of the First International Congress of Mithraic Studies*, edited by John R. Hinnells (Manchester, England, Manchester University Press, 1975), vol. I, p. 11, note 24.

I.154

Viṣṇu

1. Now I shall proclaim the heroic feats of Viṣṇu, who traverses the terrestrial regions, wide-striding; who, having stepped across triply, established the higher abode.
2. Viṣṇu, then, for his heroic feat is lauded: moving at will, mountain-haunting, like an animal of the forest, awesome; in whose three broad steps across dwell all beings.
3. Let an inspiring prayer go forth to Viṣṇu, the mountain-dwelling, the wide-striding bull, who alone with only three steps traverses this long, far-extended abode;
4. whose three steps, full of honey and undecaying by nature, rejoice; who alone sustains the triple world: the earth and the heaven - all beings.
5. May I attain to that dear spot of his, where men devoted to the gods rejoice! For that surely is a bond to the wide-stepper, a well of honey in Viṣṇu's highest step.
6. To those dwellings of you two do we yearn to go, where are the cows lusty-horned and unwearied: here that highest step of the wide-striding bull shines lustily down.

Notes

1. 'Now I shall proclaim the heroic feats of Viṣṇu': with this *cf.* the identical phraseology, except, of course, for the difference of deity, that begins the famous hymn to Indra, ṚV I.32.

'the terrestrial regions': the earth as well as the space between the earth and heaven, through which Viṣṇu is supposed to stride to the highest point in heaven in three great steps, whence his oft-repeated epithet 'wide-striding.' In stanza 4 'the earth' is also used in this wider sense; but see the note there dealing with this matter.

'having stepped across triply': The most characteristic feature of Viṣṇu is the three strides with which he traverses the three divisions of the world: earth, the intermediate space and heaven and which accordingly permeate this hymn. By 'triplly' is, of course, to be understood 'with three steps.'

'the higher abode': the highest point to which Viṣṇu ascends, where, according to 5, pious men rejoice and which we are told in ṚV I.155.5 is beyond the visibility of mortals and the flight of birds. But it is not clear exactly what this highest abode is and what relation, if any, it bears to the realm of Yama, where the blessed dead are said to revel in the company of Yama and the gods. In all probability they are identical and only seem to be separate because the two gods have quite unrelated functions.

2. 'like an animal of the forest': Viṣṇu's equation with an animal of the forest here has surely nothing to do with his being called a 'bull' in 3 and 6, as the epithet 'bull' is frequently applied in the Ṛgveda to indicate exceptional strength and virility. Perhaps he is here likened to an animal merely due to the epithet 'mountain-haunting.'

'mountain-haunting': possibly so called because in his second great step, which covers the intermediate region of clouds, he is figuratively conceived as dwelling in the huge cloud-mountains which fill the sky during the monsoons.

3. 'this long, far-extended abode': that is, the entire world of men and gods alike.
4. 'whose three steps, full of honey and undecaying by nature, rejoice': By steps are here meant the three worlds (earth, intermediate space, heaven) along with the inhabitants of each, which are traversed by Viṣṇu. That the three worlds are 'full of honey' is possibly an allusion to the Soma, which ought properly to be a characteristic only of the third or highest world, where the blessed dead indulge in this potion with the gods. It seems to have been extended to all the worlds traversed by Viṣṇu from its prevalence in his favorite abode. The steps are 'undecaying' because they are an unvarying and unchanging phenomenon and, if the prevailing view that Viṣṇu was in origin a solar god be accepted, it may be remarked that to ancient man nothing could have been more dependable and regular in its operation than the sun.

'sustains the triple world: the earth and the heaven - all beings': This passage presents some difficulty: the three categories enumerated do not correspond to the three divisions of the world through which Viṣṇu rises, *viz.* the earth, the intermediate region and the heaven, unless, as with 'the terrestrial regions' in stanza 1, it is assumed that by earth are meant the earth along with the space above it, *i.e.*, the intermediate regions. Perhaps here the earth and sky represent the older Ṛgvedic division of the world into just *two* parts, the third here ('all beings') being but the totality of the other two, as though it were distinct from

them. It may be, then, that in a more remote period there were but two steps which Viṣṇu took to encompass the whole world, which were subsequently extended to three to correspond to the later Ṛgvedic cosmology involving three divisions of the world. Such an assumption, though purely speculative, might in part account for the difficulty of passages like this, where one of the divisions of the world must be taken to include another so as to make three divisions, as in stanza 1 with 'the terrestrial regions.'

5. 'a well of honey': a further allusion to the Soma, mentioned in the note on 4, which is thus implied to be in constant and abundant supply in Viṣṇu's heaven for the enjoyment of gods and mortals alike. That this topmost domain of Viṣṇu is called 'a bond' may mean that it is a connecting link to the god himself, bringing the worshipper into the closest union with him.
6. In this stanza the poet suddenly addresses also Indra, both he and Viṣṇu being closely allied, especially in the ever-repeated contests with the serpent-demon Vṛtra.

'cows lusty-horned and unwearied': By these cows are doubtless meant the rays of the sun, which are often termed 'cows' in the figurative language of the Ṛgveda. They may be called 'lusty-horned and unwearied' to emphasize their strength and undiminished intensity.

Rudra

There are but a few hymns directed to Rudra in the Ṛgveda, yet under the epithet *śiva* 'kindly,' applied to him in X.92.9, by which he comes exclusively to be known later, he was destined to rise to membership in the great triad of Hinduism along with Brahmā and Viṣṇu. This immense prominence to which Rudra later attained is not easy to explain, even though it is paralleled by Viṣṇu, who is also not a deity of first rank in the Ṛgveda. It is more difficult in the case of Rudra because the irascibility and malevolence, which are mentioned as characteristic features of his personality and from which he is frequently implored to desist, seem ill-conducive to rendering him an object of popular and, still less, universal adoration. But perhaps it is the very fear with which so unpredictably malevolent a god was naturally approached by the worshipper that ultimately led to his elevation. The principal cause, however, may lie rather in an aspect of Rudra's character which, while intrinsically contradictory to his potential malevolence and readiness to anger, co-exists with them almost as though in amiable union and harmony with them. It is his possession of certain healing and comforting remedies or medicines, never very clearly delineated, which are endowed with miraculous and powerful properties capable of bringing to the worshipper a long life along with all manner of happiness and freedom from hostility, distress and disease. These medicines with so beneficent effects Rudra is constantly implored to bestow upon his earnest worshipper, who, in the same breath, asks to be spared his deadly missiles and fearsome anger.

It is hard to say with any measure of certainty what was the basic conception behind this dichotomous personality of Rudra. It is often said that he may originally have represented the thunderstorm in its destructive aspect, and refuge is taken in a possible etymology of his name from a root element signifying to 'howl,' so that the name Rudra would literally mean the 'howler,' with reference to the noise of the thunderstorm. But this explanation of the name is not particularly convincing, and others have suggested that it can be derived from an element meaning 'red,' ultimately cognate with the English word. But while his reddish color is frequently alluded to in the hymns, this explanation too, is not entirely satisfactory, and the issue remains unsettled.

I.114

Rudra

1. These prayers we offer to Rudra, the strong, whose hair is braided like a cowrie shell, the ruler of heroes, that there shall be comfort to biped and quadruped, that all shall be prosperous and unharmed in this village.
2. Be gracious unto us, Rudra, and make us joy: we would worship you, ruler of heroes, with homage. What comfort and blessing our father Manu procured for us through sacrifice, that may we attain under your guidance, Rudra!
3. Through worship of the gods may we attain your good will - of you, ruler of heroes, gracious Rudra! With benevolence approach our people: our heroes unharmed, we shall pour an oblation for you.
4. We call upon Rudra to help, the fearsome, who fulfills the sacrifice, the impetuous, the sage. May he cast far away from us his divine wrath! We wish only his good will.
5. With homage we call upon the boar of heaven, the ruddy one, whose hair is braided like a cowrie shell, a fearsome form! Bearing choice remedies in his hand, may he extend to us protection, shelter and cover!
6. These words, sweeter than sweet, are spoken to the Maruts' father, as a means of strengthening Rudra. And give us, O immortal god, the food of mortals! Be gracious unto me, my child and my grandchild!
7. Slay not the great among us nor the small! Slay not the growing among us nor the grown! Slay not our father nor our mother! Harm not our dear selves, Rudra!
8. Harm us not in child and grandchild nor in a living mortal, harm us not in cows nor in horses! Slay not our heroes in anger, Rudra! Provided with an oblation, we call upon you every day.
9. As a cowherd, I have brought to you hymns of praise: give unto us your benevolence, O father of the Maruts! For auspicious is your good will, most gracious. Therefore, do we wish your favor.

10. Far away let be your cow-killing and your man-killing! O ruler of heroes, let your benevolence be upon us! Be gracious unto us and speak for us, O god! And so, doubly strong extend to us protection!
11. We have voiced our homage to him, desirous of his favor. May Rudra hear our call along with the Maruts! May Mitra, Varuṇa, Aditi, Sindhu, Heaven and Earth bestow this upon us!

Notes

2. 'our father Manu': As an ordinary noun *manu* means 'man' and is, in fact, cognate with English 'man'; as a proper name Manu is regarded in the Ṛgveda as the first man and therefore the progenitor of the human race, as Adam among the Hebrews. It was he who instituted the sacrifice, upon which subsequent sacrifices, of course, were founded.
3. 'our heroes unharmed': unharmed because of the good will with which it is expected that Rudra will approach the people.
5. 'the boar of heaven': probably said with reference to his fearsome appearance and might.
6. 'sweeter than sweet': a periphrasis of a type that becomes common in the later Veda (*cf.* 'smaller than the small, greater than the great' of the Upaniṣads) and simply a way of saying 'sweeter than all else that is sweet'; Sāyaṇa is rather specific: 'sweeter than tasty things such as honey, ghee, etc.'

The Maruts are a group of deities, whose number is variously given in the hymns, who are essentially storm gods, embodying the phenomena of the atmosphere: thunder, lightning, wind, rain, storms. As here, they are often called the sons of Rudra, and their mother is the cow Pṛṣṇi, but other parentage is also given in the Ṛgveda.

9. 'As a cowherd': an abbreviated simile, which, if expressed in full, would run: 'As a cowherd brings his cows to the shed, so have I brought hymns of praise to you'; a similar notion is voiced in the hymn to Rātrī (X.127.8).
10. 'speak for us': that is, speak on our behalf, as in I.35.11.

'doubly strong': This epithet, which occurs several times elsewhere in the Ṛgveda, seems simply to mean 'extremely strong,' perhaps 'twice as strong' as others or as under other conditions; thus, it is said of Indra: 'Sing out of him, the

much-invoked, the much-praised; with songs win hither the mighty Indra, of whom, doubly strong, the lofty might upholds heaven and earth, mountains, plains, waters, sun with manly power' (VIII.15.1-2) and of Uṣas (the Dawn): 'Variousy tinted, she is doubly strong, as she reveals herself in the East' (V.80.4). Sāyaṇa has several different, alternative views, that 'double' refers to 'the earth and the intermediate region,' or 'the southern and northern paths' (which he does not explain), or to 'knowledge and action,' the two facets into which the Veda is traditionally divided.

11. 'May Mitra' etc.: a common ending of hymns ascribed to the authorship of the seer Kutsa, as is this hymn; cf. I.115.6.

II.33

Rudra

1. Let your benevolence come hither, O father of the Maruts! Keep us not from sight of the sun! May the hero be merciful unto us on the horse! May we be prolific in offspring, O Rudra!
2. May I attain a hundred winters, O Rudra, through the most comforting remedies given by you! Drive away from us enmity, farther away distress, away diseases - in all directions!
3. You are the most glorious in glory of all that is born, strongest of the strong, O wielder of the thunderbolt. Bring us across to the further shore of distress for our well-being! Keep away all onsets of infirmity!
4. May we not anger you, Rudra, with our homage, nor with ill-praise, O bull, nor with joint invocation! Cause our heroes to thrive with your remedies! I hear of you as the best physician of physicians.
5. He who invokes him with invocations, with oblations, thinking 'May I appease Rudra with my laudations!' - may he, tenderhearted and easy to invoke - reddish brown, with goodly moustaches - not consign us to *that* mentality!
6. The bull, accompanied by the Maruts, has made me, desiring his aid, rejoice with more vigorous strength. Free of infirmity may I attain to him, as to the shade in time of heat: I would seek to win Rudra's benevolence.
7. Where is that gracious hand of yours, Rudra, which is healing and soothing, remover of infirmity that comes from the gods? May you be merciful to me now, O bull!
8. To the reddish brown, whitish bull I am sending forth a mighty eulogy of the mighty one. Pay homage to the radiant one with acts of homage! We sing the fearsome name of Rudra.
9. With firm limbs, many-formed, fierce, reddish brown, he adorns himself with bright gold ornaments. The divine lordship shall not depart from Rudra, ruler of this vast world!

10. Worthily you bear missiles and bow, worthily a necklace adorable, all-colored. Worthily you wield all this power: surely there is nothing mightier than you, Rudra.
11. Praise the famed youth sitting in the battle-chariot, assaulting and fierce like a terrible beast! Be gracious unto the singer, Rudra, when praised! Let your missiles bestrew another than us!
12. Even as a son bows in turn to his father who approaches in greeting him, Rudra, I do sing of you, giver of much, true lord; praised, bestow upon us your remedies!
13. The pure remedies which you have, O Maruts, the ones that are most comforting, O bulls, that serve as a joy, which Manu, our father, chose - these as the comfort and the blessing of Rudra I do wish.
14. May Rudra's dart avoid us! May the mighty ill-will of the fearsome one pass by! Slacken your bow for your bountiful patrons! O gracious one, be gracious unto child and grandchild!
15. O reddish brown bull, so well-known, since, O god, you do not become angry and do not slay, listen to our invocation here, Rudra: loudly would we speak at the assembly, having goodly heroes!

Notes

1. 'O father of the Maruts': on the Maruts and Rudra as their father, v. note at I.114.6.
 'May the hero be merciful unto us on the horse': The hero is, of course, Rudra, who is requested to be beneficent toward the warrior on horseback. But other renditions of this passage, which is not free from obscurity, are possible.
2. 'May I attain a hundred winters': that is, 'years.' which, as in all the Indo-European cultures, are often thus computed by seasons of the year in the Ṛg-veda, where, however, it is more usual to do so by autumns rather than winters as here or by springs. In X.161.4 all three seasons occur: 'Live a hundred autumns thriving, a hundred winters, a hundred springs' etc.
3. 'O wielder of the thunderbolt': literally 'who have the thunderbolt on your arm,' an epithet otherwise characteristically applied to Indra.

4. 'May we not anger you' etc.: The worshipper implies that the homage he is bringing to Rudra may be inadequate or perhaps too oft-repeated in the eyes of the irascible god and hence rouse his anger; he is likewise concerned that his words of praise be looked upon as ill-suited or insufficiently laudatory or marked by some other unsuspected flaw, and finally that Rudra may find objection to any other deities whom he may chance to mention in the course of his hymn to Rudra. As it happens, this hymn does not mention other deities apart from the Maruts, who are unlikely to stir the god's wrath, inasmuch as they are Rudra's own sons, but in the final stanza of I.114 there occurs a sextuple apostrophe which, were that hymn the composition of our poet, is just the sort of 'joint invocation' whose impression upon Rudra he fears might rouse him to baleful anger.

'O bull': The gods, especially Indra, are often termed 'bull' as here and frequently throughout the hymn, as an epitome of masculinity and virility, a bull being regarded as a veritable incorporation of these desirable virtues; cf. similar use of 'boar' in I.114.5.

5. A difficult stanza and hence variously rendered. According to this rendition there is a break or alteration in the construction which leaves the clause 'he who invokes . . . ' hanging in the air. The logical construction would be 'May he (Rudra) not consign us to the mentality of that one who invokes' etc. The sense of the passage is 'Don't think me to be one of those who imagines he can get on your good side merely by praising you!'

'with goodly moustaches': v. discussion of this expression in the notes to RV II.12.6.

7. 'infirmity that comes from the gods': that is, infirmity visited upon the worshipper by the gods due to some unspecified infraction on his part or even to Rudra's irascibility and malevolence.
9. 'The divine lordship shall not depart from Rudra': that is, Rudra will always possess supreme sovereignty over the world.
11. Other gods are also called 'youths,' among them Indra and Agni as well as Rudra's sons, the Maruts.

'like a terrible beast': What animal is meant is, of course, purely conjectural. Sāyaṇa identifies it as the lion, but it could equally well be a buffalo or an elephant.

12. 'Even as a son bows' etc.: Traditionally in India it is the father or elder who greets the younger, who then returns the greeting. In this stanza the worshipper is compared to the son saluting his father, here in the shape of Rudra. Rudra, thus greeted by his filial worshipper, manifests his paternal affection by offering

him a boon in the form of the curative medicines referred to in the next stanza.

13. Note that here Rudra's sons, the Maruts, are said to possess the healing remedies desired by the worshipper; moreover, they, like their father, are called 'bulls.' 'which Manu, our father, chose': *v.* note on I.114.2; since he was the first man, it is natural that he would have had the first opportunity to choose these remedies when offered by Rudra.
15. 'Loudly would we speak' etc.: This is a favorite conclusion of the seer Gṛtsamada, author of the hymns of the Second Maṇḍala; *cf.* also II.16.9.

VII.46

Rudra

1. Bring these songs to Rudra, whose bow is sturdy, whose arrows are swift, the self-dependent god, unconquerable conqueror, ordainer, whose weapons are sharp! May he harken unto us!
2. For by his rule he perceives creatures on the earth, by his universal sovereignty those in the heaven. Friendly to us, come to our friendly doors! Visit no illness upon our offspring, Rudra!
3. That lightning-flash of yours which, cast down from the sky, traverses the earth - may it spare us! You have a thousand remedies, you of goodly understanding: harm us not in children and grandchildren!
4. Slay us not, Rudra, give us not up! May we not be in the toils of your anger! Grant us to share the sacred grass: fame among the living! Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

3. 'of goodly understanding': The Vedic word has been much discussed, and very varied interpretations of it given by scholars, ranging from 'appeaser of the wind' to 'well-beloved,' including variations of the interpretation adopted here, which, on the whole, seems the most probable.
4. 'Grant us to share' etc.: The sacrifice is viewed as an arrangement, a sort of contract, between the worshipper and the god to whom it is offered. Each, then, has something to gain from it: the god the sacrificial meal and its strengthening essence, the worshipper the answer to his request, whether heroic sons, wealth, prosperity, security from danger, fame, etc. In this passage 'sacred grass' is said metaphorically for the sacrifice or sacrificial meal itself, with the implication also of its effects, which the worshipper requests be shared according to the established norm and which for him consist of 'fame among the living.'

The Maruts

The Maruts are a group of deities, in one hymn said to number thrice seven, in another thrice sixty (!), all identical in appearance, who personify the phenomena connected with the storm: the thunder, lightning, wind and rain. They are the sons of Rudra (the great god Śiva of later Hinduism), for which reason they are often called Rudriyas or, by a curious Vedic idiom, Rudras, the plural of their father's name. Their mother is the cow Pṛṣṇi, who is sometimes explained as representing the thundercloud, but also, especially by Indian commentators, the earth. Other parentage, however, is also ascribed to them, as, for example, that their mother is Sindhu (by which may be meant the Sindhu River or the ocean) or that they were born of the laughter of the lightning. The worship of the Maruts is occasionally characterized by fear of their irascibility, a trait which they seemingly inherited from their father Rudra, and they are accordingly implored to restrain their harmful and destructive impulses.

They are depicted as warriors in panoply and as the allies of Indra in his confrontations with the serpent Vṛtra, several hymns being addressed to Indra and the Maruts conjointly. The brightness and splendor of their appearance are much dwelt upon, no doubt in allusion to the lightning which constitutes part of their weaponry in the form of their spears. But the allusion may be also to the glistening drops of rain, the production of which is their chief benefaction to their worshippers.

Perhaps indicative also of the brightness commonly associated with the Maruts is their name, which, according to one of the many etymologies proposed, means literally 'the shining or glistening ones,' from a root *mar* 'shine, glisten,' which is found in a number of interrelated words in Greek, although hardly elsewhere in Indo-European. Another suggestion, however, connects the element *Mar-* of their name not with this postulated root, but with a homonymous root *mar* 'sea' (as in Latin *mare* 'sea') in combination with a root *ut* 'blow'; thus, 'those who blow from the sea,' an explanation to which some textual corroboration may be given by RV V.55.5, which speaks of the Maruts bringing rain from the sea.¹ A very different explanation from these is seen in the attempt to connect their name with that of the Roman god Mars, which appears in an earlier form *Māvors* (cf. Virgil's *Māvortis in antrō* 'in Mars' grotto,' Aeneid VIII.630) and in the Oscan language (a sister of Latin) as *Māmers*, but difficult phonological considerations are involved, which render this equation less probable.

¹ According to the suggestion of Paul Thieme in 'Die Wurzel *vat*' in *Asiatica, Festschrift Friedrich Weller* (Leipzig, 1954), p. 665.

I.85

The Maruts

1. They who adorn themselves like women - the sons of Rudra, coursers on the advance - are of wondrous works: for the Maruts have made the two worlds to increase. Impetuous heroes, they rejoice at the assemblies.
2. Having grown, they have attained greatness. In the sky the Rudras have made a seat for themselves. Singing their song and arousing Indra's prowess, they, whose mother is Pṛṣṇi, have put on their splendors.
3. When they, whose mother is the cow, brighten themselves with unguents, on their bodies the bright ones put weapons that glitter far and wide: they drive every adversary away, along their tracks flows the ghee.
4. Goodly warriors who shine far and wide with their spears, causing even the unshakeable to shake by their might, - when, O Maruts, swift as thought, moving in manly hosts, you have yoked to your chariots the spotted ones,
5. - when you have yoked to your chariots the spotted ones, O Maruts, making your stone-missile to speed in battle, they let loose the streams of the reddish cloud and moisten the earth far and wide, like a skin.
6. May your coursers, swift-running, bring you hither! Swift-flying, go forth by your arms! Sit on the sacred grass: a broad seat is made for you! Exhilarate yourselves, Maruts, on the sweet juice!
7. Having inherent strength, they grew in greatness. They have mounted the firmament, made it a broad seat for themselves. When Viṣṇu favored the bull, reeling with exhilaration, they sat upon their beloved sacred grass like birds.
8. Just like heroes, like warriors constantly on the go, like those who seek after fame in battles, they array themselves. All creatures fear the Maruts: men of glistening aspect, they are like kings.
9. When the skilful Tvaṣṭṛ turned out the thunderbolt, well-made, of gold, thousand-edged, Indra took it unto himself to perform works for man: he slew Vṛtra, drove out the flood of waters.

10. Upward they push the well by their might, split asunder even the firm mountain. Blowing their pipe, the Maruts, bountiful ones, perform warlike deeds in the exhilaration of Soma.
11. Aslant they push the well in that direction, poured the spring for thirsty Gotama. Hither they come to him with their favor, the bright-rayed ones: they satisfied the desire of the sage with their bestowals.
12. What shelters there are for the one that has toiled for you, these grant threefold unto the worshipper! Unto us extend these, O Maruts! Bestow upon us wealth of goodly heroes, O bulls!

Notes

1. 'at the assemblies': The interpretation of the Vedic word thus rendered has been much discussed; *v.* note on it at RV V.63.2.
2. 'having grown': probably from the imbibition of Soma juice offered in the sacrifice; most unlikely is Sāyaṇa's interpretation 'inaugurated [by the gods],' which is based on a homonymous Vedic word.
 'singing their song and arousing Indra's prowess': The Maruts' song is, of course, the sound of the thunder and wind they produce, here identified with a song sung in praise of Indra, their close companion, and to stir his special qualities of strength and virility - his 'Indra-ness,' as the text says - in his combat against Vṛtra. Sāyaṇa here refers to a passage in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (III.20) which speaks of the Maruts standing by Indra at the time of the great contest with Vṛtra, whereas the other gods had deserted him due to the fear Vṛtra had inspired in them by his exhalations; but the Maruts urged him on to the conflict with the words 'Strike him, Blessed One, smite him, show your prowess!'
3. 'along their tracks flows the ghee': By 'ghee' is figuratively meant the rain which flows after them in abundance and is as rich and nourishing as ghee; *cf.* similar usage in the hymn to Parjanya, V.83.8.
4. 'Goodly warriors': It is doubtful whether 'warriors' is the correct rendition of the Vedic word; in spite of its frequent occurrence, its precise meaning is elusive, and its etymology has been explained in several entirely different ways. The meaning 'warrior' is founded on the assumption that the Vedic word is descended from an Indo-European root signifying 'fight' corresponding to the Greek μάχ- to be seen in *tauromachy* ('bullfighting') and *Batrachomyomachy* ('Battle of the Frogs and Mice,' the name of a parody on the Iliad attributed to Homer).

‘who shine far and wide with their spears’: The spears which the Maruts carry on their shoulders (ṚV V.57.6) represent the lightning-flashes of the thunderstorms.

‘the spotted ones’: Perhaps ‘mares,’ perhaps ‘deer’ are meant, the word used to designate them being just a feminine adjective meaning ‘spotted’; it has seemed preferable, therefore, to retain the ambiguity in English by rendering simply ‘the spotted ones.’ So also in the opening clause of the next stanza, which repeats the latter part of this stanza.

5. ‘they let loose the streams of the reddish cloud’: Note the switch from the second person to the third, which, though harsh and abrupt in English, is extremely common in the Ṛgveda; cf. ṚV V.55.2 and VII.103.5. The word ‘cloud’ is not expressed in the original, and almost all translators supply ‘horse’ on the basis of parallel passages in the Ṛgveda, e.g., V.83.6 (‘Grant to us, O Maruts, the rain of heaven! Cause the stallion’s streams to flow abundantly!’), but this need not be the case here: the ‘reddish one’ might as readily be referred to the cloud to which a reddish hue is imparted by the frequent flashes of lightning cast by the Maruts from their shoulders. Sāyaṇa, incidentally, makes the adjective refer to ‘the sun or Agni in the form of lightning’: ‘You [he changes the third person back to the second!] release streams of rain-water from the radiant sun or Agni in the form of lightning.’

‘like a skin’: that is, like a water-skin, the skin of an animal used to store water, such as is common throughout the entire Orient; v. note on ṚV V.83.7.

6. ‘go forth by your arms’: that is, using your arms as wings.
7. ‘When Viṣṇu favored the bull, reeling with exhilaration’: By ‘the bull’ is meant Indra, who in his battles with the great demon Vṛtra was often helped by Viṣṇu; his ‘reeling with exhilaration’ is due to the immense quantities of Soma he is said to have drunk prior to these taxing engagements.
9. ‘he slew Vṛtra, drove out the flood of waters’: It should be borne in mind that Indra slew Vṛtra in order to release the waters which that serpent-demon enclosed within his ample belly and so withheld from man. The release of these waters was also a creative act on Indra’s part, as various elements of the cosmos issued forth along with the waters (v. ṚV I.32, the great Indra hymn, for the details of this myth).
- 10-11. Sāyaṇa relates how the sage Gotama, presumably the same Gotama to whose authorship this hymn is traditionally ascribed, was once stricken with thirst and asked the Maruts for water. Harkening to his call, they brought a well or bucket of theirs to the spot where the seer was, made a hole and poured the contents therein and so quenched his thirst.

10. 'Upwards they push the well': Doubtless the well is envisioned as a water-skin such as referred to in stanza 5, but perhaps as a bucket or pail.

'split asunder even the firm mountain': The mountain is a frequent figure in the Ṛgveda for the cloud; the Maruts split the solid-looking cloud-mountains with their spears, *i.e.*, their flashes of lightning.

'Blowing their pipe': The whistling of the wind in the thunderstorm is fancied as a tune played by the Maruts on their pipe. Sāyaṇa thinks the instrument is a sort of *vīṇā* with a hundred (!) strings, but the verb 'blowing,' unless it is employed here in the generalized sense of playing any instrument, is ill-suited to this interpretation.

11. 'Aslant they push the well in that direction': They tilted the water-skin so that the water would flow out into the hole they had made; 'in that direction' probably means 'toward where Gotama was.' The second half of this stanza, as it has been rendered here, also refers to the incident mentioned above, the verb 'they come' being a historical present. But if, by an alternative rendition, the second verb 'they satisfied' is translated 'may they satisfy,' then the words would no longer refer to Gotama in the particular predicament noted by Sāyaṇa, but would be general in their application, essentially futural: 'Hither they come with their favor . . . may they satisfy the desire of the sage,' etc.

12. There appear to be three categories for whom the dispensation of protection is requested: 1. the one that has toiled for you, *i.e.*, performed the manual operations of the sacrifice, 2. the worshipper, *i.e.*, the patron of the sacrifice, and 3. Gotama himself.

'O bulls': All the gods in the Ṛgveda at one time or another are called 'bulls,' which is simply a graphic way of denoting great virility, but the metaphor is particularly appropriate to the Maruts as rain-bringing gods, who inseminate the earth, as it were, with their fructifying streams.

I.172

The Maruts

1. Bright be your advance, bright with favor, O bounteous ones, O Maruts, who have the serpent's lustre!
2. Far away, O bounteous ones, that straight-going arrow of yours, O Maruts! Far away the stone which you cast!
3. Do spare Tṛṇaskanda's people, O bounteous ones! Raise us up that we may live!

Notes

3. It is not known who Tṛṇaskanda was, nor does his name occur anywhere else in the Ṛgveda. It may be presumed that he was a king or prince, on whose behalf this brief hymn was recited. Although as an ordinary adjective it is also nowhere else attested, *tṛṇaskandá* would mean literally 'hopping or jumping about in the grass' and, when employed as a noun, possibly a 'grasshopper' (!) or something of the sort, but this is obviously unsuited to the context. However, Sāyaṇa, putting a somewhat different sense to it, takes the word as an epithet and, by one alternative, interprets thus: 'Protect the people (children, servants, etc.) of me quivering like a blade of grass', supposedly out of fear of the Maruts' irascibility or the harm they may wreak with their storms. But Wilson, who generally follows Sāyaṇa fairly closely, understands Sāyaṇa's explanation figuratively and translates: 'protect my people (although I be) as insignificant as grass'. The problem is, of course, unsolvable, but considering the word to be a personal name seems to be the most reasonable solution.

V.55

The Maruts

1. The worshipful Maruts, with spears blazing, with gold on their breasts, have put on their lofty power. They go with horses well-guided and speedy. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
2. You have put on strength by yourselves, as you know: loftily, O great ones, broadly you reign far and wide. Also the space between they have measured far and wide by their might. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
3. Born together, with goodly figure, and grown up together, the heroes have increased even more in beauty, like the rays of the far-gleaming sun. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
4. Worthy to be praised, O Maruts, is your greatness, worthy to be seen, like the appearance of the sun. Place us also among the immortals! - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
5. You cause it to rise up from the sea, O Maruts, you cause the rain to rain, you who are richly laden. Your cows do not go dry, O wonder-workers. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
6. When you have yoked the spotted ones to the chariot-poles as your horses and fastened on your golden garments, then you cast all your competitors far and wide. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
7. Let not mountains, not rivers keep you back! Where you have resolved, O Maruts, right there do you go: you even go 'round heaven and earth. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
8. What was before, O Maruts, and what is now, what is said and what is recited - of all this you are aware. - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.
9. Have mercy on us, O Maruts: slay us not! To us extend ample shelter! Have regard for our hymn of praise, our friendship! - Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor.

10. Do lead us unto greater welfare, away from afflictions, O Maruts, you who are being sung! Relish our gift of oblation, you who are worthy of worship! May we be the possessors of riches!

Notes

1. 'The worshipful Maruts . . . have put on their lofty power': This rather obscure expression, which recurs in nearly identical form in stanza 2, may refer to the mounting intensity and fury of the thunderstorm through its crescendos of thunder, lightning and wind, here depicted in the gathering of the Maruts' strength and donning of their weapons.

'Their chariots have rolled after them going in splendor': This line is a refrain which marks the conclusion of every stanza of the hymn except the last. But while it is fairly closely integrated with the sense of the preceding lines here, its subsequent repetitions are purely mechanical, without regard to the foregoing thematic material; hence the use of the dash to reflect the break in thought.

5. 'you who are richly laden': The meaning of the Vedic word is somewhat doubtful, perhaps literally 'having or possessing a filling', *i.e.*, of the nutrient rain brought by the Maruts, but to say 'possessing water', as does Sāyaṇa, seems unnecessarily to specify what is really implicit.

'Your cows do not go dry': 'Cows' is used figuratively for 'clouds', which yield milk in the form of water.

6. 'you have yoked the spotted ones . . . as your horses': Some say 'the spotted gazelles', but there is no certain proof that the Maruts' draft animals were gazelles or antelopes; *v.* note at RV I.85.4.

8. 'what is said and what is recited': that is, what is spoken in ordinary parlance as well as what is spoken at the sacrifice.

V.57

The Maruts

1. Come hither for our welfare, O Rudras, accompanied by Indra, all together, with your golden chariots! This prayer from us is welcome to you, just as springs from heaven to the thirsty one, longing for water.
2. You are provided with axes, spears - you wise ones - with goodly bows, with arrows, quivers, goodly horses, goodly chariots, you whose mother is Pṛṣṇi: with your goodly arms, Maruts, come in splendor!
3. You shake wealth from the heaven, from the mountains for the worshipper; the woods bow down in fear of your advance. You whose mother is Pṛṣṇi make the earth to tremble, when, O mighty ones, you have yoked the spotted ones in splendor.
4. Impetuous as the wind are the Maruts, garmented in rain, like twins quite alike, with goodly ornaments, golden horses, reddish horses, free of blemish, full of energy, in greatness wide as the heaven.
5. Abounding in drops, covered with unguents, bounteous, of glistening aspect, whose gifts are not to be taken away, well-born by birth, with gold on their breasts - heaven's singers have gained an immortal name for themselves.
6. Spears are upon your shoulders, Maruts; power, might, strength are placed in your arms, manly thoughts in your heads, weapons in your chariots. Every splendor is embellished upon your bodies.
7. Gift of cows, of horses, of chariots, of goodly heroes, gold, you have given us, Maruts: do bring us recognition, O Rudriyas! May I partake of your divine favor!
8. O heroes, Maruts, be merciful unto us! O you who are rich in bounty, O immortal ones, O knowers of the Ṛta, O you who truly hear, O sages, youths, O you whose are the lofty mountains, you growing loftily!

Notes

1. 'just as springs from heaven to the thirsty one, longing for water': Sāyaṇa refers this to the legend of Gotama, whose thirst impelled him to request water of the Maruts (*v.* note on ṚV I.85.10-11), but it need not be taken so specifically.
2. The Maruts, in short, are provided with all the paraphernalia of warriors ready to do battle; *cf.* also stanza 6 below, which has the same tenor.
3. 'You shake wealth from the heaven': The figure is that of shaking fruits from a tree laden with ripened fruits.
 'the spotted ones': regarding the identification of the animals that pull the Maruts' chariots, *v.* note on ṚV I.85.4.

The Aśvins

The Aśvins, also called Nāsatyas, are twin-gods, divine physicians, whose function is to help the distressed and afflicted. They are depicted as wonder-workers, and the list of their wondrous deeds is long. These marvelous deeds are often alluded to, and the singular dearth of detail in these allusions suggests that the deeds were all well-known both to the composers of the hymns and their hearers.

That the Aśvins belong to the older strata of the Indo-Aryan pantheon is apparent from the occurrence of their alternative name Nāsatyas in the cuneiform treaty between the Mitanni and the Hittites of the fifteenth century B.C., where they are called to witness along with Mitra, Varuṇa and Indra. This alternative name occurs in the Avesta in the singular, as one of the Daēvas, whose worship is expressly forbidden to the Zoroastrians. Though the etymology of this name is uncertain, it may with tempting plausibility be derived from a noun **nasati* 'saving, rescuing, deliverance', according to which the literal meaning would be 'the two who are concerned with saving or rescuing,' *i.e.*, the saviors, quite like the epithet σωτήρες 'saviors' applied to the twin-gods of Greek mythology, Castor and Polydeuces (called Pollux by the Romans), with whom the Aśvins share several striking features. Thus, Castor and Polydeuces are called the 'sons of heaven' (Διὸς κούροι, latinized to Dioscuri), as are also the Aśvins, and they too, are known for the protection they afford to travellers, especially those at sea. The Dioscuri are represented as riding on white horses, but while the Aśvins are not directly connected with horses, beyond the fact that their chariot is sometimes said to be drawn by horses, their name etymologically means either 'possessing horses, rich in horses' or 'horsemen'. If this myth is indeed a joint heritage by the Greeks and Indo-Aryans from the Indo-European period, this name may be a mythological reminiscence of a trait of these twin-gods, which, though retained in the Greek version of the myth, was preserved by the Indo-Aryans only in this epithet, which became the twin-gods' most familiar name. This would explain why the name Aśvins, from the focal point of the Ṛgveda, is really meaningless, the fossil of a bygone age.

Many attempts have been made to connect the Aśvins with various natural phenomena, such as the day and the night, the sun and the moon, the morning and evening star, as well as the light and dark phases of the twilight. But the underlying nature of the Aśvins has always been a puzzle, even from the time of Yāska and his predecessors, who had many divergent views as to what these twin-divinities represented. Perhaps, however, they have in

reality *no* basis in nature, but were from the beginning simply helpers in distress, even mortal twins who were elevated to godhead in consequence of their wondrous deeds, similarly to the Ṛbhus.

The Aśvins were very popular deities, some fifty hymns of the Ṛgveda being dedicated to their magnification and their names being referred to with great frequency in other hymns. The obvious reason for their popularity lies in their role as helpers of those in distress or need, rejuvenators of the aged and decrepit, protectors of the weak and deliverers from disease and bodily affliction. It is remarkable that the recipients of their benefactions are generally named, which inevitably leaves the impression that they were not mythological fictions, but actual people.

VII.68

The Aśvins

1. Come hither, resplendent Aśvins, with your goodly horses, O wondrous twins, relishing the songs of one who is devoted to you both and enjoy our oblations brought before you!
2. The exhilarating juices have been made ready for you: come now to enjoy my oblation! Hence the invocations of a stranger: hear us!
3. Your chariot, which has the speed of thought, is moving across the heavenly spaces, O Aśvins, with a hundred blessings, coming for us, O twins whose treasure is Sūryā.
4. When this lofty stone that goes to the gods, which presses the Soma for you, speaks unto you, may the sage turn you two fair ones hither with his oblations!
5. Marvelous is the refreshment which you have - with it you kept down the immense heat for Atri, who, being dear to you, receives your favor.
6. And for aging Cyavāna, a giver of oblations, there has been that recompense from you two in that you bestow comeliness upon him, whose blessings are from now on.
7. And that Bhujyu, O Aśvins, his ill-natured companions left in the mid-ocean: the avaricious one, devoted to you both, saved him.
8. Even the languishing wolf you aided, and you heard Śayu when being called - you two who caused to swell his cow, though barren, with your power, your skills, like the Waters.
9. This singer here sings with hymns of praise, waking up at the start of the dawns, with goodly prayers. With refreshment, with draughts of milk may the cow cause him to thrive! - Protect us always with well-being.

Notes

2. 'The exhilarating juices have been made ready': said with reference to the Soma juice.
 'Hence the invocations of a stranger': that is, away with them, pay no heed to them.
3. 'O twins, whose treasure is Sūryā': Sūryā is the daughter of Sūrya, the sun-god, and she is here conceived as the common wife of the Aśvins.
4. 'When this lofty stone . . . speaks unto you': The stone for pressing the Soma is meant; it is personified, the sound it makes during the process of pounding the Soma stalks being its voice, as it were, calling out to the Aśvins; on the sound of the Soma stones, cf. I.118.3: 'hear this noise of the stone!'
5. 'Marvelous is the refreshment which you have - with it you kept down the immense heat for Atri': Atri is one of the many persons named in the hymns to the Aśvins as having received their help. But were it not for allusions in other hymns, less chary of detail than this passage, it would not be possible to say anything at all about the nature of the distressful circumstance from which they rescued Atri. Not only are necessary details lacking in this passage, but the meaning of the key-word,¹ which occurs nowhere else in the Ṛgveda, is wholly in doubt and consequently also the exact sense of the words with which it is construed. With the help of I.116.8, although it is far from being an exemplar of clarity and a repository of detail, a skeleton of a story can be tentatively given. That passage may be translated: 'With cold you kept away the burning fire; you offered him nourishment consisting of a beverage: you Aśvins brought up to safety Atri, who had been brought down into an abyss, along with his whole group'. From this it may be gathered that Atri and others were cast into a fiery abyss, presumably by demons, whence they were all rescued in some unspecified fashion, after the searing heat of the flames had first been mitigated by something cold, perhaps snow or hail. The story of Atri is alluded to again at I.118.7: 'You two upon Atri, who had been brought to a burning place, bestowed nourishment, favor, O Aśvins'. In the present passage the word 'heat' is supplied after the adjective 'immense' on the basis of the two stanzas cited above. The 'refreshment' referred to must be the same that is alluded to in this expanded account as 'nourishment consisting of a beverage'. Obviously it is not possible to determine its nature, as it is some potion peculiar to the Aśvins with magical restorative properties.

¹ *māhiṣvantam*, rendered here 'immense' with *agnīm* ('fire, heat') understood, as suggested by Theodor Baunack, 'Über einige Wunderthaten der Aśvin', *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 50 (1896), p. 271.

6. The legend referred to here concerns Cyavāna, apparently a pious devotee of the Ásvins, who had become old and decrepit, and was left to himself. The Ásvins restored his youth by giving him a new body and so rendered him appealing to the young of the opposite sex. These amplificatory details may be learned from I.116.10, which runs as follows: 'And from decrepit Cyavāna, O Nāsatyas, you stripped off the body like a garment: you extended the life of one who had been abandoned, O wondrous twins, then you made him the husband of young girls'. This story is referred to also in other hymns to the Ásvins, as, for example, I.117.13: 'You two, O Ásvins, made aging Cyavāna young again by your powers' and even more briefly at I.118.6: 'You . . . made Cyavāna young again'.

'whose blessings are from now on': that is, the blessings of his rejuvenescence are to last indefinitely in the future.

7. Though the story of Bhujyu is the most frequently referred to of all those connected with the Ásvins, there are yet lacking many details necessary for a complete and meaningful picture. The fullest version appears at I.116.3-5: 'Tugra, O Ásvins, abandoned Bhujyu in a rainshower (?), as does one who had died, his wealth. Him you conveyed in animated (?) ships floating in the intermediate region, free of water *i.e.*, not letting water in, watertight. You conveyed him with birds wandering on for three nights and three days, O Nāsatyas, to the dry land on the other shore of the moist sea, with three hundred-foot chariots with six horses. You acted like heroes there in the sea which is without support, without a place to stand on, without anything to grab hold of, when, O Ásvins, you conveyed Bhujyu home, who had mounted your hundred-oared ship'. Though not everything in this account is crystal-clear, it is certain that Tugra, who was Bhujyu's father, had something to do with his being abandoned in mid-ocean by the wicked companions mentioned in the present passage. His father's implication is also apparent from I.119.8, which states: 'You two went to him grieving in a faraway place, crushed by his own father's abandonment of him'. It may be conjectured that for some reason, nowhere related, Tugra wanted to rid himself of his son, whom he accordingly sent off to some distant place. Having gone to this extremity, he repented, and as he had been a loyal devotee of the Ásvins, was successful in securing their help in the safe return of his son.

'the avaricious one': The meaning of this word is entirely in doubt. It is based on the analysis of the Vedic word as literally 'not giving', but it is by no means clear why Tugra, to whom it must refer, is termed avaricious.

8. 'Even the languishing wolf you aided': Sāyaṇa takes the word *vṛka*, here translated in its literal meaning 'wolf', in several alternative senses, one of them the name of a seer, Vṛka, who had exhausted himself with the performance of sacrificial acts, but there is no reason why it cannot be understood

literally: the Aśvins might as well have brought help to a wolf in distress as to a quail about to be eaten by a wolf, as told at I.116.14 ('You two fellows, O Nāsatyas, set free a quail from the mouth of a wolf') and also summarily at I.118.8, *q.v.*

Almost nothing is known about Śayu beyond what is said here, from which it may be gathered that he was wasting away due to the failure of his cow to provide him milk; *v.* also I.116.22: 'Even for languorous Śayu, O Nāsatyas, with your skills you caused to swell his barren cow' and similarly I.118.8.

'like the Waters': This comparative phrase, though annexed to the words 'caused to swell his cow', does not imply the same agency as with the fructification of Śayu's cow. Perhaps no agency is really thought of, the basis of comparison being simply the notion of the swelling of the cow on the one hand and the swelling of the Waters in the rainy season on the other.

9. 'The singer here sings with hymns of praise': The singer meant is the author of this hymn, Vasiṣṭha, to whom are ascribed all the hymns of Maṇḍala VII.

'may the cow cause him to thrive': The cow referred to is the *dākṣiṇā* or fee paid to Vasiṣṭha for performing the sacrifice.

'Protect us always with well-being': This is in the plural and hence not directed specifically to the Aśvins. It is a favorite refrain of the Vasiṣṭhas, and it appears as a general request for divine blessings at the conclusion of most of the hymns of this Maṇḍala.

I.118

The Ásvins

1. May your chariot, O Ásvins, flying with eagles, with goodly graciousness, with goodly favor, come hither - that which is speedier than the thought of mortal, three-seated, O bulls, with the speed of the wind!
2. With your three-seated chariot, three-ply, three-wheeled, smooth-rolling, come hither! Cause to swell our cows, quicken our horses, cause our hero to thrive for us, O Ásvins!
3. With your chariot on a forward course, smooth-rolling, may you, wondrous twins, hear this noise of the stone! Why else do the sages born previously say you are the first to come in the face of need, O Ásvins?
4. May the eagles bring you hither, O Ásvins, yoked to your chariot - swift fliers, who, like vultures in the sky crossing the waters, bring you to the sacrificial meal, O Nāsatyas!
5. May the youthful daughter of Sūrya, being pleased, mount your chariot here, fellows! May your horses, splendid fliers - reddish birds - bring you around toward us!
6. You delivered Vandana by your marvelous powers, delivered Rebha, O wondrous twins, bulls, by your skills. You rescued the son of Tugra from the ocean, made Cyavāna young again.
7. You two upon Atri, who had been brought to a burning place, bestowed nourishment, favor, O Ásvins. For Kaṇva, whose eyes were covered over, you restored the sight, having relished his goodly praise.
8. You caused the cow to swell for Śayu of old, who sought your help, O Ásvins. You relieved the quail of her anxiety. You restored Viśpalā's leg.
9. You gave to Pedu the white horse, sped on by Indra, serpent-slaying, O Ásvins, loud-neighing, overwhelper of the foe, fierce, thousand-winning, a bull, with sturdy limbs.

10. Verily do we invoke you well-born twins for your favor, O Aśvins, seeking your help. Come hither unto us with your wealth-laden chariot for our welfare, relishing our songs!
11. Come unto us with the fresh speed of an eagle, O Nāsatyas, together! For I invoke you, having offered an oblation at the break of the ever-recurrent dawn.

Notes

1. 'flying with eagles': Were it not for stanza 4 which states 'May the eagles bring you hither', it would perhaps be more natural to render 'flying like an eagle', *i.e.*, with eagle-like speed, which is the alternative explanation given by Sāyaṇa. Ludwig too, adopts the latter possibility: 'mit dem flug des falcken'.
 'three-seated': Lommel points out that the chariot has two seats for the Aśvins and one for their beloved Sūryā.¹ The Aśvins' chariot, incidentally, was made for them by the Ṛbhus, *v.* I.20.3 and IV.33.8 (and note); oddly enough at IV.36.1 we are told that this chariot had neither horses nor reins: 'Without horses arisen, without reins, the three-wheeled chariot, worthy of praise, goes 'round the space'.
- 'speedier than the thought of mortal': *cf.* VII.68.3: 'Your chariot, which has the speed of thought, is moving across the heavenly spaces'.
3. On the noise of the pressing-stone, *cf.* VII.68.4 and note.
6. 'You delivered Vandana by your marvelous powers': Vandana is one of the many persons whom the Aśvins helped out of a calamitous and hopeless situation. But though Vandana is often mentioned in the hymns to the Aśvins, it is not at all certain exactly what was the calamity which befell him or what was the nature of the help afforded to him by the Aśvins. It seems that, when he was weak and decrepit with age, he was hidden or buried (!), by Asuras or demons (according to Sāyaṇa), in a well or other underground place, whence he was brought out, fully restored, by the Aśvins, shining like the sun when it comes forth from the darkness. This sketchy and vague account is pieced together from what is said at I.116.11; 117.5 and 119.7, each of which, however, is deficient by obscurity or laconism of wording.

¹ *Gedichte des Rig-Veda: Auswahl und Übersetzung* von Herman Lommel (München, Otto Wilhelm Barth-Verlag, 1955), p. 127, Anm. 20.

'[you] delivered Rebha': As in the case of Vandana, some scattered details about Rebha can be gleaned from other hymns addressed to the Aśvins. From I.116.24, which gives the fullest account, it seems that Rebha was stabbed by a demon or other ill-tempered individual and cast in bonds upon the waters, where he floated about for ten nights and nine days until the Aśvins drew him out, as one does Soma with a ladle. That passage runs as follows: 'Rebha for ten nights, nine days in the waters, bound, stabbed by a demon (?), floating hither and thither, cast into the water, you two brought forth, as one does Soma with a ladle'.

On the son of Tugra (called Bhujyu), who was rescued from drowning in mid-ocean, *v. notes* on VII.68.7; on Cyavāna, *v. notes* on VII.68.6.

7. On Atri, *v. notes* on VII.68.5.

'For Kaṇva, whose eyes were covered over, you restored the sight': An enlargement of this episode is given by Sāyaṇa to the effect that Kaṇva had been made to enter a dark house by some Asuras in order to test whether he was a Brahman priest (*i.e.*, whether he was really a seer) by having him indicate when the dawn came, though they had covered his eyes with an ointment. By playing on a *vīṇā*, the Aśvins made him 'see' when the dawn came. Some additional details are supplied in the version contained in the Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa (III.72). But Sāyaṇa adds an alternative possibility, that Kaṇva's eyesight, which was impaired by a veil (*i.e.*, a cataract?), was restored by the Aśvins under the circumstances described above.

8. 'You relieved the quail of her anxiety': This brief reference to the quail is enlarged by other passages, *e.g.*, I.116.14, which says: 'From the mouth of a wolf you released the quail straightway, O fellows, O Nāsatyas' and I.117.16, which indicates that the quail called upon the Aśvins for help ('The quail, O Aśvins, called upon you two, whereupon you released her from the wolf's mouth').

'You restored Viśpalā's leg': Though the story of Viśpalā is alluded to fairly often in the hymns to the Aśvins, it is never really clear who she was. In his commentary on this passage, Sāyaṇa refers to her as a woman whose leg had been cut off in battle, 'belonging to Khela, whose chaplain was Agastya'. But the most detailed account, given at I.116.15, creates the impression that Viśpalā was a *horse*, an identification which fits all the scattered references. Geldner too, in his note on I.116.15 refers to Viśpalā as a 'Rennstute'. If all the fragments are put together, then, it would appear that Viśpalā was a horse, whose leg was lost in a battle led by Khela - 'cut off like a bird's wing', as I.116.15 graphically puts it - at a decisive moment in the contest. Agastya, the king's chaplain, sought the help of the Aśvins, who immediately replaced Viśpalā's leg with an iron one so that she could continue to run.

9. Sāyaṇa refers to Pedu as a king. In any case, in the absence of any information about him beyond the fact that he is also called Aghāśva at I.116.6, it may be reasonably assumed that he was sufficiently devoted to the worship of the Aśvins to have deserved so extraordinary a gift. For the highest epithets, as here, are always lavished upon this white horse which the Aśvins presented to Pedu. That he was 'serpent-slaying' need not be interpreted literally, but doubtlessly rather with reference to enemies in general. This is fairly proved by a passage in a hymn to Soma which alludes to the horse given to Pedu in his particular aspect of 'serpent-slaying': 'Like Indra, who does mighty deeds, you are a slayer of Vṛtras, O Soma, a splitter of strongholds; like Pedu's horse, you are a slayer of the ones called serpents - of every Dasyu, O Soma' (IX.88.4).

'thousand-winning': that is, winning spoils or booty in great quantity in battle.

'a bull': not to be taken literally, of course, but, as almost always in the Ṛgveda, as an indication of great virility and courage.

I.157

The Aśvins

1. Agni has awakened. From the earth Sūrya goes up. Far and wide mighty Uṣas has shone forth, effulgent with flame. The Aśvins have yoked their chariot in order to go. What moves the god Savitṛ has stimulated individually.
2. When, O Aśvins, you yoke your chariot - a bull - sprinkle our domain with ghee, with honey! Promote our prayer in battles! May we share in the riches won by our heroes!
3. Hither may the three-wheeled chariot of the Aśvins come, the bringer of honey, with fleet horses, well-praised! Three-seated, bountiful, with blessings for all, may it bring comfort to us, to biped and quadruped!
4. Bring nourishment unto us, O Aśvins! With your honied whip rain upon us! Extend our life! Cleanse away ailments! Drive away hostility! Be our companions!
5. You place the seed in female beings, you do so within all creatures. You sent forth both fire and water, O bulls, and the trees, O Aśvins.
6. You are indeed physicians with your medicines, and with your equipage you are charioteers; and you bestow a domain, O powerful ones, upon the one who has worshipped you in his heart.

Notes

1. 'Agni has awakened. From the earth Sūrya goes up': Many take the phrase 'from the earth' with the first sentence, translating 'Agni has awakened from the earth' or similarly, a rendition that follows Sāyaṇa, who explains that earth is used with reference to the altar (in which the sacrificial fire burns). This interpretation is possible, but the apparent rising up of the sun from the earth (or from the sea from the viewpoint of insular peoples!) is a phenomenon of so general and even universal observation, that it seems more natural to join 'from the earth' with 'Sūrya goes up'.

‘What moves the god Savitṛ has stimulated individually’: It should be borne in mind that the name Savitṛ etymologically means ‘stimulator’ and that the god Savitṛ is simply the personification of the Sun-god Sūrya in his aspect as the stimulator or vivifier of all things. The Ṛgvedic poets were very well aware of the etymological meaning of Savitṛ as ‘He who stimulates’ and loved to play on the name with various forms of the same root, as here: ‘the god Savitṛ has stimulated’.

2. The Aśvins’ chariot is called a bull, a term of ubiquitous use in the Ṛgveda, to indicate its sturdiness and strength, especially in battle, just as when the gods are called bulls, their virility and courage are thereby implied, as, for example, in stanza 5, where the Aśvins are called bulls. But the word for bull etymologically means ‘one that rains, the rain-er’, with obvious reference to the bull’s immense impregnating powers, and this meaning is here played upon figuratively with the following words: ‘sprinkle our domain with ghee, with honey’.

‘sprinkle our domain with ghee, with honey’: By ‘domain’ is probably meant the area ruled over by the king or prince for whom the sacrifice is being performed; *cf.* the same usage in stanza 6. The Aśvins are constantly associated with honey, more so than any other gods, and in a variety of ways. In the next stanza their chariot is called ‘the bringer of honey’ and in 4 their whip is ‘honied’. The reason for this intimate connection with honey is not entirely clear, but perhaps it was believed to have curative properties sufficient to form a principal element of their healing paraphernalia.

‘Promote our prayer in battles’: that is, cause our prayer for victory in battles to be realized. The verb used is suggestive, as Bergaigne points out,¹ of speeding on a horse or chariot.

5. The functions attributed to the Aśvins here seem quite beyond their ordinary office as helpers of those in need, but perhaps these attributions are just an example, oft repeated in the Ṛgveda, of the transfer of functions from one deity to another. They can hardly be regarded as extensions of their healing powers.
6. ‘You are indeed physicians with your medicines, and with your equipage you are charioteers’: There is a parallelism between ‘medicines’ and ‘equipage’ here: just as physicians or doctors are practitioners of the art of healing by reason of their medicines, so the Aśvins are chariot-drivers by reason of their chariot and all that is connected with it, *i.e.*, the accessories, horses, etc.

¹ *Quarante hymnes du Rig-Véda, traduits et commentés* par Abel Bergaigne (Paris, Librairie Émile Bouillon, 1895), p. 40, n. 8.

Bṛhaspati

Bṛhaspati, who is praised in the following, is a curious composite of many diverse elements, apparently a concoction of the Indo-Aryans, as no trace of his worship is to be found in the Avesta. The name means 'Lord of Prayer,' and he is also called, even in the same hymn, by the synonymous name Brahmanaspati. In large part Bṛhaspati seems to be the divine counterpart of the Brahman priest on earth, although this development may have resulted from a specialization of the priestly functions of Agni, with whom, in fact, Bṛhaspati is closely identified, rather than from any endeavor to project a divine copy of the earthly Brahman. Bṛhaspati is also connected with the myth of Indra and the release of the cows and often invoked with him, and in two hymns they are worshipped as a pair.

IV.50

Bṛhaspati

1. Bṛhaspati who, occupying the three abodes, holds apart by his might the ends of the earth with his call, him, whose tongue is the bringer of joy, the seers of old, sages deeply reflecting, placed at the fore.
2. O Bṛhaspati, those who with noisy gait move revelling openly against our herd - spotted, sleek, harmless! - from them, protect its enclosure, O Bṛhaspati!
3. O Bṛhaspati, from the farthest distance they have sat down for you, adhering to the Ṛta. Rooted up for you, the founts milked by the stones, are dripping everywhere a profusion of honey.
4. Bṛhaspati, when first born of the great light in the highest heaven, with seven mouths, seven rays, mighty at birth, blew asunder the darkness with his call.
5. He with his eulogizing host singing hymns of praise, he shatters Vala the withholder with his call. Bṛhaspati, loudly bellowing, drove out the lowing cows who provide the oblation.

6. So, the father who belongs to all the gods, the bull, we would serve with sacrifices, obeisance, oblations. O Bṛhaspati, with goodly offspring and heroic sons may we be lords of riches!
7. Only that king overcomes all opposing forces with impulse and heroism, who cherishes Bṛhaspati well, honors him, praises him as the one who gets the first share.
8. He alone lives well-set in his own abode, for him the sacrificial food is always abundant, to him the people bow down of their own accord: the king with whom the Brahman goes first.
9. Unresisted, he wins the riches belonging to his adversaries and to his kinsmen. The king who gives comfort to the Brahman who seeks help, him do the gods help.
10. O Indra and Bṛhaspati, drink the Soma, rejoicing in this sacrifice, you two who rain riches! May the drops, ready at hand, enter you both! Upon us bestow wealth consisting entirely of heroic sons!
11. O Bṛhaspati, O Indra, make us to increase! May that goodwill of yours be with us! Favor our prayers! Awaken generosity towards us! Weaken the hostility of enemy and rivals!

Notes

1. 'occupying the three abodes': probably used in a double sense, with reference to the three worlds (heaven, intermediate space or atmosphere, and earth) and to the three fire-altars (*cf.* ṚV V.11.2, where Agni is said to be kindled in the threefold abode).

Holding apart the ends of the earth and other similar notions are said of various Ṛgvedic gods; *e.g.*, of Varuṇa in VII.86.1.

By 'with his call,' which also occurs in stanzas 4 and 5, may be meant the magic spells that Bṛhaspati, as Brahman par excellence, utters. The Indian commentator Sāyaṇa asserts that the words uttered by Bṛhaspati are 'Stay that way!'

By 'placed at the fore' is meant that the seers made him a domestic priest, called a 'purohita,' which literally signifies 'who is placed at the fore.' Agni is regularly so designated (cf. ṚV I.1.1), so that here may be seen a good example of how closely Bṛhaspati and Agni are interrelated.

2. This stanza has been subjected to numerous very divergent interpretations. In this rendition it is assumed that Bṛhaspati is being asked to protect the enclosure, in which the cows are penned up, from the depredations of cow-stealing demons, such as Vala or the Paṇis. The demons apparently have been drinking Soma, for which reason their gait is noisy.
3. That is, the gods who have come from heaven have taken their places on the sacred grass strewn upon the place of sacrifice in accordance with the Ṛta or universal law. By 'founts' are meant figuratively the Soma plants, in particular the stalks, as being repositories of the Soma juice, which is gotten from the stalks by pressing them between stones. The Soma juice is often called 'honey.'
4. In this stanza Bṛhaspati seems to be viewed as a form of Agni, the seven mouths figuratively referring to his flames. He is 'mighty at birth' because, as Agni, his powers are fully developed at birth. The number 'seven' is merely a symbolical, mystical way of conveying an indefinitely large number. But the stanza is not crystal-clear, and various explanations have been advanced by scholars, especially in elucidation of 'with seven mouths, seven rays,' thus, for example, that the former refers to the seven priests called 'hotṛs' or to the seven Aṅgirasas (for whom cf. V.11.6), and similarly that the latter, by them translated 'with seven reins,' rather than 'seven rays,' figuratively refers to the 'reins' of the sacrifice, *i.e.*, to the priests who guide or conduct the sacrifice, conceived as a horse.
5. The 'eulogizing host' is apparently the Aṅgirasas who are elsewhere (I.62.3) associated with Bṛhaspati and Indra in the myth touched upon here, according to which the cows stolen by the demon Vala are found and driven out of the enclosure or cave where they had been confined. Vala appears to be in origin a personification of the clouds, in which the waters, poetically represented as cows, are locked up, as happens when the monsoon fails to bring the accustomed rain. But sometimes, as here, this personification fades a bit into the background, and Vala seems to be portrayed more as a cloud than a cloud-demon. Note that Bṛhaspati breaks open the cloud-enclosure by the utterance of his prayer or spell, whereby he is said to hold apart the ends of the earth in stanza 1 and to dispel the darkness in 4. The cows 'provide the oblation' by supplying milk which is used in various ways in the sacrificial offering, for example by being mixed with the Soma juice or by conversion into ghee.
6. Probably it is said that Bṛhaspati 'belongs to all the gods' because he is the divine Brahman and hence ministers to all the gods, and conversely, as the representative of the earthly Brahman who ministers to men, he might be said to

belong to all men. Bṛhaspati is called a 'bull,' as are other gods, merely to indicate the possession of great power, the bull being regarded as a sort of archetype of male strength.

With stanza 6 the eulogy of Bṛhaspati, in his divine manifestation at least, comes to an end with a plea for heroic offspring and riches. The next three stanzas (7-9) constitute a eulogy of the Brahman priest, Bṛhaspati's earthly counterpart, in which are stated the boons that will accrue to the king that accords the first place to the Brahman and helps him in time of need.

7. Here Bṛhaspati in his earthly aspect as the Brahman priest is meant: if he 'gets the first share,' the king, whose priest he is, will overcome all opposition.
8. Only that king who gives precedence to the Brahman will live in comfort, have sufficient food for the sacrificial meal and receive the voluntary respect of his subjects.
10. Now there is a sudden apostrophe to both Bṛhaspati and Indra who, as we have seen in the note to stanza 5, are often associated together and also worshipped as a pair in two hymns.

'you two who rain riches' is only a provisional translation of a doubtful word. This epithet occurs fairly often in the Ṛgveda and is always applied to deities worshipped in pairs, mostly to the Ásvins.

X.68

Bṛhaspati

1. Like birds protecting themselves whilst swimming in the water, like roars of the loud-sounding thundercloud, like waves bubbling joyously as they break against the rocks, our songs addressed praise unto Bṛhaspati.
2. The friend of the Aṅgirasas, coming nigh with the cows, has brought them together, as Bhaga does the suitor. As a friend of the family man and wife, Bṛhaspati joins them. O Bṛhaspati, hasten them on, like swift horses in a battle!
3. Cows dear to the pious, fit for guests, robust, desirable, of goodly color, of unblemished form - these Bṛhaspati has strewn out from the mountains, like barley from grain sacks, after winning them.
4. Besprinkling with honey the bosom of the Ṛta, lightning hurling down from the sky, a firebrand as it were, Bṛhaspati, when extracting the cows from the rock, splits open its skin, as the earth's with water.
5. With the light he drove away the darkness from the middle place, as the wind the Śīpāla from the water. Bṛhaspati, having laid hold of Vala, has brought nigh the cows, as the wind a cloud.
6. When Bṛhaspati shattered the languor of the fiend Vala with magic spells burning like fire and, as the tongue what is encompassed by the teeth, devoured him, he uncovered the repositories of the ruddy cows.
7. Because Bṛhaspati thought of the name of these bellowers which was in a secret place, just as by breaking the eggs the young of a bird, he let out the ruddy cows from the mountain by himself.
8. He looked around at the honey shut up in the rock, like a fish abiding in shallow water. Bṛhaspati brought it forth with his call, after cutting him out, as a bowl from the wood of a tree.
9. He the dawn did find, he the sun, he the fire; with his magic spell he dispelled the darkness. Like the marrow of a limb, he brought forth the marrow of Vala who had the shape of a cow.

10. As the woods the leaves taken away by the winter, Vala mourned the cows taken away by Bṛhaspati. What cannot be duplicated - not again - he did, whereby sun and moon might rise by turn.
11. As a dark horse with pearls, the Fathers adorned the heaven with stars, in the night the darkness they put, the light in the day, when Bṛhaspati split the rock, found the cows.
12. This homage we have made to him who abides in the clouds, who roars hither repeatedly in compliance with our abundant hymns of praise. May he along with cows, may he along with horses, may he along with heroic sons, may he along with men, bestow strength upon us!

Notes

In this hymn Bṛhaspati is depicted as the destroyer of the demon Vala, who imprisons the cows in his mountain strongholds. He is thus practically identified with Indra, to whom this feat is also ascribed along with the defeat of other demons, notably Vṛtra. By the cows are most probably meant the waters of heaven, while Vala, whose name seems etymologically to mean 'enclosure' or 'cavern,' represents the clouds, in which the fructifying waters are contained, although this figure so often fades imperceptibly into his personification as a demon, that it is hard to separate the two meanings. The imagery in this hymn is elaborate, sometimes perplexing and obscure, so that the intended sense is not everywhere certain.

1. The poet's songs in praise of Bṛhaspati are here likened, among other things, to the sounds made by birds protecting their young in the water from danger, such as, we may suppose, that posed by hunters or even other birds, a somewhat curious simile, as the sounds emitted under such circumstances are unlikely to be at all sonorous and fit for equation with Vedic hymns of praise.
2. The Aṅgirasas were higher beings, the sons of gods, who became friends with Indra, with whom they are closely associated. Through their friendship with Indra they came to be connected with the myth of the slaying of Vala and the release of the cows, feats which we are told in RV VIII.14.8 were even performed for the Aṅgirasas by Indra. Because of his identification with Indra in this hymn, Bṛhaspati is called the 'friend of the Aṅgirasas.' Bṛhaspati is said to have united the cows and the Aṅgirasas (as though they belonged together and

became separated), this union being compared with the union effected by Bhaga, the god of love and marriage, between suitor and beloved. The simile of a union through marriage is continued with a couple brought together through the efforts of a friend of the family. The final line appears to be a request to Bṛhaspati to bring the cows hither as quickly as possible, but it is variously interpreted, and its connection with the foregoing variously explained.

3. This stanza presents a remarkable example of the Vedic seer's ability to mingle both the literal and figurative in the same thought: in the first half of the stanza the cows are described in a series of epithets, all of which are to be taken in their literal sense, as cows are literally meant. But in the second half of the stanza there is a shift to the metaphorical plane, the cows, by the curious figure mentioned above, representing the waters. There is, furthermore, a bold simile by which the cows are likened to grains of barley strewn out from sacks. Cows, it must be remembered, were held in highest regard, as a pillar of the ancient Vedic economy, and they played an important role in the practice of hospitality; hence the epithet 'fit for guests.' By 'mountains' is meant 'mountains of clouds,' that is 'mountains that are clouds.'
4. Bṛhaspati's struggle to secure the waters, figuratively called the 'cows,' from the cloud-fastnesses of Vala is portrayed in terms of a violent thunderstorm, in which Bṛhaspati himself is the lightning hurling a flaming bolt into the clouds. The clouds are called the 'rock' in allusion, no doubt, to the rocky cavern which Vala, as a personification of the cloud, is fancied to be. But by a peculiar and sudden mixing of metaphors the 'skin' of the rock is said to be split, as though the cloud were thought of as a vast water-skin, such as has been used throughout the whole of the Orient from the most ancient times to transport and conserve water. Since 'skin' by a natural transfer can also mean the 'surface' of anything, it is subsequently applied to the surface of the earth, which is said to be split open by the impact of the water.

'Besprinkling with honey' etc.: that is, bestrewing the earth with water, called 'honey,' as also in stanza 8. The 'bosom of the Ṛta' is the place where the laws of the cosmos are operative, so that the world in the largest sense might be meant or the place of the sacrifice in the narrowest.

5. The light with which Bṛhaspati drove away the darkness is probably that of the sun, as in stanza 9 he is explicitly stated to have 'found' the sun, as well as the dawn and fire, and with the light to have dispelled the darkness. Inasmuch as Bṛhaspati is here virtually identified with Indra, it is worth noting that Indra too, is said to have brought forth the sun and the dawn in consequence of his battle with Vṛtra (*cf.* I.32.4).

Śīpāla is a moss-like plant, *Blyxa Octandra*, which is commonly found growing over the surface of pools and lakes in India. A slight breeze causes it to shift about, like any object floating on the surface.

6. The expression 'shattered the languor of the fiend Vala' is a curious way of saying more directly and simply 'shattered the languorous fiend Vala,' the languor of Vala being made into something concrete, as though it were synonymous with the demon himself.

Very probably the word translated by 'magic spells' might also be rendered by 'lightning-bolts', or perhaps both are meant. Similarly in 9, where the same word occurs in the singular, probably both 'light' and 'magic spell' are implied.

7. Apparently a name was conceived as having magical properties, so that here we are to understand that, when Bṛhaspati conjured up the name of the cows, which had been a secret, he was able to break open the cloud-mountains of Vala and release the cows.

The comparison of Bṛhaspati's extrication of the cows with the breaking open of the egg by the young chick is remarkable, as the focal point is quite the opposite of that of the subject of comparison, *i.e.*, Bṛhaspati. Thus, the chick in the egg breaks out of his shell from *within*, whereas Bṛhaspati breaks open the mountain from *without*, and what is more, the verb 'let out' or perhaps more literally 'drove out' used of Bṛhaspati and mentally to be supplied in the simile is not appropriate to the action of the chick, unless we make it reflexive, *i.e.*, 'lets himself out.' Translators have always been much bothered by this passage and have found various solutions, all of which are more or less defensible due to the economy of expression of the original. Thus, Professor Renou translates 'As (the mother pushes out) the newborn of the bird by breaking the egg' [comme (la mère pousse au dehors) le nouveau-né de l'oiseau en fendant l'oeuf]. But apart from the awkwardness of supplying so many words, the fact is that the *mother bird* does not break open the eggs of her young, it is the *chick* that does this. What is more, it is important to note that the text says that Bṛhaspati performed this act of driving out the cows 'by himself,' *i.e.*, without any help, just as is the case with the chick breaking out of the egg, and this may be the aspect of the comparison that was dominant in the poet's mind.

8. 'Honey' here means either the water or perhaps the cows, which is ultimately the same thing. The appositeness of the simile of the fish swimming in shallow water seems to be that, as the fish is hemmed in and restricted in his movements by the shallowness of the water and also limited in the food available to him, so are the cows imprisoned by Vala in his cloud-stronghold.

'With his call': that is, by the utterance of a spell. In the simile of the bowl some word expressive of an agent must be mentally supplied: 'after cutting him (*i.e.*, Vala) out, as a woodcarver a bowl from the wood.'

9. The point of the simile, though curious and perhaps a bit extravagant, seems to be that Bṛhaspati got the *best part* (*i.e.*, the marrow) of Vala, just as one who gets the marrow from a limb or a bone.

'who had the shape of a cow' as here translated can only imply that Vala had actually taken the form of a cow, a metamorphosis not difficult of attainment by a cloud-demon, clouds being by nature Protean. But it may be that the Vedic word should be rendered: 'who had the shapeliness (*i.e.*, the beauty) of a cow' or 'whose glory was the cow.'

11. Bṛhaspati's feat of destroying Vala and releasing the cows must be looked upon as an act of creation, in which he was subsequently assisted by the Fathers, who performed the various cosmic actions mentioned here.
12. 'who abides in the clouds,' because he is associated with the 'middle place' or atmosphere, where his great contest took place, as also Indra with whom he is identified.

The hymn ends with a fairly standardized wish for material wealth. The somewhat strange phraseology is a literal rendition, but the meaning is simply: 'May he bestow strength upon us in the form of cows,' etc.! It is not clear what exactly is meant by 'men' in relation to 'heroic sons' (literally simply 'heroes'); perhaps 'men' merely in a general, unspecified sense, but especially as contrasted to 'heroic men' only.

Uṣas

Uṣas, the personification of the dawn, must have been one of the most popular deities with the poets of the Ṛgveda, to judge from the high level of inspiration apparent in the floridity of expression and vividness of imagery that generally characterize the nearly two dozen hymns that are devoted to her praise. Nor are there in these hymns any of the excessive condensation of expression and obscurity of thought to be found elsewhere in the Ṛgveda, the principal difficulty being the determination of the precise meaning of an occasional word, not the thought itself. There is, moreover, a freshness about the hymns to Uṣas that is often wanting in other hymns, where the mode of expression seems studied and contrived to appear elusive and enigmatic. In any case, whatever may be the reasons, the hymns to Uṣas are surely among the finest poetry in the Ṛgveda, and it is unfortunate that when put into English, especially a closely literal version, they lose so much of their natural vigor and fluidity.

The concept of a goddess of the dawn may with fair probability reach back to the time when the Indo-Europeans were still more or less a united people, as she is found, though far less elaborately portrayed, in both Greek and Roman mythology under the name ' Ἥως and Aurōra, which, in spite of their very different appearance from each other, are mutually cognate and also cognate to the Vedic word Uṣas, all three stemming ultimately from an Indo-European postulate **ausōs* beside **usōs*, the 'bright one.'

IV.52

Uṣas

1. That gladsome lady, daughter of heaven, shining forth from her sister far and wide, has appeared opposite.
2. Like a mare, bright and ruddy, the mother of the cows, Uṣas, has conformed to the Cosmic Law, a companion of the Aśvins.
3. Companion of the Aśvins you are and you are mother of the cows and, O Uṣas, you are master of shining wealth.
4. The dispeller of foes, we have awakened to meet you with songs of praise, you who are perceptibly joyful.

5. Her auspicious rays have appeared opposite, like herds of cows let loose: Uṣas has filled the broad expanse.
6. Filling it, you who shine far and wide, have uncovered the darkness with light, O Uṣas; according to your wont do favor us!
7. You overspread the sky with your rays, overspread the space between, broad and dear, O Uṣas, with bright radiance.

Notes

1. Uṣas' sister is, of course, the night.
2. 'mother of the cows': By a figure which is quite remarkable the rays of Uṣas are often called 'cows,' and Uṣas, being their source, is therefore their mother.
Uṣas is closely connected with the twin deities called the Aśvins, who are alleged to follow her in their chariot after they have been awakened by Uṣas. But elsewhere she is said to be born when the Aśvins' chariot is yoked!
3. 'you are master of shining wealth': The Vedic word translated by 'shining wealth' originally signifies simply 'that which shines' and is based on the same root-element as Uṣas, which literally means 'the shining one.' In various grammatical forms this root-element is commonly applied to Uṣas, as is the case in stanza 1, where she has the epithet 'shining . . . far and wide.' The Vedic poets were well aware of the connection of Uṣas with this root-element, as shown by their fondness of playing upon the connection by the use of words derived from it. In the translation the inclusion of 'shining' is intended to stress the association of the notion of 'shine' with Uṣas' name, although the etymological play is wanting.
4. 'perceptibly joyful': The true meaning of the word here rendered 'perceptibly' is doubtful.
7. 'broad and dear': surely 'dear' in the sense that any part of the world of daily experience is held dear, as being intrinsic to life itself.

V.80

Uṣas

1. Her, whose way is glowing, lofty one, by the Truth adhering to the Truth, with ruddy breaths, shining far and wide - the goddess Uṣas, bringing the sunlight hither, the poets praise with hymns.
2. Worthy to behold, she goes ahead, waking up the people, making their paths easy to traverse. Lofty one on her lofty chariot, Uṣas, invigorating all, gives her light ahead of the days.
3. With ruddy bulls yoked, unfailing one, she produces wealth unremittingly. Striking paths for our welfare, the goddess, much celebrated, shines far and wide with gifts for all.
4. Variousy tinted, she is doubly strong as she reveals herself in the east. Properly she goes along the path of the Truth: as one who knows, she infringes not the directions.
5. Like a beautiful woman, become conscious of herself, she has stood up, like one who is bathing, for us to see. Dispelling hostility and darkness, Uṣas, daughter of heaven, has come hither with her light.
6. Turned toward men, this daughter of heaven, like a fair damsel, lets flow down her robe. Disclosing to the worshipper things to be desired, the young maiden as before has made the light again.

Notes

1. 'by the Truth adhering to the Truth': Like all the gods, Uṣas too, conforms her actions to the Truth that is under the guardianship of Varuṇa, whereby the operation of the universe functions. She adheres to this universal Truth through the Truth or unfailingness of her appearance every morning; *cf.* also the latter half of stanza 4.

'with ruddy breaths': presumably with reference to the reddish or pinkish clouds that often attend the coming of the dawn, picturesquely conceived as exhaled by the goddess.

3. 'she produces wealth': All the gods are said to confer wealth on the worshipper, which is sometimes specified as heroic sons, cows and other material possessions, at other times left indeterminate, as here.
4. 'she is doubly strong as she reveals herself': By 'doubly strong' is probably meant nothing more than 'extremely strong,' the same epithet being applied to Rudra at I.114.10, where *v.* note. Her greater strength is perhaps the greater intensity of color and brightness that follow upon the first appearance of Uṣas and linger for a while until the coming of the sun's orb.
5. 'Dispelling hostility and darkness': By hostility is meant any potential danger, whether from wild beasts, thieves, demons or any other source of danger.

I.92

Uṣas and the Ásvins

1. Behold! these well-known Dawns have raised their banner: in the eastern half of the sky they anoint themselves with lustre, like bold warriors refurbishing their weapons. The ruddy cows, the mothers, are returning.
2. Upwards the reddish lustres freely fly: they have yoked the ruddy cows easily yoked. The Dawns have made their webs as of yore: ruddy, they have spread a gleaming lustre.
3. They shine, as do women busy with their chores. Over the same stretch from far off they come, bringing refreshment to the one who does good, to the bounteous, ever to the patron of the sacrifice, to the one who presses the Soma.
4. She bestrews ornaments on herself, as does a dancer. She uncovers her bosom as a ruddy cow her udder. Making light for the whole world, she has unclosed the darkness, as cows their stall.
5. Her gleaming light has appeared opposite: it is spreading out; it is driving off the black void. Like one anointing a sacrificial post, the ornament in the sacrifices, the daughter of heaven has spread her splendid lustre.
6. We have crossed to the other side of this darkness. Growing bright, Uṣas is making her webs. As a flatterer for favor, she smiles, shining far and wide. Of goodly countenance, she has awakened to our delight.
7. Luminous herald of good things, the daughter of heaven is praised by the Gotamas: do you portion out treasures consisting of offspring and men, known for horses, distinguished by cows, O Uṣas!
8. O Uṣas, may I attain that glorious wealth consisting of goodly heroes, a troop of servants, known for horses - you who shine far and wide with fame rich in wonderful deeds, enlivened by your vital force, fair one - ample wealth!

9. The goddess, looking upon all creatures, turned toward the eye of the sun, shines far and wide. Awakening every living being to motion, she has aroused the voice of every devotee.
10. Born again and again, yet ancient, she adorns herself with identical hue. Like a skilful player reducing the stakes, the goddess wastes away the life of mortal.
11. Uncovering the ends of the heaven, she has awakened: she drives away her sister. Diminishing men's life span, the maiden shines far and wide with the eye of her lover.
12. Extending her rays like cows, the fair one has shone forth afar like a river in flood. Not infringing upon the divine rules, she has been perceived, appearing with the rays of the sun.
13. O Uṣas, that splendid wealth bring unto us, you who are rich in rewards, whereby we shall establish sons and grandsons!
14. O Uṣas, here today you who are rich in cows, you who are rich in horses, who shine far and wide, shine forth abundantly upon us, O joyous one!
15. Yoke the horses, you who are rich in rewards - the reddish ones now, O Uṣas! Then bring hither unto us all good fortunes!
16. O Aśvins, towards us make your circlet rich in cows, rich in gold, O wonderworkers, hither with one accord direct your chariot!
17. You two who at this time of day have made your call, your light for the people, O Aśvins, bring hither strength unto us!
18. Hither let them, who awake at dawn, bring the two gods who are a comfort, O wonderworkers, whose chariot is golden, to drink the Soma!

Notes

This hymn falls naturally into several distinct sections, partly based on a difference of metre in the original and partly on content: the first two

sections, *viz.*, stanzas 1-4 and 5-12, differing in metre, are directed to Uṣas, the next three, *viz.*, 13-15, constitute an entreaty to Uṣas for wealth of various sorts, and finally there is a triad of stanzas addressed to the Aśvins, the twin deities who are closely associated with Uṣas, who is said to awaken them and whom they follow in their chariot.

1. The 'ruddy cows' are the rays of Uṣas, whose ruddy or pinkish hue was suggestive of that of the ubiquitous cows to the Vedic Indian, and the metaphor is often repeated. The 'mothers' are probably the recurring Dawns themselves, whence are born the cows or rays. Incidentally, in the translation the plural 'Dawns' is used wherever the name of the goddess of the dawn occurs in the plural in the original, elsewhere her name Uṣas is employed, as the Vedic word ill lends itself to pluralization in English.
2. 'The Dawns have made their webs as of yore': by 'webs' is intended to be meant, as also in stanza 6, the garment of color that Uṣas 'weaves' each day and spreads across the sky. But it is by no means certain that the Vedic word so rendered here has this meaning, or indeed what precisely is its meaning, in spite of its fairly frequent use in the Ṛgveda. Most of the meanings advanced by scholars seem to be centered on the notion of 'rule, regularity or determination,' from a basic element meaning 'direct or guide' (the same element that ultimately furnished the Latin word *via* 'way'), especially with regard to 'regularly recurring time, fixed time or a demarcation thereof.' Accordingly, one might translate 'The Dawns have made, *i.e.*, adhered to, their rule,' 'regular course,' 'fixed time' or 'demarcation' (between night and day). The meaning 'web' suggested here is, however, founded on the assumption that the Vedic word is formed from a different root-element, meaning 'weave' rather than from that meaning 'direct or guide.'
3. 'They shine': the Vedic word also may mean 'sing'*, the meaning more appropriate in the simile of the women at their chores.
It is difficult to say with certainty whether 'the one who does good' and 'the bounteous' are one and the same person; the same might also be said of 'the patron of the sacrifice' and 'the one who presses the Soma.'
4. 'She has unclosed the darkness, as cows their stall': a somewhat odd simile, which seems to imply that the enclosed cows themselves open their own stall. But more important than this minor defect in the figure is the recurrent equation of cows with Uṣas' rays.

* The same source ultimately as the word 'ṛg' in Ṛgveda: originally a 'song,' then a 'hymn of praise.'

5. 'the black void' is, of course, the night. The Vedic word means etymologically 'the non-existent one' and suggests in English something like 'non-thing'; 'void' seems to be the closest equivalent and is, in any case, preferable to the usual rendition 'monster,' which implies something terrifying or awful, not inherent in the Vedic word.

'Like one anointing a sacrificial post': to understand the point of this comparison it is necessary to bear in mind that the sacrificial post was smeared with ghee during the sacrificial ceremony (*v.* ṚV III.8, which is addressed to the sacrificial post).

7. The Gotamas are the priestly family to which tradition assigns the authorship of the present hymn.
9. 'she has aroused the voice of every devotee': the translation is designed to be as ambiguous as the original, that is the appearance of Uṣas awakens the whole world of nature to song, each creature to his own, and especially to hymns of praise by seers, sages and priests.
10. 'Like a skilful player': the Vedic word for player used here is of interest, signifying literally 'he who avoids the dog,' 'dog' here being slang for an 'unlucky throw' of the dice. 'The stakes' against which Uṣas plays, as it were, are of course, the lives of mortals, which, with the arrival of each dawn, are ever reduced, making her the winner. Sāyaṇa's interpretation of this half of the stanza, incidentally, is remarkably different: 'Just as the wife of a hunter who cuts up birds and destroys them (by cutting off their wings, etc.), so does Uṣas waste away the life of mortal!'
11. Uṣas' sister is the Night (Rātrī), to whom a whole hymn is dedicated, *viz.*, X.127.

'with the eye of her lover': *i.e.*, the sun, Sūrya.

- 16-18. As was pointed out in the prefatory remarks to the hymn, the last three stanzas are addressed to the Aśvins and thus form, in a sense, a separate entity, whose only connection with the rest of the hymn is the association of the Aśvins with Uṣas. The precise function and character of the Aśvins, especially the phenomena they originally represented, have always been a matter of speculation, and even the Indian commentator Yāska, who lived no later than the eighth century B.C., was unsure what they represented, and his statement of the conflicting views of his contemporaries is quoted by Sāyaṇa in his comment on 17: 'Who, then, are the Aśvins? Some say 'the heaven and earth,' some 'the sun and moon,' some 'the day and the night.'

18. 'let them who wake at the dawn': According to Sāyaṇa, these are the (Aśvins') horses.

Sūrya

Of all the solar deities in the pantheon of the Ṛgveda Sūrya is the most concrete in conception. Thus, whereas Savitṛ embodies the stimulating and animating powers of the sun, Sūrya is the disc itself. It is said to be drawn across the sky by Sūrya's bay steeds, at other times by but a single steed. Doubtless these steeds originally were personifications of the sun's rays which precede the appearance of the orb. Sūrya is often referred to as the eye of various deities, *e.g.*, Mitra and Varuṇa and, as the great luminary of the world, is described as all-seeing or far-seeing. Since he follows the dawn, Sūrya is, by a natural figure, the lover of Uṣas, goddess of the dawn. He rids the world of the night by interrupting the goddess Rātri's work of weaving the black garment with which she envelops the world or by rolling it up like a skin.

The imagery connected with Sūrya is sufficiently clear on the whole, his orb, with which he is sometimes actually identified and which is sometimes treated as though separate from him, being called a wheel or ornament of heaven.

It is of interest to note that *sūrya*, which is also a common name for the sun, without any implied reference to the god bearing the name, is ultimately related to the Greek ἥλιος, whence have been formed many scientific words in English, *e.g.*, heliotrope, heliography.

I.50

Sūrya

1. Now are the heralds drawing up Sūrya, that god Jātavedas, for all to see.
2. Yon stars go off with the nights' end, like thieves, before the all-seeing sun.
3. His heralds, the rays, have appeared far and wide among the people, glowing like fires.
4. Crossing over, visible to all, you are the maker of the light, Sūrya: o'er all the firmament do you shine.

5. Facing the hosts of the gods, facing men, you go, facing the world, the sun to see -
6. the eye wherewith, bright one, you look upon him who is busy among the people, O Varuṇa.
7. You pervade the sky, the broad space, demarcating the days with the nights' end, looking upon creatures, Sūrya.
8. Seven bays draw you, flame-tressed, in your chariot, O divine Sūrya, far-seeing.
9. He has yoked the seven radiant daughters of the sun's chariot: with these, his own teams, he goes.
10. Looking up out of the darkness to the higher light, to Sūrya, god among gods, we have gone to the highest light.
11. Going forth now, you who are rich in friends, mounting the higher heaven, cause my heartache to perish, Sūrya, and my yellowness!
12. In parrots we'll put my yellowness, in *ropaṇākas* and also in *hāridravās* my yellowness we'll deposit.
13. This Āditya has gone forth with all his power, making my enemy subject to me. May I not be subject to my enemy!

Notes

1. 'the heralds': the rays, as becomes clear in 3, which are conceived in this hymn as mares, the seven daughters of Sūrya. At other times bay steeds of unspecified number are mentioned, *e.g.*, in RV I.115, and sometimes a single steed called Etaśa, as at VII.63.2. For further details *v.* note on stanza 8 below.

'that god Jātavedas': Elsewhere the epithet Jātavedas, which is of frequent occurrence in the Ṛgveda, is exclusively that of Agni. Its exact significance has been much discussed, various rather divergent etymologies being possible technically, but perhaps the most likely explanation is suggested in the Ṛgveda itself at VI.15.13, in a hymn to Agni: 'Agni is the invoker, lord of the house, he is

king; as Jātavedas *he knows all beings*; who of gods and mortals is the best sacrificer: let him, adherent of the Ṛta, sacrifice! That Jātavedas is here transferred to Sūrya is indicative of the close affinity felt to exist between Agni as god of fire and Sūrya as god of the sun's fiery orb.

'for all to see': that is, 'in order that the world may be able to see,' as without Sūrya to supply illumination all would be impenetrable darkness. Alternatively, the meaning may be 'in order that all may see the sun (or Sūrya, depending on whether the sun's orb or its personification is meant).'

2. Just like robbers, who must carry out their activities while it is still dark, the stars, having performed their nocturnal function, go off at the very end of the night ('with the nights' end'), as the first light of day begins to appear. This statement is probably general and not thought of as applicable to this particular occasion of Sūrya's rising, as shown by the plural 'nights' end', *i.e.*, at the end of every night yon stars go off, just as they are on this occasion.
4. 'you are the maker of the light': In addition to presenting the obvious interpretation of these words that Sūrya is the illuminator of everything, Sāyaṇa suggests an interesting alternative explanation, *viz.* that Sūrya causes the moon and other heavenly bodies to shine at night by means of his rays reflected from their watery surface and so dispels the darkness, just as with his rays reflected in a mirror set up in the doorway of a house he dispels the darkness inside. This observation is remarkable both because of the theory that the sun causes the moon to shine by its reflected light and so may be said to shine by day as well as by night, and also because of the notion of the watery nature of the moon. Until Sāyaṇa's time, it should not be forgotten, the craters of the moon were thought to be *seas* by western astronomers and to this day bear the names of the various fabulous seas that were anciently given to them, *e.g.*, Mare Tranquillitatis, Mare Imbrium, Mare Procellarum.
5. The idea is that Sūrya, the sun's orb, as it rises, is turned toward gods and men - the whole world - so as to be 'visible to all,' as the poet says in the preceding stanza. In the following stanza Sūrya as the sun's orb is declared to be the eye whereby Varuṇa, who is suddenly apostrophized, surveys the world.
7. 'demarcating the days with the nights' end': that is, marking out or delimiting the days by starting them with the very first light at the end of the night and ending them with the setting of his orb.
8. 'Seven bays draw you': As noted in the remarks on 1 above, the number of horses that draw Sūrya's chariot varies from hymn to hymn. The specific number seven may be an allusion to the seven days of the week. On the other hand, the bays being personifications of the rays, the number seven may be put merely for an indefinite number without further implication.

9. 'daughters of the sun's chariot': said because they are intimately connected with it, parentage not being implied.
- 'with these, his own teams': Almost all translators render 'with these (daughters) who yoke themselves' or an equivalent phrase, but it is contradictory for the poet to be made to say, on the one hand, 'He has yoked the seven radiant daughters' and, on the other, to refer to them as self-yoking. Grammatically both translations are equally possible, but 'with these, his own teams' removes the inconsistency.
10. This stanza, which gives the impression of having been added to the preceding by a later poet - as is most certainly the case with the following three stanzas - is strongly conducive to a figurative and spiritual interpretation: 'Out of the darkness of sin and ignorance we have come to the light of pure knowledge, the Supreme Spirit,' and it is so explained by Sāyaṇa.
11. 'you who are rich in friends': This same expression occurs also at ṚV I.58.8, where it is addressed to Agni; it might equally be rendered 'you who have the majesty of Mitra,' and it is very likely a deliberate *double entendre*.
- 11-13. These last three stanzas, which form a unit by themselves, are, as stated in the note to 10, an addition to the hymn, though not necessarily of later composition. They are Atharvavedic in character, a charm or magic spell designed to rid one of jaundice, an affliction that causes the skin to take on a yellowish color, here called simply 'yellowness.' The sun is looked upon, as it has been in many ancient cultures, as having a curative effect and accordingly is asked to remove the reciter's 'heartache,' by which is possibly meant 'heartburn' or 'indigestion,' hardly 'heart disease.'
12. 'In parrots we'll put my yellowness': It was a commonly accepted assumption that diseases could be cured by transferring them to something bearing some external resemblance to them, to which they were supposed to have some unexplained affinity, and this could be effected by the recitation of an appropriate formula of transference. Thus, here the 'yellowness' or jaundice is to be removed by causing it to enter parrots that have a similar yellow color. It is not known what exactly is denoted by the words *ropanākas* and *hāridravās*, whether, in fact, they are birds or plants or otherwise, but, in any case, they are presumably also yellow and so capable of absorbing the yellow disease.
13. The enemy referred to here is the disease from which the reciter is suffering.

I.115

Sūrya

1. The bright face of the gods has risen, eye of Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni: Sūrya, soul of what moves and stands, has filled heaven and earth and the space between.
2. As a lover a maiden, Sūrya is approaching the refulgent goddess Dawn from behind, where men, devoted to the gods, are spreading out the yokes, auspiciously before the auspicious god.
3. Auspicious are the bay steeds of Sūrya, bright with rays of many hues, worthy of acclamation; deserving our homage, they have mounted the vault of the sky. Round heaven and earth they go in a day.
4. This is Sūrya's divine nature, this his greatness: in the midst of her work he gathers together what was spread out; when he has yoked his bays from their stall, then upon herself Night spreads her garment.
5. For Mitra, for Varuṇa to see, Sūrya dons this form in the bosom of the sky. One, infinitely brilliant, is his body; his bays gather together the other, the dark one.
6. Now, O gods, upon Sūrya's rising deliver us from anxiety, from sin! May Mitra, Varuṇa, Aditi, Sindhu, Heaven and Earth bestow this upon us!

Notes

1. 'eye of Mitra' etc.: Since Sūrya basically personifies the disc of the sun rather than its animating qualities, as does Savitṛ, it is sufficiently natural that he should be conceived as the eye of various gods, a point that is elaborated in stanza 5 below, where we are told that Sūrya puts on this aspect in order that Mitra and Varuṇa may see.

'soul of what moves and stands': since he pervades all things animate and inanimate, as does the soul the body, and is their vivifying factor. The expression 'what moves and stands' is used of various deities in the Ṛgveda, e.g., Pūṣan, who is called 'the lord that rules what moves and stands' at I.89.5. Hardly more

than a poetic, yet formulaic, way of saying 'all things' or 'all existing things,' it came to permeate Indian philosophic writings. In the Jaina religion, incidentally, this same dichotomous division of the world into what moves and stands is applied to those souls that have not yet achieved liberation from rebirth.

2. 'where men, devoted to the gods' etc.: In a general sense 'where' refers to the world, but more specifically here to the place of the sacrifice, where the pious are getting ready to perform a sacrifice to Sūrya, whose disc has just risen in close pursuit of the Dawn. The expression 'are spreading out the yokes,' borrowed from the language of the peasant, is, by a bold figure, applied to the sacrifice. The same figure occurs in a more expanded and explicit form in RV X.101.3-4: 'Yoke the plows, spread out the yokes! Sow the seed in the opening that has been made! If compliance with our song is accompanied by plenteousness, then the ripened crop will come closer to our sickle. The seers are yoking the plows, spreading out the yokes one by one: the wise are in the gods' good graces.'

'auspiciously before the auspicious god': On the one hand, the performance of the sacrifice is an auspicious act for both the performer and the god, who expects it, and on the other, the god Sūrya himself is auspicious as bringer of illumination to the world with his bright orb.

3. 'the bay steeds of Sūrya': The golden rays emanating from Sūrya's orb are conceived as steeds that draw it across the heaven.

'with rays of many hues': said of the steeds of Sūrya, as though the poet had half-forgotten that the steeds are really, by a transfer, just the rays themselves. Typical of the language of the Ṛgveda is this almost imperceptible slipping from the figurative to the literal (or *vice versa*) as well as the intermingling of the two, no really sharp line being drawn between them.

4. The sense of this stanza, which has been very variously translated and interpreted, seems to be that the essence of Sūrya's power as god of the sun's orb lies in his ability to remove the web of darkness woven during the night by the goddess Rātrī and to do so whilst she is right in the middle of her work of weaving, whereupon she puts the garment she has woven upon herself, thus removing it from the world and allowing the light of the sun to take its place.

The obscurity which has given rise to so many varying and discrepant interpretations is due in great part, as so often in the Ṛgveda, to the brevity and condensation with which the ideas are expressed, especially the omission of the subject of the verb and pronominal words, the inclusion of which is required in English idiom and which must be supplied in the translation. As in many other instances of obscurity and ambiguity in the Ṛgveda, some help can be gotten from parallel passages where the context is clearer and the phraseology

more expanded. So, in this case, the obscurity may be partially dispelled by a similar passage in a hymn to the sun god Savitṛ (ṚV II.38.3d-4abc), which reads: 'In accordance with the ordinance of Savitṛ the releaser (the Night) has come hither. Again the weaver (the Night) has rolled together what was spread out: in the midst of the work the wise one (Savitṛ) has suspended her handicraft. Having gotten up, he has stood forth. He kept the times firmly apart.'

To ancient man the ceaseless alternation of the bright day with the black night, surely affording the greatest contrast with which he was confronted, must have been an inexplicably remarkable phenomenon, and this stanza and others like it in the Ṛgveda suggest something of the awe with which he undoubtedly contemplated it and the means whereby he tried to account for it (on this point cf. ṚV VII.63.1, where Sūrya is referred to as 'the god who rolled up the darkness like a skin').

5. 'For Mitra, for Varuṇa to see': Sūrya or the sun's disc is the eye whereby Mitra and Varuṇa see the world; cf. note on 1 and v. also ṚV VII.63.1.

'dons': in its etymological sense of 'does on,' *i.e.*, puts on himself, the verb being used reflexively.

'this form': that is, the eye of the day.

'One' and 'the other' are here just a way of saying 'the day' and 'the night' respectively, neither expression referring directly back to 'this form' in the first part of the stanza, except insofar as 'this form' in general implies 'the day.' The meaning, then, which is little more than a reiteration of the preceding stanza, may be thus amplified: 'The day, which is Sūrya's body (since his orb is the illuminating power that produces the daylight), is infinitely bright, to the extent that his steeds, which draw the orb across the sky, simply cancel the darkness of the night and so may be said to gather it together.'

6. An apostrophe is here made, as commonly in the Ṛgveda, to other deities, as though they were all sharing in the worship of the god who is the subject of this hymn; one almost has the feeling that in such cases the poets really regarded all the gods as one, but with different names, capable of being interchanged or kept distinct, as the mood moved them. The last line is a favorite refrain of the seer Kutsa and occurs also at ṚV I.114.11d.

VII.63

Sūrya

1. Blessed Sūrya, all-seeing, goes forth, common to men, eye of Mitra and Varuṇa, the god who rolled up the darkness like a skin.
2. The stirrer of peoples goes forth, the great shimmering light of Sūrya, to turn hither the universal wheel, which Etaśa, yoked to the poles, draws.
3. Shining far and wide from the bosom of the dawns, he goes forth, acclaimed by singers. The god Savitṛ he seems to me, who oversteps not the universal law.
4. An ornament of heaven, far-seeing, he goes forth, his goal far away, traversing, shining. Now the peoples, stirred by Sūrya, will go to their tasks: they will do their work.
5. Where the immortals made a way for him, flying like an eagle he goes along the path. Now that the sun has gone forth, we would pay honor to you both, Mitra and Varuṇa, with obeisance and oblations.
6. Now may Mitra, Varuṇa and Aryaman bestow ease upon us and our offspring! May all be fair paths for us, easy to traverse! Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

1. 'common to men': because, as casting his rays over the whole world, he belongs to all.

'eye of Mitra and Varuṇa': Sūrya is regularly so called; cf. ṚV I.115.1, where Agni is included, and 5, where it is said that Sūrya 'dons this form' so that Mitra and Varuṇa may see.

'rolled up the darkness like a skin': As may be seen from ṚV I.115 and the notes thereon, the intense darkness of the night was conceived as a garment woven during the course of the night by the goddess Rātrī. Here it is fancied as a skin.

2. 'The stirrer of peoples': Both Sūrya and Savitṛ are portrayed as stirring or stimulating the world to life, and, as has been pointed out, Savitṛ is properly in origin just an epithet of the sun god, meaning literally 'stimulator', which was evolved into a separate solar deity. In this hymn Sūrya and Savitṛ are in part merged (*cf.* stanza 3, where the poet says 'The god Savitṛ he seems to me').
 'which Etaśa . . . draws': Etaśa, which etymologically probably means 'dappled' or 'variegated', is the name of the horse that transports Sūrya's disc across the heaven.
3. 'who oversteps not the universal law': Presumably, the great Cosmic Law called Ṛta is meant, which all the gods must adhere to in order that the regular operations of the cosmos may continue uninterrupted.
5. In the latter half of this stanza the poet addresses his homage to the closely allied gods Mitra and Varuṇa, a shift of focus which is in reality very slight, Sūrya's orb being the eye whereby Mitra and Varuṇa see. Such shifts are a commonplace in the Ṛgveda and in some measure at least must have contributed to the later notion of the existence of but one god bearing many names.

Savitṛ

In many ways Savitṛ is one of the important deities in the Ṛgveda, although not more than a dozen hymns are wholly addressed to him. His name is mentioned, however, with great frequency, and there are separate stanzas honoring him in hymns directed to other gods. One such stanza, occurring in a hymn in which several deities are celebrated, has formed part of the morning and evening devotion of millions of Hindus for more than three millennia. It is the Gāyatrī (ṚV III.62.10), so-called because it is composed in the poetic metre of the same name, or often also the Sāvitrī ('[the hymn of praise] directed to Savitṛ'), which may be thus translated: 'May we reflect upon that excellent splendor of the god Savitṛ, who shall inspire our thoughts'. However prosaic this sentiment may seem in a literal translation, it is felt by those who utter it to be filled with profound mystical meaning.

Savitṛ is a solar deity, often hardly separable from Sūrya, whose name actually signifies 'sun', cognate etymologically with Greek ἥλιος and Latin *sol*. But whereas *sūrya* as a common name for the sun descends from the time of Indo-European unity, Savitṛ is an Indian creation, in origin merely an epithet meaning 'stimulator' or 'stimulating', and in many of its occurrences it is used in combination with the word 'god', almost as though it had not quite acquired independent status. The Ṛgvedic poets were quite conscious of the etymological meaning of Savitṛ, and in the hymns there are many word-plays, in which words derived from the same root-element are applied to Savitṛ, often with considerable strain on the original sense of 'stimulate'.

Savitṛ was, then, the sun thought of as the great stimulator of all things, that lends them life and motion and hence the most important force in the universe. Though not originally a separate god, but an abstraction of the chief function of the sun, *viz.*, that of animation and vivification, this function gradually and almost imperceptibly became separated from the sun and endowed with an existence of its own.

Savitṛ's principal characteristic, apart from the stimulation of all creatures, is his golden color, ascribed to almost all parts of his body ('golden-handed, golden-eyed, golden-tongued', etc.) as well as to his chariot. He appears as the regulator of time and so brings on both the day and the night and, as will be seen in the following, his nocturnal side sometimes becomes the more predominant.

I.35

Savitṛ

1. I invoke Agni first for well-being. I invoke Mitra and Varuṇa here for help. I invoke Rātrī who puts the world to rest. I invoke the god Savitṛ for aid.
2. Rolling hither through the dark space, putting to rest mortal and immortal, the god Savitṛ comes on his golden chariot, beholding creatures.
3. The god goes by a downward path, he goes by an upward path; worthy of worship he goes with his two splendid bays. The god Savitṛ comes from afar, driving away all ills.
4. Worthy of worship, bright-rayed Savitṛ has mounted his lofty chariot, covered over with pearls, all-colored and golden-pegged, toward the dark spaces, displaying his strength.
5. The darkish, white-footed ones have surveyed the peoples, pulling his chariot with its golden yoke-pole. Always have the settlers, all beings, been in divine Savitṛ's lap.
6. Three heavens there are: two the lap of Savitṛ, and the one in Yama's world, which harbors heroes. Upon him all that is immortal depends, as does the wheel of a chariot upon the axle-pin: let him who may know this say so here!
7. An eagle, he has surveyed the intermediate regions, a deeply inspired divine spirit, with goodly guidance. Where is the sun now? Who knows? To which heaven has his ray extended?
8. He has surveyed the eight peaks of the earth, the three deserts, the leagues and the seven rivers. Golden-eyed the god Savitṛ has come hither, bestowing choice gifts upon the worshipper.
9. Golden-handed Savitṛ, ranging far and wide, goes between both heaven and earth. He drives away disease, causes the sun to move, rises up to the heaven through the dark space,

10. Golden-handed divine spirit, with goodly guidance, with goodly grace, with goodly favor, let him come hither! Chasing away demons and sorcerers, the god is present every evening, praised in song.
11. By those ancient paths of yours, Savitṛ, dustless and well-made in the intermediate region, well-traversed, protect us today and speak for us, O god!

Notes

1. 'here': at this sacrifice.
2. Though Savitṛ is primarily a god of the day, in this hymn he is, in part, portrayed as bringing on the night, moving through the dark regions of the heaven and putting gods and men to rest.
'through the dark space': through the darkness.
4. 'covered with pearls': Possibly stars are meant.
'golden-pegged': It is not clear what these pegs or pins were, perhaps a sort of dowel at each end of the yoke to keep the yoke from slipping off the shoulders of the horses, or pegs used in the construction of the chariot.
5. 'The darkish, white-footed ones': In stanza 3 two horses (bays) are specified, here the plural is used. Note that here the horses are said to survey the peoples, whereas in 2 the god himself does so.
6. 'Three heavens': By a peculiar usage in the Ṛgveda some words in the dual or plural may denote two or more closely related objects rather than identical objects, like so many fruits or so many cows; thus, 'two fathers' may, by this special idiom and in an appropriate context, mean 'father and mother', a usage which continued into the classical language and was there extended to many other words of relationship ('two sons' for 'son and daughter', 'two brothers' for 'brother and sister' etc.); cf. German *Geschwister* 'brother(s) and sister(s)'. In the Ṛgveda are found also instances like the 'two Dawns' for 'Dawn and Night', the 'two Mitras' for 'Mitra and Varuṇa' (gods who are often worshipped as a pair). Significant for the interpretation of this stanza is the dual the 'two heavens' by which is meant 'heaven and earth.' Here, then, the plural 'three heavens' may, by a slight extension of this elliptical usage, simply mean 'heaven, the intermediate regions and the earth,' which constitute a familiar triad.

'Yama's world': Situated in the highest heaven, far beyond the earth and the intermediate regions, which constitute the lap of Savitṛ, the world of Yama is where those who have died (the 'Fathers') and the gods dwell.

'all that is immortal': not only the gods, but also the Fathers and probably also all the parts of the cosmos, such as the moon and other celestial bodies.

'axle-pin': Just as the axle-pin, which kept the wheel from slipping off from the end of the axle, was absolutely essential to the functioning of the chariot, so was Savitṛ, as prime mover and animator of all things, vital, indeed crucial, to the operation of everything in the cosmos.

7. 'the intermediate regions': the same as the 'dark space' in 2 and 9 and 'dark spaces' in 4.

'with goodly guidance': unless used with a very special implication, with reference to Savitṛ's guiding the orb of the sun across the sky.

'Where is the sun now?': It was a matter of natural wonder to the ancients what happened to the sun at night; a similar query is raised concerning the stars at RV I.24.10: 'Those stars, set down on high, which appear by night, where do they go by day?'

8. The eight peaks are probably mountains belonging to the Vedic Indian cosmology rather than any specific mountains capable of identification; or possibly instead of 'peaks' the rendering should be 'compass directions', an alternative meaning of the Vedic word, the four principal directions and four intermediate yielding the number eight. The 'leagues' are possibly the 30 leagues which Uṣas, the Dawn, and hence also by implication the sun, is supposed to traverse each day (so RV I.123.8: 'The same [Dawns] today, the same tomorrow follow Varuṇa's everlasting law. Blameless [they traverse] the 30 leagues: one by one they fulfill their intention in one day.'). These leagues were, of course, measurements of the intermediate region, so that, taken together with the 'peaks' (or 'compass directions'), desert areas and rivers, they constitute the totality of space, celestial as well as terrestrial, spanned by Savitṛ.

9. 'Golden-handed': Apart from the obvious meaning, there may be a hint of the gold Savitṛ has in hand to give to the institutor of the sacrifice.

'[he] causes the sun to move': The sun (Sūrya) and Savitṛ are often indistinguishable from each other, but when a difference can be discerned, the sun is the more concrete conception, Savitṛ the more abstract. Here by his impulsion he causes the disc of the sun to move across the sky.

11. 'speak for us': that is, 'speak on our behalf, be our spokesman.'

II.38

Savitṛ

1. That god Savitṛ has just stood forth in order to stimulate, this latest time - the driver whose task that is. For now among the gods he will distribute the gift, and he made the one who invited him to the meal to share in well-being.
2. For all to obey him the god, high up, stretches out his arms, broad-handed: even the waters submit to his ordinance, even this wind ceases in its course.
3. He who goes even with swift horses will now release them. He has made even the one that goes 'round cease from going. He has restrained even the ardor of those that dart like serpents. In accordance with the ordinance of Savitṛ the releaser has come hither.
4. Again the weaver has rolled together what was spread out: in the midst of the work the wise one has suspended her handicraft. Having gotten up, he has stood forth. He kept the times firmly apart. Without a cessation the god Savitṛ has come hither.
5. Here and there, separately, in dwellings the domestic flame of Agni abides, visible for a whole lifetime. His mother has bestowed upon her son the first share in accordance with his desire for it, stirred by Savitṛ.
6. He who abides here and there is turning hither, wishing for gain: he, the desire of all things moving, has been at home. Having left his work done here and there, he has come hither, ever recurrent, in accordance with the ordinance of divine Savitṛ.
7. Due to you a watery domain has been established in the waters, the wild beasts abide here and there throughout the dry land, the woods are for the birds: they infringe not these ordinances of this god Savitṛ.
8. According as it has been allotted, Varuṇa, moving about unceasingly every twinkling of an eye, has gone to his watery abode, every bird and cow to his shelter: each according to his place has Savitṛ dispersed beings.

9. Whose ordinance not Varuṇa, not Mitra, Aryaman, not Rudra infringes, not Hostilities - that god Savitṛ I invoke here with homage for well-being.
10. While strengthening Bhaga, Dhī, Puramdhi - may Narāśaṁsa, husband of a divine wife, favor us! - may we be dear to the god Savitṛ in the acquisition of goods, in the gathering of riches!
11. Unto us from the heaven, from the waters, from the earth, given by you, may that desired bounty come hither, which shall be a comfort to your praisers, to your friend, Savitṛ, to the singer who has broad praise for you!

Notes

There are many problems connected with the interpretation of this hymn. The interpretation presented here owes much to the article by Samuel D. Atkins, 'RV 2.38: A Problem Hymn' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 81 (1961), pp. 77-86.

1. 'That god Savitṛ has just stood forth in order to stimulate': It must be remembered that the name Savitṛ is really in origin just an epithet of the sun, meaning literally 'he who stimulates, the stimulator,' with reference to his daily stimulation or vivification of all plant and animal life, a meaning which the Ṛgvedic poets were well aware of and to which they often alluded in various ways. Thus, the purpose here given of Savitṛ's rising is but a re-statement of the meaning of his name.

'this latest time': that is, the most recent instance of Savitṛ's rising in his endless series of risings.

'the driver whose task that is': Like other gods, Savitṛ is conceived as driving a chariot across the sky. But the word rendered by 'driver' might equally be interpreted as 'conveyor,' perhaps with reference to Savitṛ's conveying of the sacrificial essence to the gods and well-being to the worshipper.

'now among the gods he will distribute the gift': The gift which Savitṛ will distribute to the gods is presumably their share of the meal that is offered in the sacrifice. Like Agni, of whom he is but a particular manifestation, having distributed this sacrificial gift to the gods, he will then bestow prosperity on the giver, 'the one who invited him to the meal.' Instead of 'gift' some render 'treasure,' doubtless with reference to the sunlight, but the gods, who are here said to be the recipients of Savitṛ's dispensation, do not need the light and warmth of the sun as do mortals, so that it seems better to refer the word, which may mean either 'gift' or 'treasure,' to the sacrificial meal.

'he made . . . to share': The Padapāṭha text of the Ṛgveda, which presents the words in their separate, uncombined form, unmodified by vowel coalescence and other phonetic changes, clearly gives this verb as an imperfect, which, from the point of view of Vedic grammar, should be rendered as a simple past in English (although it is often not so treated by translators). Were it not for this imperfect implied by the Padapāṭha analysis, it would be possible to consider this form as a so-called injunctive and translate it more agreeably to the context as a future, parallel in value to the previous verb ('he will distribute'), thus: 'he will distribute the gift, then he will make . . . to share in well-being.' Of course, it would be an easy, though perhaps undesirable, solution to regard the Padapāṭha in error and translate the verb as an injunctive.

2. 'the god, high up, stretches out his arms': We are to assume that Savitṛ has now reached the highest point in his passage across the sky; the stretching out of his arms is but a vivid anthropomorphization of the sun's rays at their greatest extent.
3. 'He who goes even with swift horses': This may in the first instance have reference to Savitṛ and the horses that draw his chariot across the sky, and secondarily to those mortals who are riding about on horses and must now unharness them at the day's end, as does Savitṛ too. By 'the one that goes 'round' may be meant Savitṛ's chariot on the one hand or, on the other, a mortal wandering about. More difficult is the third statement concerning Savitṛ's restraint of 'the ardor of those that dart like serpents': perhaps this may again be a reference to the steeds that convey Savitṛ on his long journey, swiftly yet almost imperceptibly, like the gliding of a serpent, and secondarily to great birds of prey, who dart equally swiftly toward their prey. Their ardor, like that of Savitṛ's steeds, is curtailed with the end of day and the coming of the 'releaser,' *i.e.*, the night, who releases all of the day's labors. The use of this particular word for night, really only an epithet and not occurring elsewhere, is surely meant to echo the verb 'release' in the first part of the stanza, as though the night, the releaser of men's labor, were ultimately the cause of Savitṛ's releasing or unyoking his horses.
4. The night is now over, and with Savitṛ's return to begin the next day, she must roll up the garment of darkness she has been spreading over the world in the course of her weaving. A cycle of a day and a night have now been completed, so that we are at the same point as at the start of the hymn.
 'He kept the times firmly apart': The rather startling change to the past tense indicates that Savitṛ's division of time into day and night was an event of the remote past.
5. Agni, in his domestic aspect, is to be found in every home, where he has to be maintained by the head of the family as long as he lives, after which his son continues the process. The domestic rite accorded to Agni, called the Agnihotra, is performed twice a day, early in the morning and in the evening, the two ceremonies really constituting a single sacrifice. In accordance with Sāyaṇa's interpretation it is assumed that Uṣas, goddess of the dawn, is meant by 'mother' and Agni by 'her son,' to whom the 'first share' is directed in the sense that he is the first recipient of worship in the domestic ceremony that begins the day. Agni's desire for this sacrificial meal is impelled by Savitṛ's rising.
6. In this stanza the poet continues to play on the oneness and multiplicity of Agni, who, though one, abides in every home (*cf.* ṚV Vālakhilya hymn X.2: 'Agni is but one, although kindled manifoldly'). Thus, though he has been at home, *i.e.*, in the multiple homes where he simultaneously makes his abode, he

is coming as but one to the place of the present sacrifice, desirous of the meal that will be offered to him, as if his coming required leaving aside the work done by him in all the separate homes where he is perpetually maintained. This mystery of oneness in multiplicity, stated by the Vedic poet in singularly condensed and ambiguous phraseology, is ordained by Savitṛ.

‘wishing for gain’: desirous of the sacrificial meal offered to him at the Agnihotra.

‘the desire of all things moving’: that is, the object of their desire, as being the focal point of the sacrifice and, in the final analysis, of everything; for without fire in its manifold aspects nothing could exist.

8. ‘Varuṇa . . . has gone to his watery abode’: ‘Varuṇa’ is most probably not here to be taken literally as the god himself, but metaphorically as representing all the denizens of the sea, since the water is his element. In effect, then, the sentence means ‘the inhabitants of the sea, who are constantly moving about, have gone to their home in the water.’ In favor of this view is the parallelism of the categories mentioned in this stanza with those in 7, the order of the terrestrial and aerial only being inverted here. If ‘Varuṇa’ is thus used metaphorically, then the words ‘moving about unceasingly every twinkling of an eye’ have a double application: one with reference to the constant movement of the creatures of the sea, the other with reference to Varuṇa’s constant watchfulness against infringements of the Truth, of which he is the guardian.
9. The idea here appears to be that no force, whether of a god, *i.e.*, of good, or of evil can alter the ordinances of Savitṛ.
10. ‘While strengthening Bhaga, Dhī, Puraṁdhi’: that is, with the food of the sacrifice; Bhaga, Dhī and Puraṁdhi are deified abstractions, Good Fortune, Devotion and Skill, *i.e.*, poetic skill, respectively, the dispensation of which is essential to the poet’s success in composing verses suitable to their recipient as well as success in his priestly and wordly capacities.

‘may Narāśaṁsa, husband of a goddess, favor us’: a parenthesis directed to Agni, here called by his special name Narāśaṁsa, which means literally ‘Praise of Men,’ *i.e.*, object of men’s praise, in origin, then, but a personification of the praise afforded to Agni in hymns of praise. The cognate of this name in the form Nairyōsangha occurs in the Avesta, where it is the name of Ahura Mazdā’s messenger, a function which reminds one of Agni’s role as messenger between men and gods. As the name also occurs after an enumeration of five manifestations of fire (Yasna XVII.11), the conclusion seems certain that the connection of Narāśaṁsa and Nairyōsangha with fire belongs to the period of Indo-Iranian unity. The purport of the appendage ‘husband of a divine wife’ (or possibly ‘of divine wives’) is unclear, and nowhere else in the Ṛgveda is Agni so

designated, nor is it apparent why any god of the pantheon should be especially distinguished by marriage to a divine wife.

'may we be dear . . . in the acquisition . . . in the gathering': that is, more freely 'when there is an acquisition' etc.

11. By 'praisers' are doubtless meant the various poet-priests who sing Savitṛ's praise; 'your friend' and 'the singer who has broad (*i.e.*, heard far and wide) praise for you' are probably the same person, *viz.*, the singer or composer of this hymn.

Pūṣan

Although the evidence in general seems to point to Pūṣan as a solar deity in his origin and even in some of his functions, he was certainly looked upon by his worshippers as a pastoral god, and it is this aspect that is chiefly alluded to in the hymns directed to him.¹ He is primarily a god of the rural people, a divine herdsman, who watches over the herds of cows from his high perch in the sky, in the exercise of which function he keeps the herds from getting lost or hurt (as by falling into a hole), finds suitable pasturelands for them, and helps the herdsman to recover them when they do get lost or stolen. In addition to knowing the right paths and providing guidance, he is also a guardian of paths or roads, which he makes safe by keeping away those who would inflict harm, whether man or beast. That he is said to confer wealth and prosperity on his worshippers would seem naturally to derive from these principal functions, as the protection of cows and their increase through sufficient food were paramount to the Ṛgvedic Indian, and without security on the roads neither cowherd nor his cows would survive or thrive.

In consonance with his bucolic character and unlike Indra, with whom he is closely associated in one hymn, Pūṣan does not drink Soma, but consumes a sort of gruel, called *karambhá*, principally made of grain, a dish of countryfolk.

Like the Greek Hermes and Roman Mercury, who, among their other functions, were conveyors of the souls of the dead to Hades, Pūṣan was a conductor of the dead to the world of the Fathers in the highest firmament.² This curious office as *psychopompos* must be closely related to his knowledge of the right path and his ability to guide.

It has been customary among scholars to connect the name Pūṣan with a root-element meaning to 'nourish,' so that it would mean literally the 'Nourisher;' to this might be related the rare Greek word πῦαρ 'the rich milk provided by a cow after parturition' through a pre-Greek **pūsar*. But another etymology has not unconvincingly been proposed which derives Pūṣan from

¹ In his study *Pūṣan in the Rig-Veda* (Princeton, 1941) Samuel D. Atkins concludes that Pūṣan was a 'solar deity of a pastoral people, consequently a deity with pastoral characteristics and functions', p. 29; but R.N. Dandekar in 'Pūṣan, the Pastoral God of the Veda' in *New Indian Antiquary* 5 (1942), pp. 49-66, is of the view that Pūṣan was essentially a pastoral divinity, with whose original nature the phenomena of light came later to be connected.

² On this function of Pūṣan, v. H. Collitz, 'Wodan, Hermes und Pūṣan' in *Festschrift tillägnad Hugo Pipping* (Hellsingfors, 1924), pp. 574-87.

a compound *paśu-ṣan* ('acquirer of cows') through an intermediate compression to **pśū-ṣan*, exactly equivalent to *fšū-šan* in Avestan.³ An attempt has been made to show a kinship with Πάων, the name of the Greek god of the woodland, particularly as it is reflected in the Arcadian dialect of Greek, where it has the form Πάφων, from a postulated earlier **Pāusōn*, an affiliation of special interest in view of Pūṣan's predominantly pastoral role in the R̥gveda.

I.42

Pūṣan

1. Cross the paths together with us, Pūṣan! Away with distress, O son of deliverance! Do go before us, O god!
2. The harmful, unkind wolf that may threaten us - smite him from our path!
3. Drive away him who obstructs our way, the robber, the deceiver - far away from the road!
4. With your foot stand upon the fiery brand of the false - of anyone who wishes us harm!
5. From you, wonder-working, sagacious Pūṣan, we wish that favor whereby you inspired our Fathers.
6. Therefore, do you, who have all wealth, best wielder of the golden axe, make riches easy for us to obtain!
7. Lead us away from our pursuers! Make good paths for us, easy to traverse! Do find the inclination for this, Pūṣan!
8. Lead us to good pasturage! Let there be no fresh sorrow on the way! Do find the inclination for this, Pūṣan!

³ As proposed by Jarl Charpentier in 'Beiträge zur indogermanischen Etymologie' in *Oriental Studies in Honour of Cursetji Erachji Pavry* (London, Oxford University Press, 1933), pp. 81-85.

9. Be helpful, be generous, bestow, make us sharp, fill our stomach! Do find the inclination for this, Pūṣan!
10. We do not reproach Pūṣan: with hymns of praise we celebrate him. For riches we go unto the wondrous one.

Notes

1. 'son of deliverance': an epithet exclusively applied to Pūṣan, but most probably just a locution for 'deliverer' *scil.* from obstacles besetting one's path, etc. and similar to English expressions like 'son of pride, son of light or darkness', *i.e.*, 'an embodiment of pride' etc.; *cf.* Milton: 'Pursue these sons of Darkness, drive them out' (*Paradise Lost* VI.715) and John Adams: 'zealous son of liberty' (in an entry from his *Diary*).
2. By 'wolf' may be meant any malignant, hurtful person or being, not necessarily the animal.
7. 'Do find the inclination for this': that is, be willing to comply with these requests. Note that these words form a refrain through stanza 9.
9. 'make us sharp': so literally, possibly in the sense of invigorate or stimulate, make alert.

VI.54

Pūṣan

1. Join us with one who knows, Pūṣan, who will instruct us straightway, the very one who will say: 'Here!'
2. We would go with Pūṣan, who will point out the houses and say: 'These very ones!'
3. Pūṣan's chariot suffers no harm; the body does not fall off, nor does his rim loosen.
4. The one who has worshipped him with an oblation, him Pūṣan surely does not forget: he is the first to find his wealth.
5. May Pūṣan follow our cows for us! May Pūṣan protect our horses! May Pūṣan gain strength for us!
6. O Pūṣan, follow after the cows of the sacrificer, the presser of the Soma, and of us who praise you!
7. Let none be lost, let none suffer harm, let none be crushed in a hole: come hither, then, with them unharmed!
8. We approach Pūṣan, who hears, who is watchful, who loses not one's possessions, the lord of wealth.
9. O Pūṣan, in your service may we never suffer harm! We are your praisers here.
10. May Pūṣan put his right hand around us from afar! May he drive back what is lost of ours!

Notes

1. 'one who knows': Probably Pūṣan himself is meant, not just anyone who happens to know. Note that in stanza 2 Pūṣan is specified as the guide. The sacrificer is apparently concerned about the recovery of some lost or stolen property and is seeking the help of Pūṣan, who is expert at tracking down what is missing and affording protection of various sorts to his worshippers. It may be of some interest to note that until recent times, perhaps even nowadays, there were tribal peoples in the Punjab and Gujarat who were regarded as especially expert in locating lost cows and sheep.
 'Here!': laconically put for a fuller expression such as 'Here's what you're looking for!' Sāyaṇa asserts that lost wealth is meant.
2. 'who will point out the houses': presumably the houses where the missing property is to be found. Here Sāyaṇa says: 'the houses where our cows are,' so that he identifies the lost wealth with cows. It is a fact that among many ancient peoples cattle generally were equated with wealth; cf. Latin *pecunia* 'money,' which is derived from *pecus* 'cattle.'
3. 'Pūṣan's chariot suffers no harm' etc.: literally 'wheel,' but taken here by synecdoche for the whole vehicle. All these assertions are made as evidence of Pūṣan's reliability in guiding his worshippers to their lost possessions and helping them in general, for the performance of which functions his transportation must, of course, be dependable.
5. 'May Pūṣan protect our horses': probably from thieves principally, but also from harmful animals.
6. 'the cows of the sacrificer, the presser of the Soma': Probably one and the same person is meant, viz., the patron or institutor of the sacrifice, the various priests engaged in its performance being comprehended in the subsequent phrase 'of us who praise you.' The patron may be called the 'presser of the Soma' by the same idiom seen in 'Cheops, the builder of the Great Pyramid,' in which Cheops is not the actual agent of the action.
7. 'Let none be lost' etc.: that is, let no cow be lost, and so on throughout the stanza.
 'let none suffer harm': Sāyaṇa explains 'by tigers and the like.'
 'let none be crushed in a hole': Sāyaṇa understands 'in a well' rather than 'in a hole' and adds 'let there be no harm even while they are drinking from a well.'
8. 'We approach Pūṣan': that is, we beseech Pūṣan.

VI.55

Pūṣan

1. Come hither, O son of deliverance, glowing one: let us both join together!
Be the charioteer of the Ṛta for us!
2. We approach the best of charioteers as our friend, whose hair is braided
like a cowrie shell, lord of great munificence and wealth.
3. A stream of wealth are you, glowing one, a heap of riches, you who
have goats for horses, friend of everyone who is pious.
4. Now we shall praise Pūṣan, who has goats for horses, who is endowed
with strength, who is called the lover of his sister.
5. To the wooer of his mother I said: 'May the lover of his sister hear us,
Indra's brother, my friend!'
6. May the sure-footed goats bring Pūṣan hither in his chariot, bearing the
god who is the good fortune of men!

Notes

1. 'O son of deliverance': This epithet, peculiar to Pūṣan like the following, occurs also at ṚV I.42.1, in the notes to which it is explained. Probably 'deliverance' is to be understood in the widest sense in which Pūṣan plays the role of deliverer, not only by keeping away harmful beasts, thieves and generally rendering all paths safe, but also by returning lost cows, preventing them from falling into holes, and so on.

'glowing one': The rendition of this epithet, which, like the preceding, is uniquely applied to Pūṣan, is uncertain in spite of its frequent occurrence. If this rendition is approximately correct, it would contribute to the evidence supporting the intrinsically solar nature of Pūṣan.

'Be the charioteer of the Ṛta for us': Many render by 'charioteer of the sacrifice' or an equivalent phrase, but it is doubtful if Ṛta, the Law that governs all the operations of the cosmos, should be restricted to the sense of sacrifice. Perhaps the expression is best understood as the charioteer (of the sun) that conforms to the Law of the Cosmos, an office which the worshipper here entreats Pūṣan to fulfil.

2. 'whose hair is braided like a cowrie shell': with reference to the braiding of the hair and coiling it into the shape of a cowrie shell; said also of Rudra at ṚV I.1 14.1. It is possible also to interpret this epithet as 'whose hair is adorned with cowrie shells' or even 'wearing strings of cowrie shells,' *i.e.*, without reference to the braiding of the hair. From time immemorial cowries have been used in India to ornament the hair or in the form of necklaces.

'lord of great munificence and wealth': an expanded form of 'lord of wealth' in VI.54.8, probably not to be interpreted as implying the mere possession and dispensation of wealth, but rather the control of it, since one of Pūṣan's chief functions is to guide the worshipper to his lost or stolen property.
3. 'you who have goats for horses': another frequent epithet of Pūṣan and, like the first two discussed above, peculiar to Pūṣan. Perhaps his chariot is said to be drawn by goats instead of horses because of their sure-footedness, a characteristic especially needed in his role as guardian of paths.
- 4-5. It is very difficult to say what is the sense underlying the genealogical references in these stanzas, whether, indeed, the mother and sister of Pūṣan are one and the same person, or whether otherwise, or to whom in either case they refer. The mother-sister relationship could be accounted for, if Uṣas, goddess of the Dawn (who is said by Sāyaṇa to be Pūṣan's sister), and Sūryā, a goddess of obscure lineage elsewhere puzzlingly involved in the mythology of Pūṣan, are assumed to be identical, since, at the marriage of Sūryā to the Aśvins, at which Pūṣan was present, Sūryā in effect became Pūṣan's mother when he chose the Aśvins as his fathers (ṚV X.85.14). But Pūṣan's connections with Sūryā are not clearly to be had from the few, more or less isolated fragments of the Sūryā myth to be found in the Ṛgveda, and it seems a hopeless task to put them together into a meaningful assemblage. Moreover, there remains unanswered the question why Pūṣan is called the 'lover of his sister' and the 'wooer of his mother.' One is tempted to assume that Pūṣan really wanted to marry Sūryā after her marriage to the Aśvins, but for some reason (not given in the Ṛgveda) did not do so. But that Pūṣan is also called the *brother* of Indra need not be taken as a genealogical fact, but merely as a way of saying that he is a close friend of Indra, just as we use the word brother in English. As a matter of fact Pūṣan is associated with Indra as a pair in one hymn (ṚV VI.57).

Rātrī

There is only one hymn addressed to the goddess Rātrī (Night) in the Ṛg-veda, although she appears conjoined in a pair with her sister Uṣas (Dawn) in a number of scattered stanzas. Though she is a goddess of the darkness, the emphasis is more on the brightness of the night which she produces by means of the stars, which are her eyes. She is asked to afford protection from the wolf and the thief and to provide a safe passage to her worshipper.

X.127**Rātrī**

1. Coming on, the goddess Rātrī has looked in many places with her eyes; she has donned all her splendors.
2. The immortal goddess has filled the broad space of heaven, the lowlands and the uplands. With her light she is dispelling the darkness.
3. Coming on, the goddess has relieved her sister Uṣas, but the darkness too, will go away.
4. You have come to us today, you at whose coming we have retired, as the birds to their abode in the tree.
5. The villages have retired, those with feet and those with wings have retired; even the greedy hawks have retired.
6. Keep away the she-wolf and the he-wolf, keep away the thief, O Night! Be, therefore, easy for us to traverse!
7. The richly spangling darkness has stood close upon me, black, bedecked. O Uṣas, clear it away like debts!
8. Like cows I have delivered up to you - accept it, O daughter of the heaven, Rātrī! - a song of praise, like one for a victor.

Notes

1. 'with her eyes': that is, with the stars, which are the eyes of the night.
3. This stanza is somewhat obscure. Perhaps Uṣas (Dawn) here should be taken to include the whole day, not just the dawn itself. This, then, is displaced by Rātrī approaching. But Rātrī, after her first appearance (when she covers everything with darkness), will light up the darkness with her stars, and so the darkness will go away. In the dead of night the darkness is so thick as to seem close and almost palpable. To this phenomenon, almost unknown to modern city-dwellers, but an unvarying reality to the Vedic Indian, must, in part at least, be due the postulation of darkness as a substance in subsequent Indian thought.
7. 'O Uṣas, clear it away like debts': a much discussed passage, but the sense seems to be: 'Clear away the darkness, O Uṣas, by replacing it with your light, just as one would clear away debts by paying them off.' In the first three stanzas night is depicted as approaching, in 4-6 as present and here in this stanza as gradually withdrawing.
8. Here too, the simile has been stated in a very abbreviated form. Fully expressed, it would read: 'Just as a cowherd delivers up the cows to their shed, so have I delivered up a song of praise to you, like one composed for a victor.'

Sarasvatī

The river Sarasvatī, conceived as a goddess, is the most celebrated of all the rivers mentioned in the Ṛgveda, not even with the exception of Sindhu, to which ṚV X.75 is directed except for the apostrophe to other rivers in stanza 5. It is remarkable, therefore, that the well-known river which bears the name Sarasvatī (locally called Sarsūti), located to the east of the Sutlej, is in fact a rather small river, hardly of such dimension as to accord with the mighty river with seven sister-rivers venerated in three hymns and separate stanzas of many others. Scholars have long been perplexed by this seeming incongruity and have attempted various explanations. Some, for example, have thought Sarasvatī is but another name of the mighty Sindhu, in addition to being the name of the small river, but others, unsatisfied with this suggested dual use of the name, insist that Sarasvatī is really identical to the small river Sarasvatī, which in ancient times joined with the Sutlej and flowed into the sea, although nowadays it disappears in the desert of Patiālā at the spot appropriately called Sarasvatīvinaśana 'Place where Sarasvatī dies away.'

It is perhaps worth noting that the name Sarasvatī is really just a feminine adjective meaning 'abounding in water', which might fittingly serve as an epithet of any river, whether of moderate or large size. The word itself was surely not coined on Indian soil, but formed a part of the common linguistic heritage of the Aryans prior to the further migration of a portion of them into India, as proved by exact cognates in Iranian, Harahuvati(š) in Old Persian and Harahvaitī in Avestan. The former occurs as the name of a province of the Achaemenian empire, called Arachosia by classical writers, though in origin it is simply the name of its principal river, the only usage preserved in the Avestan counterpart. Similarly the state of Mississippi in the United States takes its name from the river. It is quite possible that early Aryans, entering India from Iran, either simply transferred the name Sarasvatī from the river known from the Avesta to the far mightier Sindhu,¹ or, what is perhaps more likely, added *sarasvatī* in its epithetical value to Sindhu, the original meaning of which seems to have been 'frontier',² in allusion to its

¹ T. Burrow also thinks that the name Sarasvatī was transferred from Iran to India, but regards the Avestan and Old Persian forms as early borrowings by the Iranians from the Indo-Aryans when the latter were still in Iran; v. his 'The Proto-Indoaryans' in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1973, p. 126.

² On the name Sindhu, v. Paul Thieme 'Sanskrit sindhu-/Sindhu- and Old Iranian hindu-/Hindu-' in *W.B. Henning Memorial Volume* (London, Lund Humphries, 1970), pp. 447-50.

natural function between the two great branches of the Aryans. Out of this usage *sarasvatī* could easily have become an alternative name for Sindhu, a name expressive of its amplitude of water.

By a curious development, the details of which are by no means clear, Sarasvatī came, in the period of the Brāhmaṇas, to be identified with Vāc, goddess of speech and finally, after all connection with her riverine affiliations were completely forgotten, she took her place in the later pantheon as the goddess of eloquence and wisdom, the capacity in which she is known and worshipped in India today.

VI.61

Sarasvatī

1. To Vadhryaśva, the pious worshipper, she gave the fierce Divodāsa as canceller of his obligations - she who wrested from every Paṇi his sustenance: these are your mighty gifts, Sarasvatī.
2. She, as a boar with his snufflings, broke the tops of the mountains with her mighty waves. Sarasvatī, smiter of the Pārāvatas, we would seek to win for our favor with goodly hymns of praise, with prayers.
3. O Sarasvatī, crush those who scorn the gods, the offspring of every wily Bṛṣaya! For our settlements you found streams: for those you flowed poison, you who abound in nourishment.
4. May the goddess Sarasvatī, favorer of our prayers, who abounds in nourishment, favor us with nourishment!
5. The one who, O goddess Sarasvatī, entreats you for the prize that has been set up, as one does Indra for the vanquishing of Vṛtra . . .
6. Do you, O goddess Sarasvatī, favor us with nourishment, you who have nourishment! Like Pūṣan, confer gain upon us!
7. Even that Sarasvatī, awesome one with golden chariot, a slayer of Vṛtras, wants our eulogy.
8. She whose loud-resounding fury moves on: unending and undeviating, fearsome, ever moving, restless -

9. may she, adhering to the Ṛta, cause all enemies to go beyond us -beyond the others, her sisters - just as Sūrya, wandering 'round, the days.
10. And dear to us among the dear, with her seven sisters Sarasvatī, well-loved, has been worthy of our praise.
11. Having filled the terrestrial regions, the broad expanse and intermediate space, may Sarasvatī protect us from scorn!
12. Having three abodes and sevenfold, making the Five Tribes to increase, she has been worthy of invocation in every contest.
13. She who, great among them by reason of her greatness, outshines the others in splendors, most active among the active, mighty, made, like a chariot, to be a match, - Sarasvatī should be lauded by the one who understands.
14. O Sarasvatī, lead us on to greater wealth! Withhold not your water from us! Parch us not! Relish our friendship and comradeship! May we not go from you to alien fields!

Notes

1. 'To Vadhryaśva . . . she gave the fierce Divodāsa as canceller of his obligations': The subject of the sentence 'she' refers, of course, to Sarasvatī, *i.e.*, the river Sarasvatī conceived as a goddess. Vadhryaśva is a well-known seer, a son of whom by name Sumitra is the author of ṚV X.69, a hymn to Agni wherein Vadhryaśva figures prominently. In that hymn Vadhryaśva appears as a worshipper of Agni, while in this hymn he is a devotee of Sarasvatī, who is said to have presented Vadhryaśva with a son named Divodāsa. That she bestows offspring, among other benefactions, is stated elsewhere in the Ṛgveda. The obligations which Divodāsa's birth was supposed to cancel or fulfil are probably the offerings to the Fathers, *i.e.*, the deceased ancestors or Manes, which were required to be made by the eldest son. Śāyana and Skandasvāmin include among these obligations also worship of the gods and study of the Veda, but these, especially the latter, are hardly likely for this early period, although with the first mentioned they form the well-known triad of obligations enjoined in the law-books. Still later, it may be noted, yet other obligations were added, *viz.*, benevolence to mankind and hospitality to guests.

‘she who wrested from every Paṇi his sustenance’: Although the Paṇis are frequently mentioned in the Ṛgveda, it is uncertain who they were. At times they seem partly a mythical people, as perhaps in ṚV X.108, which relates the visit to them by Saramā to effect the release of Bṛhaspati’s cows, which they are supposed to have stolen. At other times, however, they seem to be a vaguely discernible historical people, with whom the Aryans had frequent, but hostile contact, who are depicted as withholding offerings from the gods. Various passages in the Ṛgveda suggest that their wealth consisted largely of cows, so that it was probably on these that they depend for their subsistence. The present passage, if correctly interpreted, implies the ruination of their pasturelands by Sarasvatī’s flood waters and the consequent destruction of their means of sustenance. In a closely similar passage at ṚV I.93.4, where, incidentally, as in stanza 3 of this hymn, they are referred to as Bṛsaya’s offspring, the gods Agni and Soma, addressed as a pair, are said to have taken away the Paṇi’s sustenance, which is specifically stated to be cows: ‘O Agni-Soma, that heroic deed of yours has been known - that you two robbed Paṇi of his sustenance, the cows. You overcame Bṛsaya’s offspring, you gained the one light for many.’

‘these are your mighty gifts’: that is, the gift of Divodāsa along with the implications his birth has for fulfilling his father’s obligations to the Fathers as well as Sarasvatī’s destruction of the Paṇi’s pasturelands.

2. ‘She, as a boar with his snufflings, broke the tops of the mountains with her mighty waves’: The action of a wild boar, doubtless here envisioned on a mountain-top, in pulling up roots, however violent and laborious a process it may be, seems ill-suited to serve as the object of comparison in this curious simile. But perhaps the basis of the comparison is less the violence of the action or the noise accompanying it than the manner of its effectuation, a turning up of the earth with the boar’s snout and thereby loosening it, not at all unlike the action of water forcefully dashing against the banks of a river and loosening the soil so that it crumbles away.

‘smiter of the Pārāvatas’: It is not known who the Pārāvatas were, but the context obviously implies a hostile or detested people living in the vicinity of the Sarasvatī river. The usual etymology of their name, which has it signify literally ‘people from a distance,’ *i.e.*, living far away, is certainly unhelpful here, unless it is assumed they were a nomadic people of distant origin. In the Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa (IX.4.11) a people of this name on the Yamunā River are mentioned.

3. ‘the offspring of every wily Bṛsaya’: that is, of every demon like Bṛsaya, the singular of the name used to express the type; or alternatively, by the figure called hypallage, the expression might be taken to mean ‘every offspring of wily Bṛsaya.’ Note that, in the passage quoted above under stanza 1 from ṚV I.93, the pair Agni-Soma are said to overcome Bṛsaya’s offspring, while here it is

attributed to Sarasvatī. Sāyaṇa states that Bṛsaya is a name of Tvaṣṭṛ, whose son was the demon Vṛtra, an identification which seems improbable, although it is difficult to evaluate since Bṛsaya is mentioned only in these two passages.

‘For our settlements you found streams: for those you flowed poison’: Whatever may be the precise interpretation of the text as reflected in this rendition, the general purport at least must be that Sarasvatī provided ample water and fertile land for her devotees, but the very negation of all this for those who reviled her.

5. The sentence is incomplete. If it is coupled with the next stanza, a change in focal point has to be assumed, which is harsh and awkward (‘The one who entreats you . . . do you favor us . . . ’). It is simpler to supply a thought like ‘do protect him,’ as does Sāyaṇa.
7. ‘a slayer of Vṛtras’: that is, a slayer of demons like Vṛtra; literally a compound ‘Vṛtra-slayer’ which is best thus interpreted to refer not to the well-known demon slain by Indra, but, as above with Bṛsaya in 3, to demons typified by Vṛtra.
9. Because of its condensed phraseology this passage has been translated in many different ways, none of which is wholly satisfactory. In this rendition some of this condensation has been deliberately retained; by way of clarification it might be expanded as follows: ‘may she, Sarasvatī (as characterized in stanza 8), adhering to the Cosmic Law or Truth, send all our enemies beyond us, far away so that they do not return - beyond the other rivers, her sisters - just as Sūrya the sun-god, in his circuit across the heaven, sends the days beyond us, so that they do not return.’
10. ‘with her seven sisters’: That Sarasvatī has seven sister-rivers, whether this number be taken at exactly face-value or not, suggests a river of substantial size, far exceeding that of the river that bears the name Sarasvatī in historical times. This lends support to the view set out in the introductory note that in the Ṛg-veda Sarasvatī is the Sindhu, of which it is originally just an epithet; v. also note on stanza 13 below.
- 11-12. One is reminded of the post-Vedic conception of the Ganges as flowing in three worlds, heaven, earth and lower world, which in part at least, must have evolved from the sort of triple abode given to Sarasvatī here. The Waters in the Ṛg-veda have their abode in heaven where the gods dwell, and they descend to earth in the form of rain from the intermediate region, where Indra fought his great battle with Vṛtra who withheld the Waters from man. Almost from the beginning, then, the Waters are connected with the three worlds, and only by a slight extension of this notion earthly streams are connected also with heaven and the intermediate region.

12. 'making the Five Tribes to increase': The Five Tribes are probably just a way of designating the Aryans as a whole, of whom various tribes or peoples are named in the Ṛgveda. Sāyaṇa's explanation that the four classes with the outcaste Niṣādas as fifth are meant may be possible, but v. note on the Five Peoples at ṚV III.59.8.
13. 'She who, great among them by reason of her greatness, outshines the others in splendors': The pronouns 'them' and 'others' refer to the sister-rivers, all of which Sarasvatī surpasses. This passage too, tends to dispel any possibility that Sarasvatī could be the small Sarasvatī of historical times, however the size of this diminutive river may have become reduced since the Ṛgvedic period.
- 'made, like a chariot, to be a match': that is, made to be a match against the other rivers (her sisters), just as a chariot against other chariots. Chariots are supposed to be capable of swift movement, mobility, great strength, etc., all qualities attributed to Sarasvatī in stanza 8, so that the equation of chariot and river is neither unreasonable nor farfetched.
14. 'Parch us not': that is, do not let our fields become dry from want of water.
- 'to alien fields': to fields which are not watered by Sarasvatī and hence not subject to her benefactions.

Sindhu and the Other Rivers

This hymn is in praise of the rivers of India, in particular the Sindhu or Indus, seventeen of which at the least are individually named. Many of these rivers can be identified with certainty, and a few others with fair probability. They are named in a perfect and undeviating sequence from the easternmost to the westernmost, so that with an outline map of ancient India in hand one might easily identify all the names and locations up to the Indus. Difficulties of identification arise only with the westernmost tributaries of the Indus, from which it may be concluded that the Vedic Indians themselves were vague and uncertain about the hydrography of this area, which, by the time they had reached the Ganges, when this hymn was composed, no longer formed a part of their daily experience and so, known to them only through the transmission of their ancestors, had become remote and enshrouded in myth.

X.75

Sindhu and the Other Rivers

1. Well, O waters, your excellent greatness shall the poet proclaim on Vivasvat's seat; for seven each in the three places they issue forth: Sindhu flows forth past the swift streams due to her strength.
2. Varuṇa dug up the paths for you to go, O Sindhu, when you ran unto the victor's prize. Over the earth's back you go by a lofty road, when you lead the van of these rivers.
3. The sound upon the earth strives toward heaven. An unending roar she raises up along with her brightness. As if from a cloud, sprays of rain thunder forth when Sindhu goes bellowing away like a bull.
4. Unto you, O Sindhu, they go, as do mothers to a child, as do lowing cows with their milk. As a warrior king both wings of his army, do you alone lead when you seek to attain the van of these headlong streams.

5. Attend to this, my hymn of praise, O Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, O Śutudrī, Paruṣṇī! With Asiknī, O Marudvṛdhā, with Vitastā, harken! You, O Ārjikiyā, harken with Suṣomā!
6. First to go together with Tṛṣṭāmā, then with that illustrious Rasā of goodly flow, glistening white, O Sindhu, you flow on with Kubhā to Gomatī, to Krumu, with whom you go on the same chariot with Mehatnū.
7. Darting onwards, glimmering and bright in her majesty, she extends to the flat expanses, to the dusty fields. Unswervable Sindhu, busiest of the busy, is worthy to behold, like a splendid mare, like a comely maiden.
8. Abounding in goodly horses is Sindhu, in goodly chariots, in goodly cloth, golden, well-made, rich in mares. Rich in wool is the youthful maid, rich in sīlamā-grass, and she clothes herself - fair one! - in the honey-plant.
9. Her excellent chariot, drawn by horses, Sindhu has yoked: with it may she gain booty in this contest! For great is valued the greatness of that chariot - unswervable, endowed with glory of its own, mighty.

Notes

1. 'on Vivasvat's seat': *i.e.*, on the place of sacrifice, Vivasvat having been regarded as the first sacrificer.
 'for seven each in the three places': literally 'seven (streams) each triply,' which means, however, not merely seven multiplied by three (*i.e.*, 21), a concept which would be differently expressed, but the tripling of seven in each instance where seven is involved. Now the rivers enumerated in this hymn fall into three groups: those in the east, the tributaries of Sindhu in the Pañjāb, and lastly, the westernmost tributaries of Sindhu, though there are not exactly seven rivers in each of these groups, a deficiency which, however, may be explained away either by assuming that the poet did not bother about precision in this, only naming the rivers he thought most important, or by taking seven merely as a typical number. It is possible, to confuse the issue still more, to take 'triplly' by a *double entendre* also in the sense of 'in the three worlds,' *viz.*, 'on earth, in the atmosphere, and in heaven,' the meaning which Sāyaṇa advances. If both senses of 'triplly' are admitted, then, both the three geographical groups as

well as these same groups in the three worlds would be meant. The translation 'in the three places' is intended to imply this double sense.

'Sindhu flows forth past the swift streams due to her strength': *i.e.*, Sindhu surpasses all the other rivers in strength.

2. Probably in his capacity as upholder of the Cosmic Law (Ṛta), whereby all the physical (and moral!) phenomena of the universe are regulated and kept in operation, Varuṇa is here said to have 'dug up' the paths by which the great river Sindhu, with all her many tributaries, flows from her source in the Himālayas to the Indian Ocean. Just as the heavenly bodies - the sun, moon, stars - have their appointed courses and daily rounds, so too, must the rivers, which are just as much a part of the physical world.

'Over the earth's back you go by a lofty road': the 'lofty road' refers certainly to Sindhu's course through the mountains before she appears as the mighty stream on whose banks the Vedic Aryans settled.

3. Sindhu is, like all the rivers, of the feminine gender, so that the comparison with a bull seems a bit inharmonious.
- 5-6. The rivers are named in an east to west direction, then, with the westernmost tributaries of Sindhu, generally from north to south. Gaṅgā (Ganges), Yamunā (Jumna), and Sarasvatī form the easternmost group mentioned by the poet. Sarasvatī rises in the Himālayas at a place called Plākṣaprasavaṇa and finally disappears in the sands of Patiālā at Sarasvatīvinaśana (literally 'the place where Sarasvatī dies away') or briefly Vinaśana.

The next group to be mentioned is the riverine system of the Panjāb. First Śutudrī (now Sutlej), then Paruṣṇī (later called Irāvati, whence the current name Rāvi); proceeding to the west are first Asiknī (later replaced by Candra-bhāga, now Chenāb) and Vitastā (now Jhelum), at the confluence of which apparently began the river called Marudvṛdhā (literally 'swollen by the rainy winds'), which continued on until joined by Paruṣṇī. At this point, starting with Ārjikiyā and Suṣomā and continuing on with the westernmost tributaries, certain identification is possible only in a few cases. Logically we should expect to continue on to the northwest, so that we might postulate that Ārjikiyā was a name for the upper course of Sindhu, while Suṣomā, being mentioned as though a subordinate stream, might have flowed into Ārjikiyā on a line more or less parallel to Vitastā. It has been suggested that Suṣomā may be the modern Suwat. All of the remaining rivers, whatever their true identification may be, are either western tributaries of Sindhu or separate rivers far to the west, in what is now Afghanistan. But the list seems confused, and some of the names, like Rasā, may be mythical, and some merely epithets of other rivers. Of Tṛṣṭāmā nothing is known, nor of Rasā and Mehatnū, but the names Kubhā, Gomatī, and Krumu seem to correspond to the modern Kābul, Gomal, and Kurum

ivers, though, if these last two identifications are indeed correct, the names occur in reverse order in the hymn from their geographic order, as the Kurum is north of the Gomal. The two epithets of Rasā, viz., 'of goodly flow' and 'glistening white,' are by all other translators regarded as names of rivers: Susartu and Śvetyā. But since they are mentioned in no other hymn of the Ṛgveda or anywhere else and there is no way of proving that they are names at all, it has seemed at least not unreasonable to consider them as adjectives of Rasā, a river that is mentioned with some frequency in the Ṛgveda. The same argument cannot be applied to Tṛṣṭāmā, which has no transparent meaning. Rasā, which is for the most part a mythical river elsewhere in the Ṛgveda, but in several other passages a real river far to the northwest, corresponds to the Avestan Rañhā, which has been identified with the very remote modern Syr Daryā, which flows into the Aral Sea, called by Herodotus the Araxes and later classical writers Jaxartes. Vedic Rasā may well have been this remote river which the Aryans certainly knew in the course of their wanderings prior to entering the subcontinent where they settled. This would account for the faint remembrance of it as a stream far away to the northwest in some hymns, but projected into the realm of myth in the majority. Mehatnū must have been, to judge from its place in the catalogue, the southernmost of the western tributaries, though it has not been identified.

8. 'rich in sīlamā-grass': according to Sāyaṇa from this plant is made rope employed in fastening plows together. But the grass or plant is otherwise unknown, as is also the 'honey-plant' (literally 'that which abounds in honey'), which Sāyaṇa identifies with the *nirguṇḍī*, apparently some sort of lotus, which he says grows plentifully on Sindhu's banks.
9. 'with it may she gain booty in this contest': The contest is probably Sindhu's rivalry with the many streams that have been named, so that the hymn is both a laudation of Sindhu and a prayer for her victory over all the others. But these words perhaps carry a double meaning, as the contest might also be a battle that was being fought on the river's bank, in which victory and the spoils of victory were sought by the poet.

The Waters

Under the name 'Waters' (*Āpas*) is comprehended all water, whatever its origin, whether celestial or terrestrial. These Waters are worshipped in only a few hymns, but they are referred to with frequency throughout the Ṛgveda. Although conceived as goddesses, they are endowed with scarcely any personalization, nor is their number ever specified or implied. They are, then, a sort of collective feminine deity, whose origin harkens back at least to the Indo-Iranian period, as evidenced by the cognate *Āpō* in the Avesta. That this commonly inherited word is grammatically a plural feminine seems to have furnished the basis for the conception of the Waters as goddesses.

They are said to be purifying, not only in a physical, but also in a moral sense, and their purifying quality is often alluded to. The Waters figure prominently in the myth of the serpent *Vṛtra*, who withheld them from man and gods until Indra penetrated the demon's belly and caused them to flow forth along with other elements of creation.

It is interesting to note that the old Iranian word, which has come down into modern Persian in the form *āb*, appears in the well-known Indian geographic name *Pañjāb*, which means literally '(Land) of Five Waters,' *i.e.*, rivers.

VII.49

The Waters

1. Having the ocean as their chief, they go from the midst of the flood, purifying, not settling down; these Waters, which the bull Indra, holder of the thunderbolt, dug out - may these Waters, goddesses, favor me here!
2. The Waters that are from the sky or flow from digging or that are self-born, that have the ocean as goal, clear and pure - may these Waters, goddesses, favor me here!
3. The Waters in whose midst King *Varuṇa* goes, surveying the truth and untruth of peoples; which are dripping with sweetness, clear and pure - may these Waters, goddesses, favor me here!

4. The Waters in which King Varuṇa and in which Soma, in which all the gods enjoy invigorating strength; in which Agni Vaiśvānara has entered - may these Waters, goddesses, favor me here!

Notes

1. 'Having the ocean as their chief': because the ocean is the greatest of waters in its extent or because all the waters ultimately flow into the ocean (*cf.* stanza 2: 'that have the ocean as goal').
- 'from the midst of the flood': By 'flood' is meant the flood of waters in the sky or intermediate region, whence come the rains. Sāyaṇa, in fact, explains the word by 'intermediate region.' The Waters referred to are the same as those mentioned at the beginning of stanza 2: 'The Waters that are from the sky.'
- 'which the bull Indra . . . dug out': As has been observed elsewhere, the epithet 'bull' is applied to any god, but most particularly to Indra, to indicate exceptional virility. The Waters were 'dug out' by Indra when in his victory over the serpent Vṛtra, he brought forth the Waters from that demon's belly, where they had been confined, by piercing it with his spear and boring after them; for the details *v.* ṚV I.32 and notes thereon. But another interpretation is possible whereby the digging would refer to Indra's boring of channels for the rivers with his thunderbolt (so ṚV II.15.3).
2. 'The Waters that . . . flow from digging or that are self-born': Waters that flow in artificial channels or those that issue from springs.
3. 'in whose midst King Varuṇa goes, surveying the truth and untruth of peoples': Varuṇa, the guardian of Truth, is regularly connected with water, the element in which he moves and by which oaths are sworn, and in the later, post-Vedic period he is exclusively a god of the sea, the counterpart of Neptune-Poseidon.
4. 'in which Agni Vaiśvānara has entered': As its literal meaning 'belonging to all men' suggests, this frequent epithet of Agni seems to denote not a particular form of fire, such as lightning, but fire in its more general character as the common possession of all. His insinuation into the Waters under so general a designation as this, therefore, is somewhat surprising, unless it is somehow to be connected with the myth in which Agni Vaiśvānara, who had hidden in the Waters, was brought from afar for man by Mātariśvan (for which *v.* ṚV III.9.5 and especially VI.8.4).

The Frogs

The following hymn, addressed to the frogs, is a charm intended for the production of rain.¹ In it the frogs are presented as the counterpart of the Brahman priests in the world of nature. By their annual croaking at the culmination of the heat of spring, they are thought to bring on the monsoon rains. Their croaking is equivalent to the chanting of the Brahmans at the sacrifice, and so it has the same power to achieve its particular end. The analogy of the world of the frogs to that of the Brahmans is extended to considerable detail, the croakings, first singly, then collectively, followed by antiphonal croakings contributed by choruses of other frogs, being regarded as the counterpart of the recitational practices in the Brahmanical schools. No humor is implied in all of this, as was thought by some scholars years ago when this hymn was first studied, but the whole is to be taken in strict seriousness, the goal being the attainment of abundant rain for the fructification of crops and ultimately the proliferation of cows, the practical concern of the Vedic Indian no less than his modern counterpart.

¹ That this hymn is a rain-charm is emphatically demonstrated by Maurice Bloomfield in 'On the 'Frog-Hymn,' Rig-Veda vii.103, together with Some Remarks on the Composition of the Vedic Hymns' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 17 (1896), pp. 173-79; the matter is further discussed by W. Norman Brown in 'Some Notes on the Rain-Charms, Rig-Veda 7.101-103' in *New Indian Antiquary*, May 1939, pp. 115-19. The naturalistic and zoogeographic aspects are interestingly treated by Harold H. Bender in 'On the Naturalistic Background of the 'Frog-Hymn,' Rig-Veda 7.103' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 37 (1917), pp. 186-91.

VII.103

The Frogs

1. Having lain for a year, the frogs, Brahmans fulfilling their function, have spoken words that are stimulated by Parjanya.
2. When the waters of heaven came upon them lying in the pool like a dried up water-skin, then the call of the frogs rises in concert like the lowing of cows with their calves.
3. When it has rained upon them longing and thirsty, the rainy season having come, the one frog approaches the other who is speaking, just as a son his father, when he has recited the syllables.
4. One of the two greets the other, after both have rejoiced in the downpour of water, when a frog, rained upon, keeps hopping about and a speckled one joins his voice with a green.
5. When one of them speaks the word of another, as a learner of his teacher, then a whole section speaks it as though in a chorus, as you sweet-voiced ones are speaking it over the water.
6. One lows like a cow, one bleats like a goat, one is speckled, one of them is green. Bearing the same name, they are of different traits and in speaking they modulate their speech in many ways.
7. You Brahmans, as though at an overnight Soma sacrifice, speaking as though around a full tank, you celebrate this day of the year, O frogs, which marks the beginning of the rains.
8. Brahmans offering the Soma, they have raised their voice, composing their annual prayer. As officiating priests, they appear sweating with their hot receptacles: none are hidden.
9. They have kept the divine ordinance of the year: these fellows do not violate the season. When the rainy season in the year has come, the heated receptacles get emptied out.
10. The one that lows like a cow has given, the one that bleats like a goat has given, the speckled one has given and the green one has given us riches. In giving us hundreds of cows, the frogs prolong our life a thousand pressings of the Soma!

Notes

1. 'Having lain for a year': that is, having lain dormant; the frogs' period of inactivity is really only eight months, *viz.*, from October through June, the longer period of a year being calculated from the beginning of one monsoon to the beginning of another.
 'Brahmans fulfilling their function': The frogs are identified with Brahman priests in the world of nature and, just as the function of the Brahmans is to compose hymns to be used in sacrifices, so it is the function of the frogs to croak every June and by their croaking (their way of chanting) bring on the monsoon rains.
 'words that are stimulated by Parjanya': Parjanya is the god of rain (*cf.* RV V.83 addressed to him), and it is to be presumed that the frogs are subservient to him or at least carry out their function under his mandate; hence, the words or croakings which they utter are impelled or 'stimulated' by Parjanya.
2. 'like a dried up water-skin': During their long period of dormancy the frogs lie buried in sandy holes in the banks of pools or lakes and at the onset of the rains are shrivelled and dried up much like, we are to suppose, a discarded and 'dried up water-skin.' The water-skin meant is undoubtedly the skin of an animal removed in its entirety and employed for the storage of water or other liquid, as has been the custom in the whole of the Orient from the most ancient times.
3. 'the one frog approaches the other,' etc.: In Brahman families the father was responsible for teaching his son, and it is precisely in this way that the Vedas were handed down from generation to generation. We find this method of communicating knowledge practised also by the Brahmanical frogs, the one going up to the other who is giving the lesson, so to speak, just as the son going up to his father to learn the ABCs.
4. 'One of the two greets the other,' etc.: When the frogs come out of their holes after their long estivation, they mate at the first beginning of the rains. It is during this breeding period that they croak, the croak being the mating call of the male frog. In this stanza we may, then, suppose that, while the 'greeting' is in actuality for the purpose of mating, by the observer it was thought to be merely the younger frog greeting the older, or the son the father, according to the salutatory priority observed in India.
5. The recitation of the one frog is followed by a whole chorus of frogs and this in turn by another chorus of repetition from elsewhere around the pool. The seemingly awkward shift from the third to the second person in the latter part of the stanza ('as you sweet-voiced ones,' etc.) is common in the Ṛgveda.

6. 'Bearing the same name,' etc.: They are all called 'frogs,' but some are of one color, others of another, some have one kind of voice, others another.
- 'modulate their speech in many ways': etymologically 'paint' or 'color' their speech, *i.e.*, modify it by croaking in a high or low voice, loudly (like a cow) or less loudly (like a goat). Instead of 'in many ways' we might translate 'in many places.'
7. The idea is that the frogs gather about the pool reciting their song, just as the Brahman priests cluster about the vat of Soma at the Pravargya sacrifice which lasts a day and a night; 'full tank' has, of course, the double sense of a 'full tank' of Soma and a 'full tank' or pool of water.
8. 'composing their annual prayer': that is, croaking exactly as they do every year and thereby bringing the rains. Their croaking is a 'prayer,' and they are the priests who compose that prayer. Among the Brahmans the 'officiating priests' or Adhvaryus, as they are called, perform the manual acts of the sacrificial ceremony. In the Pravargya ceremony they are in charge of handling the cauldrons of boiling milk, a strenuous procedure which causes them to perspire. In the croaking ceremony of the frogs, which is equated with the Pravargya, the holes from which the frogs have just emerged after their estivation are the hot cauldrons, as it were, though their perspiration is only apparent, being in reality the drops of rain water with which they are sprinkled. As they are officiating priests, 'none are hidden,' the services of all being required to do the work. By 'hot receptacles,' then, is meant at once the cauldrons of hot milk and the holes where the frogs had lain dormant.
9. 'They have kept the divine ordinance,' etc.: that is, they have performed the task which is assigned them by divine law, *viz.*, to croak and so produce the rain; they 'do not violate the season' because they croak punctually every year.
- 'the heated receptacles get emptied out': The same double sense is carried on: the cauldrons are emptied of their milk, and the holes in the embankments are emptied of the frogs.
10. 'has given': The simple past tense is employed here as though the 'giving' has already taken place; so also farther on with 'prolong,' where the present is used instead of an explicit wish. This sort of phraseology is frequent in the Ṛgveda.
- 'a thousand pressings of the Soma': that is, another year, there being three Soma-pressings a day and hence approximately a thousand a year. The same wish will be expressed the following year when the frogs commence their croaking again.

Parjanya

Parjanya, to whom only a few hymns in the R̥gveda are ascribed, is a personification of the thundercloud or monsoon rain, whereby all life is fructified and nourished. But in addition to his chief function of providing rain for the parched soil and all vegetal and animal life, Parjanya is said to smite the evil-doers as he thunders. It is interesting to note that the cloud in which Parjanya carries the water and with which he is also identified, is conceived as a water-skin such as employed by Indian water-carriers or bhistees and alternatively as a bucket drawn up from a well.

Parjanya, which is also commonly used as a synonym for a cloud without reference to its personification, has often been equated with the Lithuanian thundergod Perkūnas and related words in the Baltic and Slavic languages. Though this equation involves obvious phonetic difficulties and is therefore rejected by many scholars, the possibility of an ultimate relationship, perhaps affected by taboo alteration, is nevertheless tantalizing.¹

¹ For a detailed discussion of this Balto-Slavic god, v. Marija Gimbutas' Perkūnas/Perun, the Thunder God of the Balts and the Slavs' in *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, vol. 1, no. 4 (winter 1973), pp. 466-78; on the matter of taboo alteration, v. especially pp. 469-70.

V.83

Parjanya

1. Speak unto the mighty one with these songs: praise Parjanya! Seek to win him with homage! Loud-bellowing, with quickening gifts, the bull places his discharge in plants as a seed.
2. He smites asunder the trees and smites the demons: the whole world is afraid of him with his mighty weapon. Even the sinless man flees from him who has the strength of a bull, when Parjanya, thundering, smites the evil-doers.
3. Like a charioteer lashing his horses with a whip, he makes evident his rainy messengers. From afar a lion's thunders rise up, when Parjanya makes the clouds rainy.
4. The winds blow, the lightning-flashes fly, plants spring up, the heaven overflows: nourishment for the whole world arises, when Parjanya favors the earth with his discharge.
5. As one by whose law the earth bows down low, by whose law what has hoofs stirs about, by whose law the plants are of all kinds - as such, O Parjanya, grant mighty shelter unto us!
6. Grant to us, O Maruts, the rain of heaven! Cause the stallion's streams to flow abundantly! Come hitherward with this thundering, pouring down your water, you who are the divine lord, our father!
7. Bellow at us! Thunder! Deposit your seed! Fly about in your water-laden chariot! Your unfastened water-skin pull well downward! May the highlands and the lowlands be level!
8. Raise up your mighty bucket! Pour it down! Let the channels, unfastened in front, flow! With ghee moisten heaven and earth hither and thither! Let there be a good drinking-place for the cows!
9. When, Parjanya, loud-bellowing and thundering you smite the evil-doers, all this world rejoices in turn, whatsoever is on earth.
10. You have rained: now hold off your rain! You have made the parched lands passable. You have produced plants for food and you have gotten a poem of praise from your offspring.

Notes

1. The poet is addressing himself with the exhortation to compose a poem in praise of Parjanya.

'Loud-bellowing . . . the bull' etc.: While it is a common practice in the Ṛg-veda to refer to a god as a bull as being an exemplar of strength and virility, the particular application here is based on the figure of a rain-god as a bull inseminating the earth, his discharge being the water that fertilizes and fructifies the soil; *v.* stanza 4 end. This figure is reinforced by the fancied derivation of the words for bull (*vr̥ṣabha*, elsewhere *vr̥ṣan*) from the same root (*vr̥ṣ*) seen in the word for rain, so that they are thought to mean literally 'rain-er.' This identification of Parjanya with a bull pervades the hymn, his thunder being likened to the bellowing of a bull, except in 3, where the comparison is with the roar of a lion.

'with quickening gifts': that is, with gifts of water that bring to life all things.

3. Parjanya's 'rainy messengers' are, of course, the clouds which he lashes with his thunderbolts, as it were.

'From afar a lion's thunders rise up': an abbreviated figure which means 'From afar his thunders, which are like a lion's roars, rise up.'

6. Here by a sudden shift the poet addresses the Maruts, who are closely connected with the thunderstorm and whose occupation, apart from assisting Indra in his exploits, is the production of rain. But in the second half of the stanza the poet reverts to Parjanya, the subject of his poem. The Maruts are asked to produce an abundant flow of rain by Parjanya, here called a stallion.

7. The water-skin alluded to is undoubtedly identical to that commonly used in India and the Near East from the most ancient times for keeping water, *viz.*, the full skin of an animal, such as a goat, the neck of which serves as a spout when untied and turned downward. The carrier of this sort of water-skin is called a 'bhistee,' a word borrowed from Persian, which means literally a 'man from paradise.'

8. In this stanza the cloud is envisioned not as a great water-skin, but as a bucket or pail being drawn up from a well to be inverted to pour out its contents. The channels referred to are probably irrigation-canals in the fields, which have to be opened up by raising the sluice-gate in the front. The water is called 'ghee' because, like this ubiquitous constituent of the Indian diet, it is essential to life.

10. 'you have gotten a poem of praise from your offspring': This could also be rendered 'you have gotten a prayer for offspring' and very probably both meanings are deliberately intended.

Vāta

The god of the wind is celebrated under two names in the Ṛgveda, Vāyu and Vāta, the latter representing the wind in its more physical character, the former the personification as a god, although this distinction is by no means absolute. Both words presumably are derived from the same root *vā* 'blow' (in any case, they were so regarded by the authors of the hymns, who love to play on this etymology), whose Indo-European forbear is seen in our English *wind* and Latin *ventus*, which are in origin participles meaning 'the blowing one'. It may be of passing interest to note that the well-known Sanskrit word *Nirvāṇa*, in use in both Buddhism and Hinduism, is derived from this same *vā* and means literally a 'blowing out', with reference to the extinction of the fiery passions.

X.168

Vāta

1. Now I shall proclaim the greatness of Vāta, of his chariot: it goes crashing, thundering is its sound. Grazing the heaven it goes, making reddish hues, and it goes over the earth too, tossing up the dust.
2. Vāta's discharges move along after him: they come unto him, as do women to a tryst; joined with them, the god goes in the same chariot as king of the whole world.
3. Going by his paths in the intermediate region, he does not rest a single day. First-born companion of the Waters, adhering to the Law of the Cosmos, where indeed was he born? Whence has he come into being?
4. Breath of the gods, embryo of the world, this god moves according to his wish. Only his sounds are heard, not seen is his form. To this Vāta we would offer an oblation.

Notes

1. 'Now I shall proclaim the greatness of Vāta': Though the verb 'I shall proclaim' is actually omitted, it has been supplied here on the basis of the parallelism of these opening words with those beginning the hymn to Indra (ṚV I.32.1) and that to Viṣṇu (I.154.1).
 'the greatness of Vāta, of his chariot': Most translators render 'the greatness of Vāta's chariot,' but while this stanza is limited to a reference to Vāta's chariot, the remainder of the hymn is not, and it has therefore seemed preferable to adopt the present translation, which is equally possible.
 'making reddish hues': due doubtless to the lightning, although the production of lightning is not specifically stated to be a function of Vāta.
2. The discharges are, of course, the downpours of water that follow upon the wind. That they follow the wind like women going to a tryst (or 'festival' or even a 'wedding,' as it is sometimes translated) is a somewhat peculiar juxtaposition of ideas. Perhaps the closeness of the association on the one hand between the watery discharges and the wind, and on the other between the eagerness of the women to meet their appointment and the desire for the liaison on the part of their lovers is meant to be the focus of the comparison.
3. 'First-born companion of the Waters': Perhaps this priority of birth is accorded to Vāta merely because the wind and water are so inseparable a part of the thunderstorm that the wind must be imagined to have come to be directly after the Waters.
 'adhering to the Law of the Cosmos': that is, the Rta, which governs the operation of every aspect of the universe and to which all the gods adhere.
 'where . . . whence': questions that have been posed about the wind from time immemorial.
4. 'Breath of the gods': In ṚV X.90.13 the wind is said to have been born from the breath of the primordial giant Puruṣa, from which notion the wind as 'breath of the gods' may have arisen. But perhaps it is just a part of naturalistic logic to identify the wind with the breath of the gods. Much the same may be said in explanation of Vāta's being termed 'embryo of the world.' The occasional rendition 'offspring of the world' is hardly meaningful.
 'Only his sounds are heard, not seen is his form': The verb 'seen is' is not expressed, but has to be supplied from the context. A similar condensation occurs at ṚV V.84.3, on which *v.* note.

Araṇyānī

The following hymn, the only one in the Ṛgveda directed to Araṇyānī, goddess of the forest, appears to be the musing of one who has entered the forest toward evening and experienced something of the fear that naturally befalls one entering upon the awesome and the unknown.

X.146

Araṇyānī

1. O Araṇyānī! You there who seem to be gone into the woods, how is it that you do not inquire of the village? I wonder, doesn't any sort of fear come upon you?
2. When the ciccika answers the bullfrog who speaks, making him hop with his castanets, as it were, Araṇyānī is joyous.
3. Cows seem to be grazing and a cottage appears, and the woods at eventide is discharging wagons.
4. While one is calling his cow, and another has cut down a tree, the one who tarries in the woods at eventide fancies: 'Someone has cried out!'
5. Surely Araṇyānī does no harm, if no other comes up. After eating of her sweet fruit, he rests at his pleasure.
6. I have praised Araṇyānī, mother of beasts, smelling of ointment, sweet-scented, abounding in food, though untilled.

Notes

1. In this stanza the poet seems to be expressing concern for Araṇyānī and so asks why before entering the forest she has not made inquiry: after all, she ought to be afraid!
2. The interpretation of this stanza is full of uncertainties, as the meanings of some of the key words are unknown. It is assumed that the ciccika is a bird, so called perhaps because it makes the sound 'cicci.' The ciccika hears the sound of the bullfrog (?) (literally 'the one that has the bellow of a bull') and answers with his particular call which is likened to castanets (or some sort of percussion instrument), making the frog hop about as though in a dance. Araṇyānī, as tutelary deity of the forest, is naturally honored by this.
3. It is dark or getting dark ('at eventide'), and the poet, who is tarrying in the forest, imagines that he sees cows, a hut, and some carts. He is right, as we learn in 4 that the cows are being called together and wagons are leaving the forest with the wood that has been cut during the day.
4. On first hearing the cowherd's call and the sound of timber being cut down, the poet fancies someone is calling for help, perhaps from a thief or wild animal.
5. But he knows that Araṇyānī will do no harm to anyone: harm would have to come from another, a thief or an animal. Reassured, he eats of the forest's fruit at his leisure.
6. 'smelling of ointment': possibly musk, which has a strong odor, is meant.

Pṛthivī

There is only one hymn in the Ṛgveda addressed to the goddess Earth or Pṛthivī who is otherwise always invoked with Dyaus, the Heaven, as an indivisible pair, the parents of the universe. On the other hand, Dyaus is not separately addressed in any hymn, so that he has but a shadowy individuality. Unfortunately this single hymn to Pṛthivī is one of the most obscure in the Ṛgveda, and the rendition given here is tentative in many particulars, especially in the second stanza. But the concept of Pṛthivī, insofar as it appears in this hymn, is much broader than ours might be of an Earth goddess, as it includes also the atmosphere or area of the rainclouds just above the earth. Pṛthivī in this extended sense, then, is looked upon as a great animator of all things as well as the physical support of the mountains and the trees of her surface.

Heaven and Earth as the great universal parents undoubtedly must reach back into the remotest antiquity, not only of the Indo-European peoples, but of man in general. Though as separate entities they are only vaguely personified in the Ṛgveda, in Greek and Roman mythology the heaven was developed into the father of all the gods under the name 'Ζεὺς' in Greek and 'Juppiter' in Latin, the former being the exact phonetic equivalent of 'Dyaus', and the latter of a compound meaning literally 'Father Heaven', which, in fact, occurs in the Ṛgvedic equivalent 'Dyauspitar'.

V.84

Pṛthivī

1. Truly indeed you bear the weight of the mountains, O Pṛthivī abounding in heights, who vivify the earth with your might, O mighty one.
2. Hymns of praise go out to you at the nights' end, you who move apart, who discharge your fructifying essence, as a stallion his impellent seed, O silvery goddess;
3. sturdy one that you are, who with your strength sustain the trees of earth, when for you the lightning-flashes of the cloud shine and the rains of heaven rain.

Notes

The interpretation presented here is, following that of Sāyaṇa, based upon a wider conception of Pṛthivī, limited not to the earth's surface, but extending to the intermediate space between the heaven and earth.

1. 'who vivify the earth with your might': Probably meant are the rains which, during the monsoon, drench the dry land and bring about the germination of crops and the nourishment of animal life. But possibly 'vivify' here may refer to some inner life or urge that is afforded by the earth to all that is upon it. Note that in this stanza 'earth' is limited practically to the sense of 'soil.'
2. A very difficult stanza, translations of which differ markedly, as almost all the principal words are of problematic meaning and the condensation admits to many interpretations.

'at the nights' end': that is, at the very first appearance of the light of day.

'you who move apart': very uncertain, perhaps 'separately from Heaven,' as in primeval antiquity Heaven and Earth were joined.

'who discharge your fructifying essence', etc.: Here the point of view seems to be atmospheric, if it is meant that Pṛthivī discharges her essence in the form of rain that fructifies the fields, just as a stallion impregnates a mare with his seed.

'silvery goddess': perhaps so called because of her being flooded with the waters deposited during the monsoon, which present a bright or silvery appearance in the light of the sun.
3. The verb 'shine' is actually omitted here, but supplied from the sense. It is probably wrong to call such omissions in contrasting clauses by the term *zeugma*, as done by some scholars. The omission is due to a different psychological cause from that seen in classical texts, being part of the process of condensation and brevity that characterizes the Ṛgveda, rather than an incongruous association of ideas with the same verb, as seen in Tacitus, *Annals* II.29.2: *manus ac supplices voces ad Tiberium tendens*. Precisely the same phenomenon may be seen at RV X.168.4, where the verb 'is seen' is omitted in a contrasting clause with 'are heard.'

Dyāvāpṛthivī

One of the grandest of the many dualities in the Ṛgveda is Dyāvāpṛthivī 'Heaven and Earth.' Probably the oldest of these dual divinities, it may have provided a rationale for the others, though it is doubtful whether it harkens back to the period of Indo-European unity, except in the general sense that all early peoples must have had some sort of notion of the earth and the heaven as mother and father of all created things. The union of the two is so close that, with the exception of a single short hymn devoted to Pṛthivī, they are always invoked as a pair, although they are often referred to separately.

Like all the dual divinities, Dyāvāpṛthivī is a compound word consisting of the names of the two deities Dyaus 'Heaven' and Pṛthivī 'Earth,' the former in the form Dyāvā-, as required by grammatical convention. It has seemed best to retain this compound in the translation instead of rendering it by 'Heaven and Earth,' since the interposition of 'and' might imply a too loose combination of the two, and to write 'Heaven-and-Earth' seems pedantic.

It ought to be remarked that Pṛthivī is in origin a feminine adjective meaning literally the 'broad one,' all words for earth in Sanskrit being feminine, a phenomenon in all likelihood conducive to the conception of the earth as a great mother, productive of all life through the impregnating rain of heaven.

Concerning Dyaus, which, apart from its use as the personification of the heaven, means simply 'sky' and 'day,' something is said in the preliminary note to the hymn to Pṛthivī. Here it may be added that the Old English cognate is *Tīw*, which, though originally also 'sky,' under Roman influence, was identified as a deity with Mars, the god of war (!), and appears in 'Tuesday' (*Tīwes-dæg*) 'Day of Mars,' a translation loanword of Latin *Martis Dies* (cf. Italian *martedì*, French *mardi*, etc.).

I.185

Dyāvāpṛthivī

1. Which is the earlier, which of them the later? How were they born, O sages? Who clearly knows? For they two bear everything of themselves that is a name: the night and the day turn 'round on them as though on a wheel.
2. Not moving, without feet, the two sustain many a creature that moves, that has feet: like one's own son in the lap of his parents, preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
3. The unmatched liberality of Aditi, unassailable, I invoke, heavenly, indestructable, worthy of homage: that, O worlds, procure for the singer! Preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
4. May we be dear to both worlds that suffer not, that favor us with favor, that have gods as sons! Both of you among the gods, along with the nights and days, preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
5. Facing each other (young twins, brother and sister, close together in their parents' lap) kissing the navel of the world, preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
6. The two seats wide and lofty I invoke in accordance with the Law, the progenitors of the gods, for their favor, that, fair of form, bestow the immortal. Preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
7. The two wide, broad and ample ones with ends far away I address with obeisance at this sacrifice, the two auspicious ones, of godly deliverance, that bestow it. Preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
8. What wrong we have done either to gods or ever a friend or master of the house - may this prayer be their propitiation! Preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome!
9. May both praises of men favor me! May both favors attend me with favor! Much indeed grant to the one who is more generous than the stranger! Rejoicing in refreshment, O gods, may we be refreshed!

10. This Law I, of goodly wisdom, have spoken unto Dyaus, unto Pṛthivī, for them to hear first. May both protect us from sin, from going wrong! As Father and Mother, may they preserve us with favors!
11. May this, Dyāvāpṛthivī, be true, O Father, O Mother, which I address unto you here! Be the nearest of gods with your favors! May we find refreshment, pasture with quickening gifts!

Notes

1. 'Which is the earlier, which of them the later': said with reference to Heaven and Earth, not the night and day. The question of priority is raised because both Heaven and Earth, as stated subsequently, contain everything that exists, so that they would appear to have come into being simultaneously.
 'that is a name': that is, that has a name, including conditions or states as well as concrete objects.
 'the night and the day turn 'round on them as though on a wheel': The idea here, though obscurely expressed and variously interpreted, seems to be that, while Heaven and Earth do indeed contain everything, including the conditions of day and night, these two behave exceptionally, viz., as though they were on wheels, since they come and go alternately.
2. 'preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from the fearsome': This becomes a refrain which is repeated at the end of every stanza, except the last three, though syntactically it is sometimes integrated with the rest of the stanza as here, but sometimes it is independent, as in 3.
3. By Aditi, which etymologically means 'boundless,' then as a noun 'boundlessness, infinity, the infinite expanse,' is here meant the firmament, an implication suggested by Sāyaṇa.
 'O worlds': that is, Dyāvāpṛthivī 'Heaven and Earth,' similarly 'both worlds' in 4.
4. 'that suffer not': that is, where there is no suffering.
 'Both of you among the gods, along with the nights and days, preserve us' etc.: It is assumed in this rendition that these words belong to the refrain, of which they form the complex subject: 'You both, of all the gods, in conjunction with the alternating nights and days, preserve us, Dyāvāpṛthivī, from harm!'

5. A perplexing stanza that has not yet been satisfactorily explained. In this interpretation the Heaven and Earth are equated with young twins, a brother and sister, facing each other in the lap of their parents, whose navel they snuffle, just as the Heaven and Earth press close upon the place of sacrifice, termed 'the navel of the world.'
6. 'in accordance with the Law': with reference to the Law of the Cosmos, *i.e.*, the Rta, which governs not only the operation of the cosmos, such as the regular rising and setting of the sun, the phases of the moon, etc., but also the complex ritual and requirements of the sacrifice, as here.
 'the immortal': Possibly meant is the water of heaven, the rain, as Sāyaṇa says, but others translate 'immortality.' In stanza 7 it is expressed by 'it' in the translation.
7. 'of goodly deliverance': very variously translated, but probably not 'bounteous' or 'victorious,' as sometimes rendered; the root from which the latter part of the Vedic word is formed suggests rather 'bringing across, rescuing, delivering.'
9. 'May both praises of men . . . May both favors': By 'both praises' and 'both favors' are meant the praise accorded to *both* Heaven and Earth on the one hand and the favor emanating from *both* on the other.
 'O gods': an apostrophe to the gods in general.
10. 'This Law': Again the Universal or Cosmic Law is meant, as in 6; practically it amounts to 'Truth' in the present context.
 'for them to hear first': that is, for Dyaus and Pṛthivī to hear before any other, the first petition heard presumably being the most likely to be acted upon favorably. Note that the compound Dyāvāpṛthivī is broken up here and each deity addressed separately.
11. 'May this . . . be true': that is, may it become true or fulfilled.
 'pasture with quickening gifts': Though the precise sense is uncertain, 'pasture' for the cows is probably meant, the 'gifts' or return from which will bring prosperity upon the sacrificer (or his patron).

The Ṛbhus

The Ṛbhus were originally mortals who were granted immortality by the gods and made their artificers in return for certain services. They were three brothers, Ṛbhu, Vibhvan and Vāja, called the 'Ṛbhus' after the eldest by a peculiar Vedic idiom whereby a single member of a group (in this case Ṛbhu) may be used in the plural to designate the whole group. In the hymns addressed to them, which number fewer than a dozen, reference is constantly made to the wondrous deeds they performed, partly in the service of their parents, but principally in the service of the gods. Five in particular are mentioned again and again, *viz.*, the rejuvenation of their aged and decrepit parents; the fashioning of a cow, apparently from the pelt of a dead cow; the making of Indra's two bay horses who were able to yoke themselves on command, and of the Aśvins' chariot which had three wheels and needed no horses, and the transformation of the Soma-cup of the gods into four. It is this last feat, which, incidentally, had been requested of the Ṛbhus by the gods, whereby they gained immortality.

The Ṛbhus were not magicians, but they were able to perform these and other remarkable deeds through the power of Truth inherent in the perfection of their behavior, piousness and devotion to their parents. Later Indian literature, especially Buddhist literature, abounds in examples of Truth Acts, such as those of the Ṛbhus, perhaps the best known being found in the episode of Nala and Damayantī in the Mahābhārata. At a gathering of princes in which Damayantī was to choose a husband, she was able to pick out King Nala, the true object of her affection, from a group of five persons all appearing to her by divine magic as indistinguishable from Nala; the four were compelled to assume their true aspect as gods, by virtue of her allusion to certain absolutely incontrovertible truths concerning her behavior.¹

The Ṛbhus have always been a puzzle to scholars, and ingenuity has not been wanting in attempts to determine the symbolism or natural basis underlying the feats performed by them, *e.g.*, that the cup which they transformed into four is the moon and its phases. But these explanations are fairly bound to be futile from the outset, as the evidence afforded by the Ṛgveda is too fragmentary and meagre to permit of unassailable conclusions.

¹ On this matter *cf.* W. Norman Brown, 'Duty as Truth in Ancient India' in *India and Indology: Selected Articles* (Delhi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1978), pp. 102-19; originally published in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 116 (1972), pp. 252-68.

The etymology of the word 'Ṛbhu' has occasioned a great deal of discussion, but no etymology that has so far been proposed is free of objection. Once popular and even tempting was the suggestion of a kinship between 'Ṛbhu' and English 'elf', an element of support for which presumably lay in the fantastic exploits popularly attributed to elves.

I.20

The Ṛbhus

1. This poem of praise, which bestows the most gifts, has been made by the sages on their lips for a divine race.
2. They, who with their wisdom fashioned for Indra two bay steeds yoked at a word, have gained the sacrifice by their works.
3. They fashioned for the Nāsatyas a chariot with good axle-holes that goes 'round. They fashioned the nectar-milking cow.
4. Upright ones, whose utterances are true, the Ṛbhus made their parents young again through their service.
5. The exhilarating drops have come together for you along with Indra attended by the Maruts and along with the Ādityas, the kings.
6. And that cup, a fresh work of the god Tvaṣṭṛ, you have made anew into four.
7. As such, bestow gifts upon us: three times totals of seven for the presser - one each for our eulogies!
8. As conveyors, they continued: by dint of their good work they shared a share of the sacrifice among the gods.

Notes

1. 'which bestows the most gifts': The bestowal of gifts, while a sufficiently frequent request of the gods of the Ṛgveda to require no comment, is especially asked of the Ṛbhus, almost as though the worshipper on the occasion of these supplications felt a closer kinship with the Ṛbhus because of their mortal birth.
'for a divine race': The Ṛbhus are meant.
2. 'yoked at a word': yoked merely by command and hardly, therefore, the usual sort of horses. Sāyaṇa specifies that they need no beating (!) or similar coercion.
3. The chariot which the Ṛbhus fashioned for the Nāsatyas or Aśvins not only possessed good axle-holes, which obviously conduced to its running around smoothly, but, as stated in ṚV IV.36.1, it had only three wheels and needed neither horses nor reins for its operation; for further particulars *v.* note on IV.33.8.
'They fashioned the nectar-milking cow': Probably the cow made for Bṛhaspati, referred to at ṚV I.161.6, is meant; *v.* note on the cow Viśvarūpā at IV.33.8.
4. 'Upright ones, whose utterances are true': with reference to their ability to perform miraculous acts through the power inherent in Truth, to which they were wholly committed; their 'utterances', whereby they performed these acts were 'true' and hence unfailing of the desired result; in this connection *v.* note on IV.33.5, where the Truth Act from I.161.9 is quoted.
7. 'As such, bestow gifts upon us': The words 'As such' sum up anaphorically all that has been said of the Ṛbhus, who are then requested, as being without question possessed of these characteristics, to bestow gifts. A Vedic hymn is, in fact, a kind of Truth Act in that it draws thus upon indisputable truths, the inherent power of which in combination with the meal presented at the sacrifice inevitably compels the recipient to comply with the request.
'three times totals of seven for the presser - one each for our eulogies': The meaning is obscure; perhaps each of the Ṛbhus is being requested to bestow seven gifts upon the Soma-presser, making a total of twenty-one, but the number three may not have any connection, except a fortuitous one, with the fact that there are three Ṛbhus. What the seven gifts are is purely conjectural: one may easily list seven (or more!) gifts commonly requested in hymns, *e.g.*, cows, heroic sons, strength (*i.e.*, nourishment or food), delivery from hardship, protection from enemies and other harmful forces, a long life and good fortune, some of which are mentioned at IV.34.10 *q.v.* But most likely the poet did not have in mind any specific list, the numbers three (if not because of the triad of the Ṛbhus!), seven and twenty-one being simply auspicious numbers not intended to be taken literally.

8. 'As conveyors, they continued': If 'continued' is the correct translation of the polysemous Vedic word, the meaning must be 'continued living', now that they had become immortal. But a correct interpretation of the sentence is hindered also by the exact sense to be attached to 'conveyors', a term usually applied to Agni as 'conveyor' of the gods to the sacrifice, but to other gods also as conveyors of the sacrificial meal, which may be what is meant here. Why this role should be assigned to the Ṛbhus on their achievement of immortality and assignment of the third Soma-pressing is not apparent. The sentence has troubled all the translators, to judge from the divergence of their interpretations, none of which is wholly satisfactory.

IV.33

The Ṛbhus

1. Forth to the Ṛbhus I send my word as a messenger - I call on a śvaitarī cow for the spreading over - to the skilful ones who won heaven straightway, moving like the wind, on swift coursers.
2. When the Ṛbhus served their parents with close attendance, work and wondrous deeds, then indeed they attained to the friendship of the gods: wise fellows, they brought prosperity to our devotion.
3. They who made young again their aged and feeble parents lying like posts - may they, Vāja, Vibhvan, Ṛbhu in company with Indra, favor our sacrifice, enjoying the honey!
4. When for a year the Ṛbhus guarded the cow, when for a year the Ṛbhus formed her flesh, when for a year they brought her food, by these labors they gained immortality.
5. The eldest said: 'I'll make two cups!' The younger said: 'Let's make three!' The youngest said: 'I'll make four!' Tvaṣṭṛ praised those words of yours, O Ṛbhus.
6. The heroes have spoken the Truth, for thus have they done. The Ṛbhus have gone according to this inherent power. Tvaṣṭṛ stared when he saw four cups shining brightly like the days.

7. When, reposing for twelve days, the Ṛbhus enjoyed the hospitality of Agohya, they made good fields, guided streams: plants stood upon the dry land, waters upon the lowland.
8. They who have made the easy-rolling chariot that stands still for a man, have made the all-quickening cow Viśvarūpā - may those Ṛbhus, with good favor, with good work, with good hands, fashion wealth for us!
9. The gods surely relished their work, reflecting upon it with understanding and wisdom: Vāja became the artificer of the gods, Ṛbhukṣan of Indra, Vibhvan of Varuṇa.
10. They, rejoicing in our eulogy, who have made the two bays for Indra by their wisdom, who have made his horses that are easy to yoke - as such, O Ṛbhus, bestow upon us riches, prosperity, wealth, as do friendship those who desire peace!
11. At this time of day they have bestowed the libation upon you and the exhilaration: not without toil are the gods disposed to friendship. As such, O Ṛbhus, bestow material goods upon us now, at this third pressing!

Notes

1. 'I call on a śvaitarī cow for the spreading over': The śvaitarī cow was apparently a particular kind of cow, perhaps of whitish color (on the assumption that 'śvaitarī' is related to one of the large group of words for 'white'), especially rich in milk, which provided the milk that was 'spread over' the Soma juice and mixed with it for presentation at the sacrifice.
 'who won heaven straightway, moving like the wind, on swift coursers': While the translation 'on swift coursers' is somewhat doubtful, the emphasis seems to be on the speed of their transit to heaven.
2. 'they brought prosperity to our devotion': a way of expressing the certainty that the Ṛbhus will reward the singer richly for his sacrifice by implying that the benefaction in return for the devotion has already taken place.

3. 'lying like posts': Most translators take the second adjective denoting physical fragility with 'posts' rather than 'parents' and translate 'lying like decaying (or 'rotting') posts', but the idea is not so much that the Ṛbhus' parents were lying about like decaying or disused posts, but that they were as incapable of mobility as posts lying on the ground to be erected or discarded.
 'enjoying the honey': that is, 'enjoying the Soma.'
5. The actual words of the Truth Act whereby the Soma cup of the gods was made into four are given in I.161.9, where each of the Ṛbhus offers an answer to the question as to what is the most important element in the make-up of the wooden cup: 'One said: 'Water is the most important [without which the tree that supplied the wood for the cup could not grow]'; 'Fire is the most important [which in the form of lightning brings the rainwater]' said another; to the many [possible answers] one preferred the earth (or cloud?) that longs for the lightning-bolt [and so is the ultimate cause of the rainwater needed for the growth of the tree]'. The stanza concludes with the words: 'Speaking Truths they formed the cups', which correspond in their general import to the opening words of stanza 6 in this hymn: 'The heroes have spoken the Truth, for thus have they done'.
6. 'The Ṛbhus have gone according to this inherent power': that is, conformed to the power of Truth inhering in their nature or behavior, which made possible the performance of so extraordinary a feat. Most render 'followed this disposition of theirs' (or similarly), but the Vedic word means something more lasting than just 'disposition' or 'inclination', which may be evanescent. It was the continuity or duration of their disposition that was responsible for their ability to do the impossible; cf. X.129.2: 'That alone breathed windless through inherent power'.
7. Sāyaṇa here identifies the Ṛbhus with the rays of the sun, the twelve days with certain constellations connected with the rains, and Agohya, in whose house the Ṛbhus stayed, with the Sun. But these identifications, even if they are accepted, contribute little to elucidate the Agohya legend, which is too fragmentarily presented in the Ṛbhu hymns (v. also I.110.2-3 and I.161.11,13) to be conducive to a single unequivocal explanation. Resting on scarcely firmer foundation is the suggestion that the twelve days of their stay in the house of the Sun have reference symbolically to the twelve days supposedly intercalated at the winter solstice for the purpose of bringing the lunar year into alinement with the solar year.
8. 'They who have made the easy-rolling chariot that stands still for a man': in allusion to the chariot the Ṛbhus fashioned for the Aśvins, which in I.20.3 is characterized as 'with good axle-holes that goes 'round' and in IV.36.1 as 'without horses', 'without reins' and 'three-wheeled'. It is not clear exactly what

is meant by 'that stands still for a man', unless that it automatically stops for him, as would seem necessarily to be the case if the chariot is without horses or reins. But the epithet is variously rendered by translators.

'have made the all-quickening cow Viśvarūpā': This is the same cow alluded to in I.20.3 as 'the nectar-milking cow'. It is not clear whether Viśvarūpā, literally 'Omniform' or 'All-colored', should be taken as the cow's name or as an epithet, which, in either case, however, matters little, as the name is ultimately founded on the characteristic it expresses. The same may be said for the epithet 'nectar-milking' which might be taken as a name (Sabardughā), as done by some.

10. 'his horses that are easy to yoke': The meaning of this is made clear from I.20.2, where Indra's two bay steeds are said to be 'yoked at a word', *i.e.*, on mere command.
11. 'At this time of day': that is, at the evening Soma-pressing or third pressing, the one allotted to the Ṛbhus on their elevation to deities.

'not without toil are the gods disposed to friendship': The Ṛbhus had to perform many difficult tasks to obtain godhead.

IV.34

The Ṛbhus

1. Ṛbhu, Vibhvan, Vāja, Indra, come hither unto this our sacrifice for a bestowal of gifts! For at this time of day the goddess Dhiṣaṇā has bestowed the libation upon you: the exhilarating drops have come together for you.
2. Aware of your birth, you who have nourishment as your gift, O Ṛbhus, exhilarate yourselves at the appointed times! The exhilarating drops have come together for you, so also Purandhi. Send unto us wealth of goodly heroes!
3. This sacrifice has been made for you, which you received ages ago as men. The relished drops have proceeded toward you: and you have all become firsts, O Vājas.

4. There has been for the one worshipping you a bestowal of gifts now, heroes, for the pious mortal. Drink! Vājas, Ṛbhus: to you is given the third great pressing for your exhilaration.
5. Come hither unto us, O Vājas, O Ṛbhukṣans, O heroes of great wealth, who are being sung! These libations have come unto you at the close of the days, as do cows, newly calved, to their shed.
6. Come hither, sons of strength, unto this sacrifice, being called with obeisance, and together, O lords, drink of the honey of which you are the lords, along with Indra, O bestowers of gifts!
7. Together with Varuṇa, O Indra, drink the Soma! together with the Maruts, O lover of songs! together with those who drink first, who drink at the appointed times! together with the divine wives, bestowers of gifts!
8. Together with the Ādityas exhilarate yourselves! together, O Ṛbhus, with the Mountains! together with the divine Savitṛ! together with the Rivers, the bestowers of gifts!
9. The Ṛbhus, who fashioned the Aśvins; their parents; who, to help, fashioned the cow; the two horses; who made the armor; asunder the two worlds; the Vibhūs, heroes, who made goodly offspring;
10. you who bestow wealth consisting of cows, nourishment, goodly heroes, of material goods and abounding in domestic animals - as such, O Ṛbhus, you who drink first, who exhilarate yourselves, upon us do bestow it and upon those who sing your liberality!
11. You have not been away, we have not allowed you to be thirsty, excluded from praise, Ṛbhus, at this sacrifice. Rejoice along with Indra, with the Maruts, with the kings, for the bestowal of gifts, O gods!

Notes

1. 'at this time of day': at the evening Soma sacrifice.
'the goddess Dhiṣaṇā': probably a personification of the will of the gods.
2. 'Aware of your birth': in allusion to the Ṛbhus' origin as human beings.
'Puraṁdhī': apparently a personification of the skill of the poet; cf. II.38.10, on which *v.* note.
3. 'you have all become firsts, O Vājas': Because the Ṛbhus, of whom Vāja was the youngest, were now elevated to deities and the inequality of their age nullified, they are all now 'firsts' or first-born, as was only the eldest Ṛbhu formerly. Note that the triad is here called by the plural 'Vājas', while below in stanza 5 they are collectively termed 'Ṛbhukṣans', by the plural of an alternative name of Ṛbhu, and in 9 they are called 'Vibhūs', Vibhū being an alternative name of the middle-aged member Vibhvan.
9. This stanza is a remarkable instance of the extreme ellipsis of expression, of which the poets of the Ṛgveda are so fond. Even though in English it is not possible to reproduce this sort of extremity of brevity, some attempt has been made here to suggest it. In the original, however, the wording is even more abbreviated, only the second 'fashioned' and the last 'made' being expressed, leaving each segment of the sentence to consist of but the relative pronoun 'who' and an object, an appropriate verb having to be supplied in each instance either from the hearer's knowledge of the Ṛbhus' feats or by extracting it from the two that are expressed. In either case, then, if there were no other allusions to the Ṛbhus in the Ṛgveda apart from this hymn, little more than a skeleton of sense could be elicited from this laconic stanza. But from our knowledge of the Ṛbhus' deeds we might easily supply the unexpressed words as follows: 'The Ṛbhus, who [fashioned the three-wheeled chariot for] the Aśvins; who [rejuvenated] their parents; who, in order to help them, fashioned the cow [from the skin of the dead cow]; [fashioned] the two horses [for Indra]; who [made] the armor; who [pushed?] asunder (?) the two worlds; the Vibhūs, heroes, who made goodly offspring'. Nothing, however, is elsewhere said about the making of the armor, which must have been done for the gods and probably after the Ṛbhus had been made their artificers. Nor is anything said elsewhere about their 'pushing asunder the two worlds', a feat attributed to various gods in the Ṛgveda, if indeed this amplification, based on the doubtful word 'asunder', is correct. It should be observed that this stanza forms a single sentence with the next stanza, but by a transfer or alteration in construction common in the Ṛgveda, there is a sudden shift to direct address starting with the words 'you who bestow wealth' in 10.

The All-gods

Among the various groups of deities celebrated in the Ṛgveda are the All-gods or *Viśve Devāḥ*, as they are called. Theoretically this group consists of all the gods in the pantheon, worshipped as a unit or as a single deity, so to speak, the idea being that the worship of no god should be omitted or neglected in this way. By a remarkable paradox, however, the All-gods sometimes assume the character of a separate class of gods, losing their all-comprehensiveness and being mentioned along with other gods or groups of gods, even in hymns addressed to the All-gods themselves. Whether conceived thus all-inclusively or in the narrower sense, the All-gods occupy a prominent place in the Ṛgveda.

Though the construction of the hymns addressed to them varies somewhat from one hymn to the other, typically each stanza is directed to a different god, group of gods or conjointly worshipped pair like *Mitrāvaruṇā* or *Indrāgnī*, although sometimes two or more stanzas are accorded to the same deity. In some stanzas many gods are listed in a series, some accompanied by epithets. Oftentimes included among the gods are various abstractions and also concrete objects, as may be plentifully seen in ṚV VII.35, where, among others, are mentioned the Utterance of Truth, Prayer, Sustenance (apart from the *Ādityas*, like *Bhaga* and *Aryaman*, who are in reality also abstractions), plants, trees, mountains, and paraphernalia of the sacrifice. Sometimes the names of the individual gods are not given, and their identity has to be extracted from riddles, some of which constitute the greatest obscurities in the Ṛgveda, as exemplified by ṚV I.164, in large part a hymn to the All-gods, attributed to a seer bearing the appropriate nickname *Dīrghatamas* 'He of Long Darkness.' But the riddles may be of the simplest kind, mere allusions to typical attributes or activities of each god, as in the case of ṚV VIII.29, which, on the whole, presents no difficulty of identification. The hymns to the All-gods sometimes refer to deities otherwise hardly known or even unknown, as for example, *Tārksya* the horse, or *Ahi Budhnya* 'The Serpent from the Depths,' one of the most mysterious of Vedic deities.

The origin of this class of hymns can, of course, only be conjectured, and yet the idea of treating the whole array of gods as a single, all-embracing entity is bound to be of intrinsic interest to the student of religion. Perhaps, in part at least, the idea arose merely from the common practice of mentioning in the same hymn other gods than the one to whom the hymn is specifically addressed, which could easily have led to the extension of the lists still further so as not to offend any deity by inadvertent omission.

Finally, it must be said that some of the hymns which are by tradition ascribed to the All-gods are hardly more than loosely strung aggregations of isolated stanzas, often riddles, as already mentioned, to which the ascription All-gods is put for want of another category.

I.89

The All-gods

1. Hither unto us may auspicious thoughts come from every quarter - imperturbable, unobstructed, penetrating - so that the gods may ever be for our increase, our unremitting protectors every day!
2. May the gods' auspicious good will toward those who espouse the right - may the gods' bounteousness be directed unto us! The gods' friendship have we sought: may the gods extend our life that we may live!
3. These with prayer of old we invoke: Bhaga, Mitra, Aditi, Dakṣa unfailing, Aryaman, Varuṇa, Soma, the Aśvins. May gracious Sarasvatī bring us refreshing joy!
4. That medicine which is refreshing joy may Vāta waft unto us! That may Mother Earth, that may Father Heaven bestow! That may the Stones bestow that press the Soma, which are refreshing joy! This do you two hear, wise Aśvins!
5. Him, the lord that rules what moves and stands, who stimulates the thought, for his favor we invoke, so that Pūṣan may be for the increase of our possessions, our protector, a guardian imperturbable for our well-being.
6. Well-being upon us may Indra whose fame is wide-spread bestow, well-being upon us may Pūṣan, the all-possessing, well-being upon us may Tārṣya, whose fellies are unscathed, well-being may Bṛhaspati bestow upon us!

7. Having the spotted ones as their horses, may the Maruts, whose mother is Pṛśni, who move in splendor to the assemblies, constantly on the go, may those who have Agni for their tongue, the fellows who have the sun for their eye, the All-gods - may they come hither unto us with their favor!
8. The auspicious may we hear with our ears, O gods! The auspicious may we see with our eyes, O you who are worthy of worship! May we who have praised you, with firm limbs and bodies, attain the lifespan determined for us by the gods!
9. Only a hundred autumns are before us, O gods, wherein you have allotted the aging of our bodies, wherein our sons become fathers: cause not our life to suffer harm in the midst of our going!
10. Aditi is the heaven; Aditi is the intermediate region; Aditi is mother, she is father, she is son; Aditi is the All-gods, the Five Peoples. Aditi is what has been born, Aditi is what shall be born.

Notes

3. Five of the deities mentioned here, *viz.*, Bhaga, Mitra, Dakṣa, Aryaman and Varuṇa, are actually sons of Aditi, *i.e.*, Ādityas, among whom is included also Aṁśa according to the enumeration of the Ādityas given at ṚV II.27.1. Except for one or two other gods, for example Sūrya, elsewhere also called Ādityas in the Ṛgveda, these six gods, whose chief was Varuṇa, are all personifications of abstractions. Bhaga and Aṁśa are hardly to be distinguished, as is apparent from their meaning as ordinary nouns, the former meaning 'fortune, blessing,' the latter 'portion, allotment,' so that their near synonymy may account for the omission of Aṁśa from this list.
4. 'That medicine': merely a poetical way of saying freedom from all affliction, but Geldner specifies 'the elixir of life' (*das Lebenselixier*) in favor of which is the address to the Aśvins, who are the physicians among the gods.
 'wise Aśvins': 'Wise' is only a tentative translation, the meaning of the Vedic word being unknown.
5. Sāyaṇa refers the first half of this stanza, *i.e.*, through the words 'we invoke,' to Indra, but the epithet 'who stimulates the thought' is elsewhere (ṚV VI.58.2)

applied to Pūṣan and never to Indra. It is preferable, therefore, to refer the whole stanza to Pūṣan, especially since the second half ought to be construed as a subordinate clause giving the reason for the invocation.

6. 'Pūṣan, the all-possessing': This epithet might also be rendered 'all-knowing,' but the first of these is the more likely because of the god's frequent connection with property (especially cows, but also other wealth) and its safe return to the owner; cf. ṚV VI.54, especially 1 and 2 and notes thereon.

'Tārṅśya, whose fellies are unscathed': Tārṅśya was apparently a horse, much like Dadhikrā (v. ṚV IV.39), famed for his bravery and skill in battle, as shown by the epithet applied to him here and as may be gleaned also from the only other passage in the Ṛgveda where he is mentioned, viz., X.178, a hymn of but three stanzas dedicated to his praise.

7. 'Having the spotted ones as their horses': On 'the spotted ones' v. note at ṚV I.85.4. Even if the Maruts were not named in the first half of this stanza, there would be no difficulty in identifying them, as all the attributes given here are typical of them, and their splendor, partly inherent and partly the result of the unceasing application of ornamentation, runs ubiquitously in the hymns addressed to them.

'to the assemblies': a provisional translation of a difficult Vedic word; v. note at ṚV V.63.2.

'those who have Agni for their tongue': This is a fairly common epithet of the All-gods, although it might theoretically be applied to any of the gods. The Indian commentator Veṅkaṭasvāmin explains that they are so characterized 'because they eat the oblation which is cast into the fire, and therefore the fire takes the place of their tongue,' or, to put it slightly differently, they taste of the essence of the sacrificial meal through the intermediary of fire.

'who have the sun for their eye': This could also be translated 'brilliant as the sun,' but various gods are said to have the sun for their eye, as for example Mitra, Varuṇa and Agni at ṚV I.115.1.

9. 'Only a hundred autumns are before us': that is, are appointed or given to us. The computation of years by various seasons is common in the Ṛgveda; cf. 'May I attain a hundred winters' at II.33.2. A hundred years was, as we see in these two passages, considered to be the normal span of life.

10. This stanza has nothing to do with the rest of the hymn, from whose tenor it differs markedly. As it merges everything in Aditi conceived as a universal substrate, it foreshadows the concept of Brahman later to be elaborated in the Vedānta.

On the 'Five Peoples,' v. note on ṚV III.59.8.

VII.35

The All-gods

1. Beneficent to us may Indrāgni be with their favors; beneficent to us Indrāvaruṇā, to whom an oblation is offered; beneficent Indrāsomā - for our welfare a beneficent blessing; beneficent to us may Indrāpūṣaṇā be for the gaining of nourishment!
2. Beneficent to us may Bhaga be; beneficent to us Śarṁsa; beneficent to us Purāṁdhi; beneficent also may Riches be; beneficent to us the utterance of Truth well-controlled; beneficent to us may Aryaman be, whose births are many!
3. Beneficent to us may the Creator be; beneficent also to us the Sustainer; beneficent to us may the wide-extended Earth be by her inherent powers; beneficent the Two lofty Worlds; beneficent to us the Stone; beneficent to us may our goodly Invocations of the gods be!
4. Beneficent to us may Agni be, whose face is the light; beneficent to us Mitrāvaruṇā; beneficent the Aśvins; beneficent to us may the well-done Deeds of the Well-doing be; beneficently upon us may refreshing Vāta blow!
5. Beneficent to us may Dyāvāpṛthivī be at the first invoking; beneficent may the Intermediate Region be for us to see; beneficent to us may the Plants, the Trees be; beneficent to us may the Lord of the Atmosphere, the victorious, be!
6. Beneficent to us may the god Indra along with the Vasus be; beneficent well-praised Varuṇa along with the Ādityas; beneficent to us Rudra, the soothing one, along with the Rudras; beneficent to us, may Tvaṣṭṛ hear us here along with the wives of the gods!
7. Beneficent to us may the Soma be; beneficent to us Prayer; beneficent to us the Pressing Stones; beneficent also may the Sacrifices be; beneficent to us the Fixing in of the Sacrificial Posts be; beneficent to us the Grass; beneficent to us also may the Altar be!

8. Beneficent to us may far-seeing Sūrya go forth; beneficent to us may the Four Directions be; beneficent to us may the firm-standing Mountains be; beneficent to us the Rivers; beneficent also may the Waters be!
9. Beneficent to us may Aditi be with her Ordinances; beneficent to us may the Maruts be with their goodly songs; beneficent to us Viṣṇu; beneficent also may Pūṣan be to us; beneficent to us Sustenance; beneficent also may Vāyu be!
10. Beneficent to us the god Savitṛ, who protects; beneficent to us may the Dawns be, shining far and wide; beneficent to us may Parjanya be for our offspring; beneficent to us may the Lord of the Field be, who is beneficent!
11. Beneficent to us may the gods, the All-gods, be; beneficent may Sarasvatī along with Inspiring Thoughts be; beneficent Those that Attend; beneficent also Those that Attend with Gifts; beneficent to us Those in Heaven, Those on Earth; beneficent to us Those in the Waters!
12. Beneficent to us may the Lords of Truth be; beneficent to us Steeds; beneficent also may Cows be; beneficent to us the Ṛbhus with good work, with good hands; beneficent to us may the Fathers be at our invocations!
13. Beneficent to us may the god Aja Ekapad be; beneficent to us Ahi Budhnya; beneficent the Ocean; beneficent to us may Apāṁ Napāt be, the fructifier; beneficent to us may Pṛṣni be, who has the gods as her protectors!
14. May the Ādityas, Rudras, Vasus relish this fresh prayer being made! May they hear us: Those in Heaven, Those on Earth, Those born of the Cow and the Ones who are worthy of sacrifice!
15. Those who, of the gods worthy of sacrifice, are worthy of sacrifice, worthy of Manu's worship - the immortals who know the Ṛta - may they grant us wide-striding today! Protect us always with well-being!

Notes

This hymn to the All-gods comes perhaps closer to reflecting the all-comprehensive character of the concept which they represent than many of the others, even the All-gods themselves being included (stanza 11), as though they constituted a distinct and separate group not to be omitted from the enumeration. Not only, then, are the great gods invoked along with some of the chief conjointly worshipped deities and groups, but a diverse array of personifications, partly of abstractions and partly of concrete objects, is interspersed among them. Among these multifarious gods are mentioned two of the least known Ṛgvedic deities, *viz.*, Aja Ekapad and Ahi Budhnya, who, whatever else may be said about them, have the distinction of being invoked or mentioned only in hymns to the All-gods.

1. 'Beneficent': Except for the last two stanzas, every line of every stanza begins with this word, and it occurs frequently within the lines too. It is in all instances a translation of the Vedic word *śam*, which, in its occurrences in other hymns, has been translated 'comfort,' a meaning which, however, seems too narrow here, comfort being but part of the multiform benefaction that is sought by the worshipper from each of these many divine beings. Reflecting a range of meaning that embraces 'welfare, happiness, blessing, comfort, prosperity, beneficence,' this word *śam* may be seen as the first part of the Indian name Śaṁkara, literally 'maker (-kara) of welfare (etc.),' *i.e.*, promoter or giver thereof, originally an epithet of Rudra-Śiva, then an independent name. Like other names of gods, it occurs as a personal name, perhaps the most famous instance being that of Śaṁkara or Śaṁkarācārya, as he is more usually called, the great expositor of Advaita Vedānta.

Indrāgnī, Indrāvaruṇā, Indrāsomā and Indrāpūṣaṇā are all conjointly worshipped deities or pairs, and individual hymns are ascribed to all these pairs in the Ṛgveda. The second member of each pair, *viz.*, Agni, Varuṇa, Soma and Pūṣan, is separately mentioned elsewhere in this hymn, as is Indra too, showing that the pairs are conceived indivisibly, as though they were separate deities, different from the individuals.

2. 'Śaṁsa': It is not clear whether Śaṁsa is a shortened form of Narāśaṁsa, a name of Agni (for which *v.* note on II.38.10), or whether Śaṁsa, literally 'praise, utterance,' is just a personification of the hymn of praise, in which case it could be rendered 'Praise'; if the latter, it need not be restricted to this particular hymn, but doubtless would refer to hymns of praise generally or *in abstracto*. In favor of Śaṁsa as an abbreviation for Narāśaṁsa is perhaps the occurrence in II.38.10 also of the names Bhaga (the Āditya personifying 'Good Fortune') and Puram̐dhi ('Poetic Skill' deified).

‘Aryaman, whose births are many’: Aryaman, one of the Ādityas, is the personification of the relation between host and guest. Perhaps it is because this relationship extends to every household and is therefore multifold that Aryaman’s births are said to be many.

3. ‘the Creator’ and ‘the Sustainer’: These designations do not imply particular deities, as in later Hinduism, where they may be practically regarded as alternative names of Brahmā and Viṣṇu. But here ‘Creator’ and ‘Sustainer’ are just examples of a Vedic tendency to abstract and isolate various attributes and personalize them as independent deities. The example *par excellence* of this practice is the god Savitṛ, literally ‘the Stimulator,’ originally an epithet of the sun-god, which was then made into a separate god. In the late hymn X.190, which derives the world from tapas or the ‘fire’ of deep ascetic concentration, a ‘creator,’ doubtless similar to that envisaged here, is said to have formed the principal constituents of the cosmos, the sun, moon, heaven, earth, etc. But although various gods are called ‘sustainers’ or ‘upholders’ in the Ṛgveda, it is only in this passage that a sustainer has become a deity in his own right.

‘the Stone’: If the translation is correct, probably the stone used in pounding the Soma in order to extract the juice, but mention of this implement here seems out of place, and moreover the ‘Pressing Stones’ are invoked in stanza 7, where the context revolves wholly around the sacrifice and is unequivocal. Sāyaṇa and Veṅkaṭasvāmin, followed by some Western scholars, render by ‘mountain,’ a possible meaning of the Vedic word, which, however, scarcely illuminates the matter. Mountains are mentioned in 8 along with the compass directions, rivers and the Waters.

5. ‘Lord of the Atmosphere’: One would think primarily of Indra as filling this role, and so Sāyaṇa, but Indra is mentioned in 1 and 6, so that the suggestion of Bergaigne that Bṛhaspati, who is nowhere named in the hymn, may be meant, deserves to be weighed. It may be noted on behalf of this view that Bṛhaspati is closely associated with Indra in his atmospheric exploits, and in X.68.12 his home in the clouds is alluded to: ‘This homage we have made to him who abides in the clouds.’
10. ‘Lord of the Field’: a minor deity, a sort of genius of husbandry, to whom the first three stanzas of ṚV IV.57 are directed: ‘With the Lord of the Field as our friend we shall win nourishment for cow and horse. May he be merciful to us in such! (1) O Lord of the Field, a wave of honey yield unto us, as does a cow milk - dripping honey like ghee well-purified! May the Lords of the Ṛta be merciful unto us! (2) Honied may the plants be, the heavens, the Waters, honied for us the intermediate region! May the Lord of the Field be honied for us! Suffering no harm may we move after him! (3).’

11. 'Beneficent to us may the gods, the All-gods, be': Note that here the All-gods are included among the other gods whose benefaction is sought, as though they were just another group of gods like the Vasus or the Ādityas, invoked elsewhere.

'Those that Attend' and 'Those that Attend with Gifts': It is probably not possible to determine the exact meaning of these expressions, nor is any help in its determination afforded by other passages, as for example X.65.14, which, in large part made up of phrases identical to those in this hymn, has these expressions in reversed order: 'May the All-gods along with Inspiring Thoughts, with Puramdhi, worthy of Manu's worship - the immortals who know the Rta - Those that Attend with Gifts, Those that Attend, Finders (or Knowers?) of the sun, the Sun - may they relish my songs, my prayer, my hymn of praise!' Perhaps these beings were, after all, little more than guardian angels of some sort.

12. 'the Lords of Truth': very likely the gods in general.

13. 'Aja Ekapad' and 'Ahi Budhnya': Very little can be gleaned from the Ṛgveda about Aja Ekapad, who is mentioned only a half dozen times, exclusively in hymns to the All-gods. In these passages his name occurs along with that of Ahi Budhnya, with the exception of X.65.13, where Ahi Budhnya is omitted, and only in the latter instance where, like various other gods, he is styled 'supporter of the sky,' is anything beyond his bare name mentioned. The name itself is scarcely of any help in determining anything about him, however, as the first part (Aja) is susceptible of a number of unrelated explanations due to the fact that it is a threefold homonym. As an ordinary word, apart from its use in Aja Ekapad, *aja* may mean 'driving' (or 'driver'), 'unborn' and 'goat.' There are theories about the identity of Aja Ekapad that are based on all these meanings. Ekapad means 'having one foot, one-footed,' so that, depending on the particular sense of Aja, the name might be understood as 'The One-footed Driver,' 'The Unborn One-footed One' or 'The One-footed Goat!' The German scholar Roth was of the view that Aja Ekapad as 'The One-footed Driver' (or 'Stormer') was a sort of storm-god or genius of the storm.¹ Bergaigne, basing himself on the meaning 'The Unborn One-footed One,' conceived him as a god dwelling in an isolated world, a place of mystery, a hardly meaningful hypothesis.² Various theories have been founded on the interpretation 'The One-footed Goat.' Macdonell thought that he was the lightning, conceived as a goat in the cloud-

¹ 'der einfüssige Treiber, Stürmer, wahrscheinlich ein Genius des Sturmes' under the entry 'Aja Ekapād' in the St. Petersburg Lexicon.

² Abel Bergaigne, *La Religion Védique* (2. tirage, Paris, 1963) III, p. 23: 'qui habite le monde unique, isolé, le lieu du mystère.'

mountains, his one foot being the single streak of lightning.³ Dumont, in agreement with Bloomfield and Henry that Aja Ekapad was a solar deity, attempted to show that he was a sun-god under the figure of a goat who supported himself in the sky by means of one foot, whereby he also drew up the water from the earth during the dry season with which to drench the earth during the rains.⁴ The mycologist Wasson, who identifies the Soma plant with the mushroom *Amanita muscaria*, theorises that Aja Ekapad may have been a name for this mushroom, its single stalk being the one foot and its peculiar method of reproduction by spores instead of seeds suggesting that it is unborn.⁵ These are not by any means all the theories, but their number need not be augmented to show the great divergence of opinion among scholars. But whatever may have been the original conception upon which Aja Ekapad is founded, one has the impression that it is a very ancient myth, the details of which were no longer known to the Vedic poets, who had but the dimmest recollection of this deity, though they felt constrained to include him in the hymns to the All-gods as being one of the pantheon.

Hardly more can be said of Ahi Budhnya than of his associate Aja Ekapad. Though mentioned twice as frequently, his invocation is also confined to the hymns to the All-gods. A fragment of information about him is furnished at RV VII.34.16-17: 'With eulogies I sing of the serpent born in the waters: he is sitting in the regions at the bottom of the streams. May Ahi Budhnya not expose us to harm! May the sacrifice of this one who adheres to the Ṛta be unailing!' But here again we have the feeling of a myth known even to the Vedic poets only in fossilitic form, where details had long since receded into the mists of earliest antiquity. Perhaps a reminiscence of this myth can be discerned in the post-Vedic conception of the great serpent Ananta Śeṣa floating on the Ocean of Infinity, upon whose coils Viṣṇu is supposed to recline during intervals between the creation and dissolution of the universe.

'the fructifier': The meaning of the Vedic word is uncertain and has given rise to much discussion. In V.84.2 it is rendered 'fructifying' with reference to the rain that impregnates the fields, causing them to bring forth their crops. This same meaning may be justified here as a reminiscence of the original character of Apāṁ Napāt as purely a water-deity.

³ Arthur A. Macdonell, *Vedic Mythology* (in Grundriss der Indo-Arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde, III. Band, 1. Heft A), p. 74. A modification of this theory might be suggested by taking Aja as the 'Unborn' instead of the 'Goat' with reference to the lightning's seeming to arise from nowhere.

⁴ P.E. Dumont, 'The Indic God Aja Ekapād, The One-legged Goat' in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 53 (1933), pp. 327-34.

⁵ R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma and the Fly Agaric: Mr. Wasson's Rejoinder to Professor Brough* (Ethnomycological Studies No. 2: Cambridge, Mass., Botanical Museum of Harvard University, 1972), p. 37.

'Pṛśnī': the heavenly cow, mother of the Maruts. It is not clear why she is described as protected by the gods.

15. 'worthy of Manu's worship': that is, of man's worship, Manu, as progenitor of man, being put for all his descendants.

'may they grant us wide-striding today': Here used substantively, 'wide-striding' is otherwise a characteristic epithet of Viṣṇu, *e.g.*, I.154.1,3 and 6. It is hard to say exactly what is intended by it in this curious usage; one may surmise, from the implication of wide scope, freedom from restraint of any kind, especially afflictions, and then general well-being.

VIII.29

The All-gods

1. Reddish brown is the one: varying, mighty, a youth, he puts on golden unguent.
2. His repository the one has occupied, effulgent, wise one among the gods.
3. An axe the one carries in his hand, of iron, assiduous one among the gods.
4. A thunderbolt the one carries placed in his hand; with it he smites the Vṛtras.
5. A sharp weapon the one carries in his hand: shining, fierce, with soothing remedies.
6. Our paths the one has made to prosper; like a thief this one knows of treasures.
7. Three steps the one, wide-striding, traverses to where the gods rejoice.
8. By birds two move together with one woman; like two travellers they travel.
9. Two, the highest ones, have made a seat for themselves in the heaven, universal sovereigns, whose drink is clarified butter.
10. While singing, the ones thought of the great chant; with it they made the sun to shine.

Notes

In this hymn no gods are mentioned by name. Their identities are concealed in a series of riddles, each of which consists of a brief characterization of a particular god, whereby, usually through a key-word, his identity may be inferred.

1. Soma. The key-word is 'reddish brown,' which is the color of the juice; cf. IX.3.9: 'This one, a god pressed for the gods in accordance with ancient custom, goes into the strainer reddish brown.'

'varying': Though the juice is said to be reddish brown, the color is altered by the addition of water or milk; moreover, the stalk is yet another color, so that the Soma may therefore be described as 'varying' or 'variable.' The epithet may, however, refer also to Soma's dual form as plant and moon, in which case the moon's quadruple phases would add to Soma's varying nature.

'a youth': surely because Soma is pressed afresh every day.

'he puts on golden unguent': This may refer to the admixture of honey to the Soma juice, alluded to in some hymns; for example, cf. IX.97.11: 'Then mingling with a stream of honey through the wool-filter he (*i.e.*, the Soma) is purified, milked by the stones.'

2. Agni. Agni's 'repository' is the receptacle in which he burns at the place of sacrifice; cf. I.1.8: 'you who are sovereign of the sacrifices, guardian of the Order, brightly shining, growing in your own abode.'

'wise one among the gods': Agni's great wisdom is commonly alluded to in the Ṛgveda; on this cf. remarks at RV I.12.1.

3. Tvaṣṭṛ. It is not certain whether the implement he carries is an axe or knife, but, whatever it may precisely be, it is a tool for cutting or fashioning things, as Tvaṣṭṛ was the artificer of the gods.

'of iron': Perhaps it would be more accurate to render simply 'of metal,' as it is not possible to be certain what metal it was.

'assiduous one': The word is variously rendered; if this (or something similar) is correct, we may not unreasonably think that it refers to the expected assiduity of Tvaṣṭṛ in his capacity as artificer of the gods, busily fashioning weapons for them in his Nibelheim.

4. Indra. This is one of the least doubtful of all the identifications, as the thunderbolt is Indra's characteristic weapon.

'he smites the Vṛtras': that is, demons like Vṛtra, who withhold waters from man.

5. Rudra. The inclusion of the epithet 'with soothing remedies' leaves no doubt at all that Rudra is meant, as it is not applied to any other god in the Ṛgveda; thus, cf. I.43.4: 'We approach the lord of song, the lord of oblation, Rudra with soothing remedies.' Apart from this particular epithet, these remedies are referred to in various other ways, as though to counterbalance allusion to Rudra's irascibility and the fear of its visitation upon the worshipper (so at II.33.2,4,12 and 13). Although scarcely a distinctive attribute, his sharp weapons are mentioned at VII.46.1: 'Bring these songs to Rudra, whose bow is sturdy, whose arrows are swift . . . whose weapons are sharp.' That he is 'fierce,' which seems intrinsic to his nature, is mentioned at II.33.9 and 11 in keeping with the tone of much of that hymn. All the gods are said to be bright or shine and so too Rudra, as at I.43.5, which continues the sentence just quoted from stanza 4 of the same hymn: 'who shines like the bright sun, like gold, the most splendid of gods, splendid one.'
6. Pūṣan. The identification is not problematical, as Pūṣan is *par excellence* the deity who is intimately connected with paths and properties or treasures, but there is some obscurity about the exact interpretation due to uncertainty concerning the meaning of the first verb. As understood here, the sense is that Pūṣan has made the paths to prosper by rendering them secure from the depredations of thieves and noxious animals, so that the herdsmen may get their cattle safely to pasture. Some translate 'watches the paths' and take the phrase 'like a thief' with this, thus: 'The one watches the paths like a thief.' But whether the translation is 'has made the paths to prosper' or 'watches the paths', the phrase of comparison ('like a thief') more probably belongs to the second part of the stanza, as it seems unbecoming of the Vedic poet to compare Pūṣan's bestowal of fulness and blessing upon the worshipper or his watching of the roads, both of which have a beneficent end, to the ill-conceived actions of a thief.
7. Viṣṇu. Here too, the identification is without doubt: only one god is known for his three steps and bears the epithet 'wide-striding'; thus, cf. ṚV I.154.1: 'Now I shall proclaim the heroic feats of Viṣṇu, who traverses the terrestrial regions, wide-striding; who, having stepped across triply, established the higher abode.'
8. The Aśvins. The key to this identification is the statement that the 'two move together with one woman,' as the Aśvins are the only pair in the Ṛgveda who are wedded to one and the same goddess. She is Sūryā, daughter of the sun-god Sūrya, who is often spoken of as mounting their chariot, e.g., ṚV I.118.5: 'May the youthful daughter of Sūrya, being pleased, mount your chariot here, fellows!' In IV.43.6 the Aśvins are specifically said to be the husbands of Sūryā: 'That course of you two has been regarded as swift whereby you are the husbands of Sūryā.' That their chariot is drawn by birds corroborates the identification, although birds were not the exclusive means by which the Aśvins' chariot was drawn, horses, buffaloes among others being mentioned.

9. Mitrāvaruṇā. These are the only two gods who are called ‘universal sovereigns;’ cf. ṚV V.63.2: ‘As universal sovereigns, you two rule o’er this world, Mitrāvaruṇā, shining like the sun in the assembly’ and similarly also 3 and 5 of the same hymn.
10. The Aṅgirasas or the Atris (?). This identification is uncertain, as the clues given are not sufficiently distinctive. Sāyaṇa identifies them with the Atris, a priestly family of great prominence to whom the authorship of the entire Fifth Maṇḍala is ascribed. To be sure, in ṚV V.40 the finding of the sun by Atri by means of a ‘fourth prayer’ (?) is related in an apostrophe to Indra: ‘Then when, O Indra, you smote down the wiles of Svarbhānu unfolding beneath the sky, Atri with the fourth prayer found the sun hidden in inert darkness’ (stanza 6) and further ‘the priest Atri placed the eye of Sūrya (*i.e.*, the sun) in the sky’ (stanza 8) and finally the recovery of the sun is attributed to the Atris collectively: ‘The sun which the demon Svarbhānu pierced with darkness - that the Atris found again’ (stanza 9). But it is not specifically said that the finding of the sun was accompanied or accomplished by singing on the part of Atri or the Atris.

On the other hand, another priestly family, the Aṅgirasas, who are well-known for their singing, are characterized in X.62.3 as having caused the sun to shine in the sky: ‘You, who made the sun to shine in the sky according to the Ṛta and spread Mother Earth hither and thither, let there be the possession of goodly progeny to you, O Aṅgirasas!’ Moreover, in I.62.2 a chant is referred to whereby the Aṅgirasas found the cows while singing: ‘Bring forth mighty homage for the mighty one (*i.e.*, Indra), the chant of praise for the powerful one, by which our fathers of old, the Aṅgirasas, knowing the place, found the cows while singing.’ By ‘cows’ here may be meant the rays of the sun, as frequently in the Ṛgveda, and hence the sun itself.

A third possibility is the Maruts who are also well-known for their singing, but while their actions as storm-gods are such that bringing the sun into view (or concealing it behind clouds!) could without difficulty be associated with them, the specific act of making the sun shine by means of a chant or singing is not attributed to them.

Yama

Yama was king or chief of the dead, who, though nowhere explicitly called a god, was closely associated with the gods, especially with Agni and Varuṇa. He is alleged to have been the first mortal and also the first to die. It is he who discovered the path to heaven, whereby all succeeding mortals have gone to their final resting-place. As king of the dead he dwells in the highest heaven with the Fathers, the collective designation for all those who have departed from this life. There he is exhilarated along with them by draughts of Soma offered at the sacrifice.

Yama has two dogs, broad-nosed and four-eyed, who guard the ancient path and move about among men to mark out those who are destined to die. In the Atharvaveda they bear the names Śyāma ('Blackie') and Śabala ('Spottie'), of which the latter has been connected, though somewhat doubtfully, with Cerberus, guardian of Hades, of classical mythology.¹

X.14

Yama

1. The one who departed to the great heights, who has shown to many the path, the son of Vivasvat, gatherer together of peoples, King Yama: present him with an oblation!
2. Yama was the first to find the way for us: nor is this pasture to be taken away. Where our first Fathers have departed, by that way do their sons follow.
3. Mātali, who is refreshed with the Kavyas, Yama with the Aṅgirasas, Bṛhaspati with the Ṛkvans - both those whom the gods refresh and those who refresh the gods: the ones rejoice in the call svāhā, the others in svadhā.

¹ v. Maurice Bloomfield, *Cerberus, the Dog of Hades; the History of an Idea* (Chicago, The Open Court Publishing Co., 1905) for a discussion of this.

4. Sit upon this strewn grass, O Yama, in company with the Aṅgirasas, the Fathers! Let the sacred formulae, pronounced by the sages, bring you hither: rejoice in this oblation, O king!
5. Come hither with the Aṅgirasas, worthy of worship! Rejoice here with the Vairūpas, O Yama! I call upon Vivasvat, who is your father, to sit down on the sacred grass at this sacrifice.
6. The Aṅgirasas - our Fathers - the Navagvas, the Atharvans, the Bhṛgus, worthy of Soma: may we be in the favor of these, worthy of worship! May we share in their auspicious benevolence!
7. Go forth, go forth by the old paths, whither our early Fathers departed! You will see both kings rejoicing in the offering: Yama and the god Varuṇa.
8. Unite with the Fathers, with Yama, in the highest heaven by virtue of your sacrifices and meritorious works. Having laid imperfection aside, go back home! In your full bloom unite with a body!
9. Go away! Disperse! Get away from here! For him the Fathers have made this place. Yama gives him a resting-place distinguished for its days, water and nights.
10. Run past the sons of Saramā, the two dogs, four-eyed and spotted, via a safe path! Then go unto the Fathers, who are easily found, who with Yama revel in joint revelry.
11. The two dogs that are your guardians, O Yama, four-eyed, watchful of the path, observers of men - entrust him to both of them, O king! Bestow upon him both well-being and freedom from disease!
12. Broad-nosed, life-stealing, light brown, Yama's messengers roam among the people. May these two give us back our blessed life here today that we may behold the sun!
13. For Yama press the Soma! For Yama offer the oblation! To Yama the sacrifice is going, with Agni as its messenger, well-made.
14. To Yama offer an oblation with ghee and stand forth! May he intercede with the gods on our behalf that we may live a long life!

15. To Yama the king offer an oblation most rich in honey! This homage is for the first-born seers, for the first pathmakers.
16. He flies by way of the three vessels over the six worlds to the one lofty place. The Triṣṭubh, Gāyatṛī and the metres - all these things are deposited in Yama.

Notes

1. Some interpret the words here translated by 'great heights' as 'mighty streams or waters' with reference to the waters believed to be in the topmost reaches of heaven. The 'great heights' would refer to the steep paths leading to the lofty heaven where Yama dwells with the Fathers.
- Vivasvat, here said to be father of Yama, as Vivanhvāt of Yima in the Avesta, is a shadowy figure in the Ṛgveda, no hymn being devoted to his worship. It is probable that he was an ancient god of the sun, his name being an epithet, literally meaning 'shining far and wide.'
3. The Kavyas, Aṅgirasas and Ṛkvas are groups of Fathers or ancestors, and Mātali is an individual ancestor, not mentioned elsewhere in the Ṛgveda. In stanza 5 yet another group, the Vairūpas, is mentioned, and in 6 yet others: the Navagvas, Atharvans and Bhṛgus. The words 'both those whom the gods refresh' etc. suggest reciprocal aid on the part of the gods and the Fathers. The gods take pleasure in the special call 'svāhā,' whereas the Fathers in the call 'svadhā,' the former being in fact only a phonetic variant of the latter.¹
6. Among the groups of ancestors mentioned here it may be remarked that the Atharvans were apparently the family in which the hymns of the Atharvaveda were composed or at least transmitted. In form Atharvan corresponds to the Avestan word *āthravan* ('a fire-priest'), except for the initial long vowel.
7. This stanza is addressed to a dead person, who is requested to follow the age-old path to the highest heaven, which was first found out by Yama.
8. The dead person is to bring no imperfection with him to heaven, but in fact to assume a new body that is free of all taint.

¹ So also Louis Renou, *Études védiques et pāṇinéennes*, tome II (Paris, E. de Boccard, 1956), p. 57, note 2 near end: '... svadhā a pris secondairement le sens d'une interjection rituelle (avec doublet phonétique svāhā) ...'.

9. These words are presumably directed to demons or goblins thought to infect the cremation or burial grounds. The resting-place afforded by Yama to the dead man is believed to be furnished with the same amenities as are found in this world, hence the usual alternation of darkness and light and the presence of water.
10. Probably these dogs of Yama are not literally thought to have four eyes, but rather a spot over each eye; or perhaps the expression 'four-eyed' simply means 'keen-sighted,' just as 'broad-nosed' in 12 seems to mean 'keen-scented.' It is interesting to note that in the Avesta a four-eyed dog is supposed to guard the bridge that leads to the next world and frighten away the evil spirit. Furthermore, in a ceremony still performed by the Pārsīs, called 'Sagdid,' literally 'the viewing of a dog' a four-eyed dog is made to view the corpse of the newly deceased in order to drive out the evil spirit.
It is possible that the adjective translated 'spotted' may be the *name* of one of the two dogs of Yama, *i.e.*, Śabala 'Spottie', the other being omitted by an ellipsis peculiar to the Vedic language and classical Sanskrit, whereby the first of two words in an enumerative compound is omitted, the remaining member being kept in the dual number. Thus, here the Vedic word *śabālau* might stand for *śyāma-śabālau* 'Śyāma and Śabala' ('Blackie and Spottie').
12. The dogs are called 'life-stealing' because they seek out the souls of the deceased. The word translated 'light brown' occurs only here in the Ṛgveda and but sporadically in later Vedic works, always, however, in contexts insufficient to clarify its meaning. Sāyaṇa interprets it as 'having extensive power.' It has recently been explained as 'large-tailed.' It is here assumed, however, to be related to the word *udumbāra*, a species of fig-tree (the *Ficus Glomerata*), whose fruit is of a light brown color and hence the meaning 'light brown.'
- Note that the dogs are asked to 'give us back our blessed life,' as though the speakers had already been marked for death.
- 13-15. These three stanzas seem to constitute a unity apart from the rest of the hymn and may indeed have formed an unrelated eulogy of Yama that came later to be appended to stanzas 1-12.
16. The true meaning of this stanza is elusive in the highest degree and probably nearly impossible to ascertain, as, apart from the mystic abstrusiveness of its language, there are several extreme difficulties which impede its comprehension. It is often omitted by translators, but a tentative version is given here in order to afford some imperfect impression of the character of the original.
No subject is expressed in the first line; since the three foregoing stanzas emphasize the sacrifice to Yama, it is assumed that he is the subject of 'flies.' The word translated by 'three vessels' (*trīkadrukeṣu*) occurs also in the well-known

Indra hymn (I.32.3), where Indra is said to drink the Soma in three vessels, but the true meaning of this word has been much discussed. It can also refer to three days of a particular Soma festival. If this meaning is involved here, we might translate the line 'He flies at the end of the Trikadruga ceremony.' But if the meaning 'three vessels' is adopted, the sense might be 'Yama flies by virtue of the Soma he has drunk.' Or perhaps by 'three vessels' certain divisions of the universe may be figuratively meant.

The second line 'over the six worlds to the one lofty place' etc. is here assumed to refer to Yama's journey through the six worlds to his dwelling-place in the highest heaven where he resides as king over the Fathers. Perhaps, however, this line should not be construed with the first, but be allowed to form an independent sentence: 'Six [are] the worlds, one lofty.'

Triṣṭubh and Gāyatrī are metres in which most of the Ṛgveda is composed, the former being the commonest. The first ten stanzas of this hymn are written in the Triṣṭubh. These metres and all the others too, came to be invested with a substantive and divine character.

The last line, which is the clearest, seems to mean that everything - all six worlds, Yama's heaven, all the metres - is comprised within Yama or perhaps contained in Yama, a sort of notion expressed elsewhere in the Ṛgveda of other gods, though, of course, in different terms.

The Fathers

By the expression 'Fathers' is meant the spirits of the deceased ancestors or Manes, probably originally only those of the most eminent priestly families, such as the Atharvans, Aṅgirasas, etc., but subsequently the term came to include all mortals who had departed. They are said to reside in the highest step of Viṣṇu, and Yama, as the first mortal to die and find the path to heaven, is their king. The Fathers are asked to come to the sacrifice, led by Agni, and be seated by their thousands on the sacred grass, just as are the gods, and they are even referred to as gods at X.56.4. They are requested to confer upon the worshipper benefactions of the same character as the gods - wealth, heroic sons, strength, favor - and to hear him and intercede on his behalf. They are fond of the Soma, which they relish in their happy abode with Yama.

X.15

The Fathers

1. Let the lower ones arise, let the higher, let the middlemost Fathers arise, worthy of Soma! May the Fathers who have gone unscathed to the spirit-world, knowers of the Ṛta, favor us in our invocations!
2. May this homage be to the Fathers today, who first and who later departed, who are seated in the terrestrial atmosphere or who are now among the people that have fine settlements!
3. I have gotten hither the Fathers who are easily gotten, and the son and the wide stride of Viṣṇu. They who, while sitting on the sacrificial grass, shall share a draught of the extract along with the offering, are most welcome to come here.
4. O Fathers seated on the sacrificial grass, come hither with your favor! We have made these oblations for you: enjoy them! Come hither with most beneficent favor, then bestow upon us beneficence and blessing devoid of harm!

5. The Fathers, worthy of Soma, are invited to their beloved offerings placed on the sacrificial grass. Let them come hither, let them hear here, let them speak on our behalf, let them favor us!
6. Having sat down on bended knee on the right, do all of you welcome this sacrifice! Harm us not, Fathers, for any wrong we have done to you due to our humanness!
7. Sitting in the bosom of the Dawns, bestow riches upon your mortal worshipper! Grant wealth, O Fathers, to his sons! Bestow strength upon him here!
8. With those early Fathers of ours, the Vasiṣṭhas, who fare after him to the drinking of the Soma, let Yama, sharing their gifts, partake of the oblations at pleasure, an eager one with eager ones!
9. Come hither, Agni, with the Fathers, the easily gotten ones, the true, the wise, who sit beside the hot vessels, who thirst among the gods with mouth agape, who get the oblation, for whom hymns of praise have been fashioned by singers!
10. Come hither, Agni, with a thousand Fathers, the earlier, the remote ones, god-revering, who sit beside the hot vessels, the true, who eat the oblations, who drink the oblations, who are put by Indra and the gods on the same chariot!
11. Tasted by the fire, come hither, Fathers! You, whose guidance is good, sit down, each in his place! Eat the oblations that have been set out on the sacrificial grass! Then bestow wealth consisting wholly of heroes!
12. You, Agni, entreated, O Jātavedas, have conveyed the oblations, having made them fragrant; you have given them to the Fathers with the offering; they have eaten them: you eat the oblations that have been set out, O god!
13. The Fathers that are here and the ones that are not here; the ones that we know and the ones that we do not know: you know how many they are, O Jātavedas! Enjoy our well-made sacrifice along with the offerings!

14. Accompanied by those who, burned in the fire and not burned in the fire, rejoice in the offerings in the middle of heaven, do you as sovereign lord go to this spirit-world! Make for yourself a body according to your desire!

Notes

1. The Fathers are here divided into three classes: higher, middlemost and lower, which Sāyaṇa interprets as referring to different degrees of holiness, but inconsistently ascribes these divisions to differing age and merit in his commentary on the same passage in the Atharvaveda (XVIII.1.44). It is also possible, however, that this threefold classification refers to the three divisions of the world: earth, air and heaven, in which the Fathers are said to dwell. This particular classification is referred to in stanza 2.
2. By 'terrestrial atmosphere' is meant the atmospheric region just above the earth, as compared with the upper atmosphere, the heaven or sky.
3. By 'son' may elliptically be meant 'the son of strength,' *i.e.*, Agni, often so called because he is produced by men through the vigorous rubbing together of two firesticks. A similar abbreviation of this epithet is to be found also in ṚV VI.4.4 ('You are eloquent, O son, a companion at our meals,' etc.). Though the sense afforded by this interpretation is not unreasonable, Agni being mentioned several times later in this hymn, other explanations have been suggested. The passage is rendered the more obscure by 'the wide stride of Viṣṇu,' which seems out of place here, though the Fathers are associated with Viṣṇu's highest step.

The extract referred to is the Soma, which, whatever may be its true identity, was produced by an intricate process of pressing and straining.
5. With reference to the words 'Let them speak on our behalf' Sāyaṇa says: 'Let them say respectfully 'The patron of this sacrifice is good!' ' Gods are often thus requested to intercede on someone's behalf.
6. 'on the right,' *i.e.*, to the south, the orientation being eastward. The south is the region of Yama, king of the dead, and the Fathers.

7. 'his sons,' *i.e.*, the sons of the patron of the sacrifice, the so-called yajamāna.
8. The Vasiṣṭhas were a priestly family, to one member of which the composition of the entire Seventh Maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda, along with some other hymns, has been ascribed by tradition. Here, then, the Vasiṣṭhas are besought collectively to help their descendants, the Vasiṣṭhas.

Yama was the king of the dead and hence closely connected with the Fathers.

9. For 'who sit beside the hot vessels' Sāyaṇa has 'who sit at the sacrifice,' which is substantially the same thing, as the hot vessels are just the cauldrons of hot milk that form part of certain sacrifices. One might also translate, again virtually synonymously: 'who sit near the heat,' and yet other permutations are possible.
10. By a 'thousand' is, of course, simply meant an indefinitely large number; *cf.* the same usage in ṚV X.90.1, where the Puruṣa is said to be thousand-headed, thousand-eyed and thousand-footed.

Probably no difference in meaning is intended between 'earlier' and 'remote' here, these synonymous words merely indicating the earliest of the Fathers.

12. Agni is often called 'Jātavedas' in the Ṛgveda; originally only an epithet, it has become practically a proper name and so is here capitalized and left untranslated. The meaning is made clear in the Ṛgveda itself, where in VI.15.13 it is explained as 'he who knows all created things,' and it is so explained by Sāyaṇa in the present passage. The meaning of Jātavedas is played upon in the next stanza in the words 'you know how many they are, O Jātavedas.'
14. Some of the Fathers have been cremated, others buried, but all go to the third heaven, the highest step of Viṣṇu, there to revel with Yama in the Soma and various oblations that are offered to them.
- By 'sovereign lord' might be meant Yama, as supreme lord of the dead, but the fact that Agni has already been several times called upon, starting with stanza 9, renders it more likely that Agni is referred to.

Funeral Hymn

Both cremation and interment of the dead are mentioned in the Ṛgveda, but the former appears to have been by far the more usual practice and the one that in subsequent times became universal among Hindus. The following hymn was used at the cremation. In consuming the body with his flames Agni is asked by the worshipper not to burn the deceased utterly and, this gentle and partial combustion having been accomplished, to deliver him to the Fathers with whom he is to live forever in bliss in the highest heaven. Oddly enough and somewhat contradictorily to this plea to Agni to conserve the body as much as possible, the various parts are directed to merge with those cosmic or earthly elements to which they have their closest natural affinity; thus, the eye of the deceased is to go to the sun, his breath to the wind, and so on, a cumulative process which would seem effectively to lead to the dissolution of the body without the co-operation of Agni at all. Apparently, however, the spirit of the deceased at some point is invested with a new body to replace the old. The notion of transmigration and rebirth, so prominent a feature of Hinduism, is generally held to be quite absent from the Ṛgveda and to be a development of the following period of the Brāhmaṇas, although the very beginning of this doctrine seems implied in X.58, where the spirit or soul of the deceased is requested to return to his body from one of the many places to which it is fancied to have wandered. According to the Ṛgvedic view, insofar as it is possible to infer it, the spirit of the deceased, having been transported by Agni to the realm of the Fathers, retains its personal identity in a corporeal state not very dissimilar to that which it had in this world, though, no doubt, glorified in some degree. During the crematory process the spirit is supposed to be cleansed of all impurities deriving from its terrestrial existence and in this perfected form to be endowed with its new body.

X.16

Funeral Hymn

1. Do not burn him up, Agni! Do not scorch him! Singe not his skin nor his body! When you make him cooked, O Jātavedas, then send him on to the Fathers!
2. When you make him cooked, O Jātavedas, then give him over to the Fathers! When he goes to this place whither the spirits are led, then shall he be led unto the will of the gods.
3. May your eye go to the sun, your breath to the wind: go to the heaven and to the earth according to rule, or go to the Waters, if there it is ordained for you! Among the plants take your place with your limbs!
4. A goat is your portion: that burn with your burning! That let your heat burn, that your flame! The auspicious forms which you have, O Jātavedas - with these convey him to the world of the righteous!
5. But to the Fathers, Agni, release him, who, offered to you, goes according to his affinities! Clothed with life, let him enjoy what remains! May he be joined with a body, O Jātavedas!
6. What part of you the black bird, the ant, the serpent or the beast of prey has picked at - that may all-consuming Agni make whole, and Soma that has entered the priests!
7. As protection from the fire, wrap yourself in pieces of cow's flesh: cover yourself completely with suet and fat, lest he, bold, all-excited and impatient, encircle you in his grip to burn you up!
8. Upset not this cup, Agni! Dear to the gods and to those worthy of the Soma is this cup, whence the gods drink: in it the immortal gods delight.
9. Corpse-consuming Agni I send far off: carrying off the impurities, let him go to those whose king is Yama! Right here is this other Jātavedas: let him carry off the oblation to the gods, the knowing one!

10. That corpse-consuming Agni who, seeing this other Jātavedas, has entered your house - that god I dismiss for a sacrifice to the Fathers. Let this one dispatch the hot milk to the highest place!
11. May Agni, carrier off of the corpse, who shall worship the Fathers who thrive in the Ṛta, announce the oblations to the gods and to the Fathers!
12. Willing would we set you down, willing would we kindle you. Willing bring hither the willing to consume the oblation!
13. The one whom you have burned, Agni, him cool off again! Let the *Kiyāmbu*, the *Pākadūrvā* grow here, and the *Vyālkaśā!*
14. O cooling plant, O you who are rich in cooling plants! O refreshing plant, O you who are rich in refreshing plants! Join together with the female frogs: make this Agni joyful!

Notes

1. On the epithet Jātavedas, v. note on I.50.1.
3. Notions of these and like affinities of parts of the body with elements of the cosmos and nature were apparently common in Vedic thought; cf. X.90.13, where of the cosmic giant Puruṣa it is said: 'from his eye the sun was born . . . from his breath the wind was born'. These affinities are exemplified at much greater length in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIV.6.2.13. Some of them were current also in Greek belief; so, cf. Plato, *Republic* VI.18, where Socrates says: 'I suppose that the eye of all the organs of sensation is most like the sun'.
'go to the heaven and to the earth': Sāyaṇa quite rightly remarks that 'and' is here used in the sense of 'or'.
4. This stanza, like the first two, is addressed to Agni, to whom a goat is offered. The purpose of this offering seems to have been to draw away the excess of Agni's over-enthusiasm to consume the corpse utterly. A similar intent lay behind the dispersion of pieces of cow's flesh around the corpse, as may be seen farther on in stanza 7.

5. 'Clothed with life, let him enjoy what remains': The deceased, wearing a new life, like a garment, is to enjoy what remains in store for him in the realm of the Fathers. This seems to be the obvious meaning of the words, but they have been variously interpreted. Śaṅkara, taking the words 'what is left' concretely, refers them to the remains of the corpse after the cremation and says: 'let him (the deceased) obtain the body, viz., the bones, that is left'. Others, very differently, interpret 'what is left' as 'future offspring, descendants' in the deceased's family. Accordingly, Griffith renders: 'Wearing new life let him increase his offspring', and Geldner somewhat similarly: 'In Leben sich kleidend soll er seine Hinterbliebenen aufsuchen'.

'May he be joined with a body': It is not clear what this body is which the deceased is to acquire, but it is perhaps a facsimile of the one he had on earth, devoid, however, of its impurities. In the following stanza Agni, with the help of the Soma (!) that has been imbibed by the priests, is asked to make whole the deceased's body, where damage has been inflicted upon it by the depredation of birds and other wild life. Possibly, then, both the harm wrought by the flames and also by these depredations was thought to be equally repairable by Agni in which case the very same body, not a facsimile would be meant. Perhaps the concept of a subtle and indestructible body, found in later Indian doctrines, had its beginnings in this notion that a deceased's body was not wholly consumed in the crematory process, by which it was rather only separated from its gross properties and impurities before being translated to the realm of the Fathers.

6. By 'the black bird' is meant the crow, regarded as a bird of ill-omen.
8. This stanza concerning the cup of Soma seems intrusive or at the least relatively unrelated to the tenor of the hymn.
9. At this juncture Agni in his corpse-consuming role is dismissed or dispatched to the Fathers, while Agni as oblation-bearer to the gods is summoned.
10. 'has entered your house': that is, has entered the house or realm of the Fathers, whose company the newly deceased is to join.

The sense of this stanza appears to be as follows: 'In order that I may worship the Fathers, I dismiss the corpse-consuming Agni who has entered your house with the new occupant. May the *other* Agni (the oblation-bearer) take the offering of hot milk to them (the Fathers) in their highest place!' But other interpretations are possible within the latitudinarian framework of the wording.

12. This stanza, which is a request to Agni that he bring hither the Fathers to have their sacrificial meal, is largely a jingle based on different forms of the participle rendered by 'willing'; a more idiomatic rendering would substitute an adverb 'willingly' or 'gladly'.

13. Now that the body has been cremated, the worshipper asks Agni to cool off the area, to which end the flames are extinguished with water. The various plants mentioned here are such as thrive in a watery place.
14. This last stanza, which is addressed to the cooling plants collectively and the earth in which they grow, is an extension of the tenor of the preceding stanza, where an abundance of aquatic plants is called for. Here the frogs - that they are specified to be female seems of no particular moment - are asked to contribute to the production of water. In this connection it should be borne in mind that, according to the R̥gvedic belief, frogs cause the rain to fall by their croaking (*cf.* VII.103 and notes thereon).

The Spirit

The subject of the following hymn, which is really a magical spell, is the spirit or soul of a dead man, which the reciter purposes therewith to bring back to the body whence it has departed, to restore the body to life. An Indian tradition, reported by Sāyaṇa, connects this hymn and some others in Maṇḍala X with certain priestly squabbles between the Gaupāyana family, whose priests were in the employ of a King Asamāti Aikṣvāku, and two magicians, whom the king had hired to replace them. In the jealous strife that ensued Subandhu, one of the Gaupāyanas, was killed by these rivals, and it is he whose resuscitation is supposed to be effected by the recital of this hymn or spell.

The historicity of this strife is of little or no particular import, as nothing is otherwise known of the participants, but, apart from this, the hymn is of the utmost interest, as it furnishes a perfectly clear expression of the belief in a spirit or soul as a thing separate from the body, which it invests with consciousness and life and which, upon departing from the body at death, abides elsewhere in the universe. This concept of the soul's continued existence after the death of the body and its association with various objects of the material world, though set out in but crude form, seems to foreshadow the beginnings of the doctrine of transmigration, destined to become so characteristic and inseparable a teaching of Hinduism. Hinted at also may be the later notion of the soul's all-pervasiveness, which, once admitted and combined with its immortality, contains the germs of the Upaniṣadic teachings about the soul or self as the one reality and ground of all things. But to say so much may be going too far along the road of speculative assumption, and it may be best to let the hymn speak for itself.

X.58**The Spirit**

1. Your spirit, which to Yama, son of Vivasvat, has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
2. Your spirit, which to the heaven, to the earth has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
3. Your spirit, which to the four-cornered earth has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
4. Your spirit, which to the four directions has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
5. Your spirit, which to the waving sea has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
6. Your spirit, which to the light rays, to the heights has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
7. Your spirit, which to the waters, which to the plants has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
8. Your spirit, which to the sun, which to the dawn has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
9. Your spirit, which to the lofty mountains has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
10. Your spirit, which to all that moves has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
11. Your spirit, which to the distant distances has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.
12. Your spirit, which to what has been and what is to be has gone far away, we return that to you, here to abide, to live.

Notes

1. The hymn is addressed to the body of the dead man. *Manas*, the term used for the spirit or soul, means literally 'mind' and is the regular word for soul in the Ṛgveda. Its use in the sense of soul is doubtless to be sought in the belief that the soul is the seat of thought and emotion, the very essence of the individual, which, on its departure from the body, leaves it lifeless and incapable of any further thinking and emotional activity. It may be worth noting that in the later literature *manas* is replaced in this special secondary sense by *ātman*, which occurs in the Ṛgveda only in its original meaning 'breath' (cf. Modern German *Atem* also 'breath') and the attenuated meaning of a reflexive pronoun ('oneself'). *Ātman* gradually comes to be the regular term for soul in Sanskrit, along with the aura of philosophical implications which had, especially during the final stratum of Vedic speculative thought, begun to surround it. In recent times it has entered English as one of a considerable body of terms commonly employed in works dealing with Indian philosophical and religious thought.

Yama is the chief or ruler of the dead, with whom he dwells in the highest heaven. The spirit of the dead man here addressed must, therefore, have gone to Yama's realm. The other destinations mentioned in the subsequent stanzas are peculiar to this hymn.

Cosmogonic Hymns

In addition to hymns of praise, of which by far the greatest part of the Ṛgveda consists, there are a fair number of hymns that bear eloquent witness to the interest of the Vedic poets in speculation about the origin of things. These hymns reflect some of man's earliest musings on the great mystery of creation, his quest for a supreme god who himself created the entire world or for a single ultimate principle whence it evolved in all its diversity and multiplicity. The longing for a solution to these perennial questions first posed in the Ṛgveda dominated Indian thought for a long time and reached a culmination in the Upaniṣads, although the different views presented in the Ṛgveda were never really wholly abandoned, but continued to thread their way in various modifications and elaborations in the fabric of later Indian philosophic thought.

Prajāpati

This is a monotheistic hymn which seeks the name of the one god who is above and beyond all others, the supreme sovereign of the universe, on whom all else rests. Each stanza ends with the unvarying refrain 'Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?' until the final stanza, which identifies this single all-powerful deity as Prajāpati ('Lord of Creatures'). Though mentioned only here in the Ṛgveda in this sense, Prajāpati became the chief god of the later Vedic religion, to be identified with Brahmā on the personal level and Brahman on the impersonal. But it is almost a certainty that the last stanza, which supplies the answer 'Prajāpati' to the refrain, was added at some time subsequent to the composition of the hymn, so that in its original form this hymn consisted only of a series of repeated queries as to the identity of the one almighty god. At an early time the interrogative 'Who' in this refrain was mistakenly assumed to be the name of this great deity, and in fact this interpretation is the standard among Indian commentators.

This hymn is evidently an imitation of Ṛ V II.12, in which Indra is often extolled in similar terms, every stanza there ending with the refrain 'He, O peoples, is Indra.' But that hymn has many references to well-known exploits of Indra mentioned in other hymns, so that it is in large measure a statement of his greatness based on familiar terms, a rather personalized laudation. But in this hymn to Prajāpati the references are almost entirely to cosmic generalities, the name of whose controller is sought for suitable worship as the god of all gods.

X.121

Prajāpati

1. A golden egg evolved in the beginning: he who was born from it was the one lord of what was. He holds up the earth and this heaven. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
2. - who is giver of breath, giver of strength; whose bidding all acknowledge, whose bidding the gods acknowledge; whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow death. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
3. - who by his greatness is the one and only king of all that moves, that breathes and winks its eyes; who rules this world, both bipeds and quadrupeds. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
4. - through whose might are these snow-covered mountains, through whose might, they say, is the ocean alongside Rasā; through whose might are these directions, through whose might the right and the left. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
5. - by whom the heaven is great and the earth firm, by whom the sun is supported, by whom the firmament; who traverses the space in the intermediate region. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
6. - whom the two opposite sides, propped up by his help, looked upon, trembling in their heart, where the risen sun shines forth over them. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
7. - when the lofty waters came, bearing all as the egg, generating heat, then he alone was evolved as the life-essence of the gods. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
8. - who in his might surveyed the waters bearing the ritual skill and producing the sacrifice; who was the one god above the gods. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?
9. May he, who is the producer of the earth, not harm us, or who, true to his law, produced the heaven, and who produced the lofty, shining waters. Who is the god we should worship with our oblation?

10. O Prajāpati! Other than you none embraces all these created things. May that be ours which we desire in worshipping you! May we be the possessors of riches!

Notes

1. 'A golden egg': Also rendered 'golden embryo' or 'germ of gold,' the Vedic word *hiraṇyagarbhá* is often left untranslated and treated as though it were the name (or an alternate name) of the supreme god who is the subject of the hymn, which is then referred to as the 'Hiraṇyagarbha Hymn.' But when this is done, the refrain, which asks *who* the god is to whom oblation should be made, becomes purposeless, as we already have the answer.

It is hard to say what was the origin of this notion of a golden egg or embryo, whence was born the great god of all gods. Though mentioned only here in the Ṛgveda, it is frequent in the subsequent literature, and a myth about this golden egg and the birth of the god Brahmā from it comes to be elaborately developed. It may be that *hiraṇyagarbhá* was originally thought of in the alternative sense of 'source of gold' and applied to the sun as the great source of golden light in the world. Perhaps, on the other hand, production from an egg or embryo was conceived as the logical genesis for a primordial god, so that we need look no further for an explanation. That it is called 'golden' would probably then be due to the high regard in which gold was held for the permanency of its lustre and relative indestructibility.

In stanzas 2-8 the relative clauses all refer, of course, to the supreme lord introduced in stanza 1, specifically in each instance, however, to 'god' which invariably recurs in the refrain 'Who is the god [who is giver of breath, giver of strength, etc.] we should worship,' etc.

2. 'whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow death': Perhaps this is a way of saying that he is beyond both immortality and mortality, which are to him as transient shadows to any object.
4. 'are': that is, 'exist,' and similarly further on, 'is.'

'alongside Rasā': together with Rasā, a mythical river believed to flow around the ends of the earth and hence alongside the ocean (for further remarks on the Rasā v. note on ṚV X.75.5-6).

'the right and the left': literally, 'the two arms,' perhaps the meaning is rather 'the two arms of whom they (*i.e.*, the directions) are,' as though the compass directions were his arms.

5. 'who traverses the space in the intermediate region': in the form of the sun? Others translate: 'who measured out the regions in the atmosphere' (or similarly), yet others even more divergently.
6. This stanza is modelled on stanza 8 of II.12, the hymn to Indra. While there 'the two opposite sides' are quite literally two hostile armies confronting each other in battle, in this hymn are figuratively meant the heaven and earth, which were pushed apart by Prajāpati, whereupon they beheld their separator in awe in the intermediate region where the sun shines upon both of them.
7. 'bearing all as the egg': that is, bearing the entire world in the form of the egg, the egg which evolved in the beginning (stanza 1).
 'generating heat': in order to hatch the egg, from which the supreme god Prajāpati would be born. Agni (fire, here 'heat') was, in one of his forms, called Apāñ Napāt ('Son of the Waters'), believed to be latent in the waters, whence he shines 'without fuel' (ṚV II.35.4), an idea that seems clearly enough to have derived from the lightning emanating from the raincloud.
8. 'bearing the ritual skill and producing the sacrifice': The waters are a creative power in their own right and, in addition to carrying the golden egg whence was born Prajāpati, they also bore the skill to perform the sacrifice correctly and brought into existence the sacrifice itself, without which the world could not function. The treatment of abstractions, as here 'the ritual skill,' on the same level as the concrete is ubiquitous in Indian thought from the earliest period; cf. X.90.6 where the seasons of the year are constituents of the sacrifice and *ibid.*, 9 where the poetical metres of the Veda are listed among the material products of the cosmic sacrifice.
9. Note that here Prajāpati is stated to have produced the primeval waters which, according to stanza 1, bore him when incubating in the golden egg.
10. Apart from the fact that this final stanza is provably an addition to the original hymn, its presence is at the least anticlimactic, robbing it of much of the accumulated awe inspired by the cosmic dimensions of the various questions posed, which, if left unanswered, would have made the unnamed god an object of infinitely greater adoration and wonder.

Puruṣa

In this hymn, one of the very latest compositions in the Ṛgveda, may be seen the germs of the pantheistic philosophy of India. In it the world is viewed as derived from Puruṣa, a cosmic giant in whom the sum of everything is potentially encompassed. Three-quarters of him are said to be the immortals in heaven, the remaining quarter all other things. He is offered up by the gods in a great primordial sacrifice, whence are derived living beings, the three Vedas, the four classes of society, the moon, and other parts of the cosmos.

X.90

Puruṣa

1. Thousand-headed is Puruṣa, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. He covered the earth on all sides and stood above it the space of ten fingers.
2. Puruṣa alone is all this, what has been and what is to be, and he is the lord of the immortals, who grow further by means of food.
3. Such is his greatness, and greater than this is Puruṣa: a quarter of him is all beings, three-quarters of him the immortal in heaven.
4. Three-quarters of Puruṣa went upward, but a quarter of him was here below. From that he spread out in all directions into what eats and does not eat.
5. From that Virāj was born: from Virāj, Puruṣa. When he was born, he extended beyond the earth, behind and also in front.
6. When with Puruṣa as oblation the gods offered a sacrifice, the spring was its clarified butter, the summer the fuel, the autumn the oblation.
7. A sacrifice on the sacred grass they sprinkled him, Puruṣa, who was born in the beginning. With him the gods sacrificed, the Sādhyas and the seers.

8. From that sacrifice, a total offering, was brought together the clotted butter: it made the beasts: those of the air, of the forest and of the village.
9. From that sacrifice, a total offering, the Hymns of Praise and the Chants were born; the metres were born from it; the Sacrificial Formula from it was born.
10. From it the horses were born and whatsoever have incisor teeth in both jaws. The cows were born from it. From it were born the goats and sheep.
11. When they portioned out Puruṣa, in how many ways did they distribute him? What is his mouth called, what his arms, what his thighs, what are his feet called?
12. His mouth was the Brāhmaṇa, his arms were made the Rājanya, what was his thighs was made the Vaiśya, from his feet the Śūdra was born.
13. The moon from his mind was born; from his eye the sun was born; from his mouth both Indra and Agni; from his breath the wind was born.
14. From his navel was the atmosphere; from his head the heaven evolved; from his feet the earth; the directions from his ear. Thus they fashioned the worlds.
15. Seven were his altar-sticks; thrice seven faggots were made, when the gods, offering the sacrifice, tied Puruṣa as their victim.
16. The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice. These were the first rites. These powers reached the firmament, where the ancient Sādhyas are and also the gods.

Notes

1. 'Thousand-headed,' etc.: Not to be taken literally, of course, but merely intended to mean that Puruṣa embraced the sum of all beings within himself.

'stood above it the space of ten fingers': a curious and very much discussed phrase, which seems to be merely a way of saying that Puruṣa's size was greater than that of the earth. The expression 'space of ten fingers' is probably borrowed from the technical language of carpentry or architecture, where measurements were estimated by the two hands placed side by side. The objection that the space of ten fingers is absolutely inconsequential in the case at hand is not really valid, the point being not how much greater was Puruṣa, but simply that his size did not coincide with that of the earth, but overlapped. Any amount specified numerically would be as inexact as one thousand in 'thousand-headed,' etc.

Others insist that by 'the space of ten fingers' is meant the 'heart,' where, according to an idea expressed in the Upaniṣads, the soul (puruṣa!), measuring the height of the thumb, is said to abide. Those who adopt this interpretation render the whole line thus (or similarly): 'he ruled over the ten fingers' space (the heart),' which, therefore, requires the verb 'stood above' to be understood figuratively in the sense of 'ruled over.' The general purport of the passage according to this interpretation is that, in spite of the immensity and all-embraciveness of Puruṣa, the soul and substance of the universe, nevertheless, he resides as the inner soul in man's heart.

2. 'all this': that is, the entire world, the usual term also in the later literature (*cf.* X.129.3).

'he is the lord of the immortals, who grow further by means of food': an obscure passage due to the extremely laconic character of the text. As translated here, the meaning is: 'he (Puruṣa) is above and beyond the immortal gods (in addition to being what is, has been and will be), who are sustained by the food offered in the sacrifice,' *i.e.*, the gods, whose existence is maintained by the performance of the sacrifice, Puruṣa being quite independent of the need of sustenance at all.

3. Great as is the greatness of Puruṣa described so far, he is still greater: for all the world we can experience and know is but a quarter of him, the rest, beyond human ken, is the everlasting in heaven.

4. 'From that': that is, from the quarter of Puruṣa that remained here below.

'he spread out . . . into what eats and does not eat': The quarter that remained here below now developed into the animate ('what eats') and the inanimate ('what does not eat'), *i.e.*, was transformed into the everyday world of sentient beings and insentient objects.

5. This stanza elaborates on the development of Puruṣa into the physical world mentioned in 4.

‘From that’: here again probably from the quarter that remained below, but whether from just the terrestrial quarter or from Puruṣa as a whole, in either case from Puruṣa in his undeveloped, undifferentiated state.

Virāj is a female principle, the genesis of which from the undifferentiated Puruṣa is necessary in order to produce the world, just as in X.129.5 male and female energies arise from ‘That’ (the neuter primordial principle), through the interaction of which the world of objects is produced. Through the union of Virāj and the primeval Puruṣa in his undifferentiated state, an evolved Puruṣa is born, from whom the world is derived. The identity of the female principle is obscure; perhaps Virāj may be identified with the primeval waters or, what is more likely, with the so-called golden egg (*cf.* X.121.1), both of which are alleged, in later permutations and elaborations of the creation myth, to have sprung from an ‘Unmanifest’ or ‘Self-existent’ (corresponding to the primeval Puruṣa here), who is himself subsequently born from the egg as the personal god Brahmā (here Puruṣa in his evolved form), by whom the physical world is then created.

‘he extended beyond the earth, behind and also in front’: As in stanza 1, where the primeval Puruṣa is said to have overlapped the earth by ‘the space of ten fingers,’ here too, the evolved Puruṣa is declared to exceed the extent of the earth. Perhaps by this excess is meant the spiritual part of man which is over and above the material.

6. The gods now perform a great sacrifice, using the evolved Puruṣa as their oblation and the three seasons (spring, summer, and autumn) as the accessories of the sacrifice, there being nothing else available. That the summer or hot season should symbolize the fuel for the sacrificial fire is reasonable; that the spring represent the melted butter or ghee and the autumn the oblation (*i.e.*, offerings of rice, etc.), however, seems arbitrary.
7. ‘Puruṣa, who was born in the beginning’: the evolved Puruṣa, of course, the sacrifice being directed to the primeval Puruṣa (*v.* note above on 6 and especially below on 16).

It is not clear who the Sādhyas were: to judge from the etymological meaning ‘to be perfected’ one might suppose they were persons who had not yet achieved perfection of spirituality, though their being mentioned along with the gods and seers implies some sort of equality with them, so that, whoever they were, they must have been of high spiritual and intellectual attainment, though not divine. They may with considerable probability have been early ancestors of Vedic seers, who had attained to a highly exalted and blessed condition, almost on a par with that of the gods. However this may be, since both the Sādhyas and the seers were, after all, only semi-divine, they ought by strict logic not to have

existed before this great cosmic sacrifice, unlike the gods, who, we must presume, had already come to be out of the three-quarters of Puruṣa that went heavenward (stanzas 3-4).

8. 'From that sacrifice . . . was brought together the clotted butter': that is, the melted butter mixed with fat was collected and became the birds as well as wild and domestic animals. But while the subject of 'made the beasts,' which in the original is unexpressed and has to be supplied from the context, is assumed to be the 'clotted butter,' it could alternatively be the 'sacrifice' or even 'Puruṣa.' Since, however, in the subsequent stanzas the various parts of Puruṣa's body are specifically stated to be the source of this or that material thing, not Puruṣa himself, it seems more logical that the 'clotted butter,' which with Puruṣa makes up the sacrificial offering, be the source of the beasts and birds rather than the sacrifice as a whole or Puruṣa as a whole.
9. 'The Hymns of Praise and the Chants . . . the Sacrificial Formula': the Ṛg-veda, the Sāmaveda, and the Yajurveda, respectively; by 'the metres,' mentioned before the Yajurveda, are doubtless simply meant the metrical forms in which the Vedic hymns are composed, these having been invested with peculiar sanctity. But some scholars render not 'the metres' but 'the spells' (or 'incantations'), by which they assert is meant the Atharvaveda, the fourth Veda. This interpretation is unlikely, however, as at the time of composition of this hymn, probably just before the end of the second millennium B.C., the Atharvaveda had almost certainly not yet secured the status of holy writ and, in any case, even if it were mentioned, it would scarcely occupy a place between the Sāmaveda and the Yajurveda.
10. 'horses . . . and whatsoever have incisor teeth in both jaws': that is, horses, donkeys, and mules. Cows, goats, and sheep, on the other hand, have cutting-teeth only in the lower jaw. This classification of domestic (and sacrificial) animals is frequently alluded to in Vedic literature and may in part go back to Indo-European times, in view of closely similar classifications found in classical authors.
12. This is the only place in the Ṛgveda where the four classes of ancient Indian society are mentioned, one bit of evidence of the lateness of this hymn. By 'Rājanya' is, of course, meant the 'kingly' or 'warrior' class, later generally called the 'Kṣatriya.'
- 13-14. Most of the derivations are fairly rational, *e.g.*, the sun from his eye, the wind from his breath, but others, if not wholly arbitrary, are somewhat hard to explain, *e.g.*, the moon from his mind. Some are mentioned elsewhere, thus in a hymn to Agni (X.16.3): 'May your eye go to the sun, your breath to the wind; go to the heaven and to the earth according to rule' (said with reference to a dead person whose body is being cremated); *cf.* also Aitareya Upaniṣad I.1.4.

15. 'Seven . . . altar-sticks, thrice seven faggots': Possibly sticks symbolically serving as barriers to evil demons, placed around the victim, *i.e.*, Puruṣa. The number seven may not have any particular significance beyond being a favorite with the Vedic poets. The Indian commentator Sāyaṇa says that the seven Vedic metres (Gāyatrī, etc.) served as these altar-sticks and, with regard to the 'thrice seven faggots,' that these were symbolized by the twelve months, five (!) seasons, three worlds (earth, atmosphere, and heaven), and the sun.
16. 'The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice': that is, using the evolved Puruṣa as the offering or victim, the gods sacrificed to the primeval Puruṣa, who here, though the recipient of the sacrifice, is paradoxically called the 'sacrifice,' since in his evolved aspect he is, after all, also the victim. He is simultaneously both the offering as well as the object of veneration.
- 'the first rites': since this was the first sacrifice, which, then, became the pattern for all subsequent sacrifices.
- 'These powers reached the firmament': 'These powers' may be the essence resulting from the sacrifice, believed to be permanent forces, which, in some unspecified fashion, continue to operate in the realm of the Sādhyas and the gods; or perhaps are meant the rites in personified form, which joined company with the Sādhyas and the gods in the highest firmament.

Viśvakarman

The following hymn speaks clearly of the universe as the product of a single maker, termed Viśvakarman (the 'All-maker'), whom the poet views under four aspects: as a priestly seer, who produces the universe in a primordial sacrifice, wherein he himself enters into all beings; as a potter, although the poet does not know where he could have stood while forming the heaven and earth or what was the material he used; as a smith, fusing the parts together, his wings serving as a bellows to blow up the flames; lastly, as a carpenter, but here again the poet queries about the material that was used by those to whom the creator entrusted the task and whereon they stood.

X.81

Viśvakarman

1. The seer who sat down as invoking priest, offering up all these existent things - our father - he, seeking gain for himself through prayer, has entered into later beings, concealing the earlier.
2. What, then, was the place where he stood? What, then, was the material - how was it - wherefrom, creating the earth, Viśvakarman, the all-seeing, uncovered the heaven with his might?
3. Eyes everywhere and face everywhere, arms everywhere and feet everywhere, he with two arms forged them, forged with wings the heaven and the earth, creating them, the one god.
4. What, then, was the wood, what was the tree, wherefrom they fashioned the heaven and the earth? O sages, ask in your heart that whereon he stood, establishing the worlds!
5. What are your highest domains, what are the lowest and these that are middlemost - teach them unto your friends at the oblation, O self-dependent one! Do you yourself sacrifice yourself for yourself, making yourself strong!

6. O Viśvakarman, made strong by the oblation, do you yourself sacrifice for yourself to the earth and to the heaven! Let other people 'round about be confounded: to us here let our patron be bountiful!
7. Viśvakarman, the Lord of Speech, we would invoke, who quickens our thought, for help today in our contest. May he relish all our invocations for our favor, he who is beneficent to all, whose works are righteous!

Notes

1. In this stanza the creator is portrayed as a priestly seer who offers up, in a vast primordial pan-sacrifice, all things, including himself, in consequence of which his own essence is diffused throughout.

'seeking gain for himself': Just as in any earthly sacrifice the officiating priest expects a fee from his patron for his services, so here, on a cosmic scale, the seer looks for a reward, which in this case is but the production and enjoyment of the world itself.

'has entered into later beings': The implication is that the seer sacrifices *himself* also, so that his essence may be diffused throughout all the products of the sacrifice. By 'later beings' are meant, of course, those products of the sacrifice which are subsequent to what existed previously in an unorganized unformed state.

'concealing the earlier': probably enshrouding or rendering unknown (and unknowable!) all that had gone before, that is, the unorganized, undifferentiated condition that preceded the creation. Indian commentators like Śaṅkara, in accordance with the prevalent notion of later Indian cosmogonies, view this particular creation as but one in an endless series, each following upon the dissolution of the preceding. It is hard to say whether or not, at so early a period as that of the composition of this hymn, this concept of the recurrent dissolution and reconstitution of the universe had been formed, but certainly the ingredients were there for it, and it is perhaps these less fully developed and elaborated ideas that the poet draws upon here.

2. In this stanza the creator, now called Viśvakarman, is viewed as a potter.

'What, then, was the material': variously rendered, but usually by some phrase that suggests a place or point of support, which, however, seems already to have been covered by the preceding query, as a place to stand on implies a point of support. The meaning 'material' may be gotten from the etymological sense 'what is grasped hold of,' whence a basis or substance. This is also the view of Śaṅkara.

‘wherefrom, creating the earth, Viśvakarman . . . uncovered the heaven’: It is also possible to translate: ‘wherefrom, creating the earth and the heaven, Viśvakarman uncovered them with his might,’ *i.e.*, taking *both* the earth and the heaven, not just the former, as object of ‘creating.’ The difference is perhaps slight and but a nuance, but the order of words in the original suggests the rendition followed here, which implies that the earth was created and the heaven only revealed.

3. Here Viśvakarman is treated as a smith.

‘Eyes everywhere and face everywhere’ etc.: With this *cf.* RV X.90.1: ‘Thousand-headed is Puruṣa, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed.’ These predications are, of course, meant, as in the Puruṣa hymn, to convey the all-embraciveness of the primal being, that he is potentially everything.

‘with two arms forged them, forged them with wings’: The text specifies *two* arms in spite of his innumerable arms, probably because the creator is here presented as a smith of the earthly variety. The wings are needed to fan the fire as with a bellows.

4. Lastly, the creator is presented as a carpenter.

‘What, then, was the wood’: a natural enough question, if it is borne in mind that the Vedic house was made of wood.

‘wherefrom they fashioned’: Presumably those to whom Viśvakarman entrusted the work of carpentry are meant.

5. The meaning of this stanza is unclear. The ‘domains’ may be simply the earth, intermediate region or atmosphere and the heaven, *i.e.*, the whole world; or possibly meant are the different levels at which Viśvakarman is thought to manifest himself at the sacrifice. Some translate by ‘forms’ or ‘aspects,’ *i.e.*, priestly seer, potter, smith and carpenter, whereby Viśvakarman created the universe, as well as the products of his creation. Others say ‘natures’ or ‘places,’ but the obscurity is not diminished by any of these alternative renditions.

‘O self-dependent one’: because he is dependent on no one else for his powers.

‘Do you yourself sacrifice yourself for yourself, making yourself strong’: Viśvakarman is requested to re-enact his role as officiating priest at the great cosmic sacrifice, perhaps by way of flattery, as though the author and reciter of the hymn felt incapable of performing a sacrifice worthy of Viśvakarman.

6. ‘Let other people ’round about be confounded’: The sense seems to be: ‘Never mind others who do not know that you are the grand artificer, the one god, who brought the world into existence . . . we know it, therefore do see to it that we have a generous patron!’

7. We are here led to suppose that this hymn was composed by the poet specifically for recital in some sort of sacrificial contest, upon which Viśvakarman's blessings are sought in the role of 'Lord of Speech,' *i.e.*, sacred, sacrificial utterance, in which he must have been especially skilled as the priestly seer who conducted the primordial sacrifice described in stanza 1.

Vāc

The words of the sacrificial ritual, as the communicative link between men and gods, had come in the course of time to be invested with mystic properties and immense magical power. This Sacred Speech or Vāc was finally transformed by Brahmanical speculation into an independent deity, who embodied all things and upon whom all things depended for their existence and sustenance.

The following hymn is a glorification of this Sacred Speech of the sacrificial rite, as a creative principle and the substrate of all existing things, including the gods. The hymn is in the form of a monolog, spoken, according to the traditional interpretation, by Speech or Vāc herself, although nowhere in the hymn does the word Vāc occur, for which reason various alternative postulations about the identity of the speaker have been made. As the universal substrate, Vāc resembles the Brahman or neuter Absolute of the Upaniṣads and the Vedānta treatises and may indeed be viewed as a sort of feminine counterpart of the Brahman-concept.

There is an obvious similarity between this concept of divine Speech as the ground of all existence and that of the Word or Logos in Christianity (*cf.* John 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'). But while the Christian Word was, in part at least, rooted in the Heraclitean idea of an unchanging power amid the world of change and was developed under Judaic influence into an embodiment of God, the Vedic doctrine was from the start an extension from the sacrifice, which was developed impersonally.

X.125

Vāc

1. I move with the Rudras, with the Vasus, with the Ādityas and the All-gods; I sustain Mitrāvaruṇā, both; I sustain Indrāgnī, both Aśvins.
2. I sustain Soma the lusty, Tvaṣṭṛ and Pūṣan, Bhaga. I bestow wealth upon the one who has the oblation, the zealous, the patron of the sacrifice, the presser.
3. I am the queen, the gatherer of riches, the wise, the first of those worthy of worship. Me as such the gods distributed manifoldly, with many a place and entering upon many a form.
4. Through me he eats his food who discerns, who breathes, who hears what is spoken. Though not aware of it, they dwell in me. Hear, you who are heard! I am telling you what is worthy of belief.
5. Only I myself say what is relished by gods and men. Whome'er I wish to, him I make powerful, him a priest, him a seer, him of godly wisdom.
6. I stretch the bow for Rudra, for an arrow to smite the one who hates the sacred word. I do battle for the people. I have entered the heaven and earth.
7. I bring forth the Father at the head of this world. My birth is within the Waters, in the ocean. From there I extend hither and thither unto all creatures and touch yonder heaven with my crown.
8. Only I blow like the wind, reaching all creatures: beyond the heaven, beyond the earth here - so much have I become by my greatness.

Notes

1. 'I move with the Rudras, with the Vasus, with the Ādityas and the All-gods': Vāc is said to 'move with' these gods because, as speech, she cannot be separated from them or they from her. The Rudras are the Maruts or storm-gods; the Vasus are a rather vague assemblage of gods whose chief is Indra; the Ādityas are personified abstractions, principal among whom are Mitra (Compact), Varuṇa (Truth), Aryaman (Hospitality) and Bhaga (Good Fortune). The All-gods were originally, as their name implies, all the gods taken together, a concept certainly devised so as to omit none from the worship, but by a curious development this grouping eventually became just another divine assemblage, not all-comprehensive after all, as shown by this particular passage, where the mention of other deities would otherwise have been unnecessary.
'Indrāgnī': that is, Indra and Agni, taken as a pair, like Mitrāvaruṇā.
2. It may be noted that Bhaga is mentioned separately even though he is one of the Ādityas already mentioned in stanza 1.
'the one who has the oblation': that is, who has it and offers it. It is not possible to determine with certainty how many persons are involved in the subsequent listing.
'the presser': the one who presses the Soma.
3. 'with many a place and entering upon many a form': doubtless really proleptic, *i.e.*, 'so that I have many a place and enter upon many a form,' apparently with reference to speech being spoken in many places, *e.g.*, on earth by mortals, in heaven among the gods, and in many ways, human, animal, divine, etc. But the last part is variously interpreted and translated.
4. Merely a way of saying that Vāc permeates everything and nothing occurs without her as the underlying principle.
5. 'a priest': that is, the one who knows the Sacred Word or Speech, Vāc or Brahman.
6. Thus, even the immensely powerful Rudra can only fire his arrow by her impulsion or direction.
7. 'I bring forth the Father': The same sort of paradoxical assertion is found at RV X.90.5: 'From that Virāj was born: from Virāj, Puruṣa' and elsewhere in the Ṛg-veda. It is, of course, possible that the Father is other than her own parent, in which case there is no paradox. In any case, the Universal Parent is meant.
'My birth is within the Waters, in the ocean': possibly with reference to the thunder which is the voice of the celestial waters, so to speak.

Creation

In this hymn, generally referred to as the 'Creation Hymn' or the 'Nāsadiya Hymn' from its introductory words (*nāśad*), the origin of the world is treated on an abstract level, being explained as an evolution from a single primordial principle designated 'That,' which is in essence pure thought or consciousness. To a desire to create, the very first impulse to emanate from That, is traced the phenomenal world, but stricken with scepticism, the poet expresses wonder as to whether anyone really knows whence it arose.¹

X.129

1. Not non-existent was it nor existent was it at that time; there was not atmosphere nor the heavens which are beyond. What existed? Where? In whose care? Water was it? An abyss unfathomable?
2. Neither mortal was there nor immortal then; not of night, of day was there distinction: That alone breathed windless through inherent power. Other than That there was naught else.
3. Darkness it was, by darkness hidden in the beginning: an undistinguished sea was all this. The germ of all things which was enveloped in void, That alone through the power of brooding thought was born.
4. Upon That in the beginning arose desire, which was the first offshoot of that thought. This desire sages found out to be the link between the existent and the non-existent, after searching with the wisdom in their heart.
5. Straight across was extended their line of vision: was That below, was That above? Seed-placers there were, powers there were: potential energy below, impulse above.

¹ This hymn has been treated in detail by Walter H. Maurer in 'A Re-examination of Rgveda X.129, the Nāsadiya Hymn', *Journal of Indo-European Studies*, vol. 3, no. 3 (Fall 1975), pp. 219-37.

6. Who, after all, knows? Who here will declare whence it arose, whence this world? Subsequent are the gods to the creation of this world. Who then, knows whence it came into being?
7. This world - whence it came into being, whether it was made or whether not - He who is its overseer in the highest heavens surely knows - or perhaps He knows not!

Notes

1. 'it': that is, 'the world,' not mentioned until stanza 3, where it is called 'all this,' which became the habitual term for the world in all subsequent Sanskrit literature.
 'at that time': that is, 'in the beginning,' as in fact stated in 3. In the beginning, then, the world was in an intermediate state that cannot be described in ordinary terms. It surely did not exist in the sense of any objects of our daily experience, yet it did not wholly not exist: some sort of potentiality was there, out of which the universe arose.
2. Men and even the gods did not exist, night and day were not differentiated. Yet there was something - how else to call it but simply 'That'? - which did exist by reason of intrinsic power, and it subsisted without breathing in the customary sense: it 'breathed windless' as the poet tells us. This primeval principle came regularly to be called 'That One' or 'The One' and, more expansively, 'The One without a second' in the later Vedānta philosophy.
3. 'brooding thought': perhaps not a very satisfactory translation of the Sanskrit *tāpas*, literally 'heat' (cf. English 'tepid'), here applied to the heat of deep concentration, the sort of concentration sought after by yogins, whereby great powers may be obtained, but here, of course, on a cosmic scale. It was believed in ancient India that, just as the fire on the sacrificial altar, when accompanied by the proper invocation and ceremonial rigmarole, possessed immense potency, so also the internal heat generated by right concentration. The rendition 'brooding thought' is an attempt to combine the notions of concentrated thought and heat. In RV X.190, the hymn which follows, the ultimate source of the insentient world is ascribed to Tapas, regarded as an independent creative force.
4. 'Upon That . . . arose desire': presumably the desire to create the world and its objects, an idea that is common in the later Vedic literature, and this desire to

create was the first product of That, the primordial principle, which had come into its own through brooding thought. It is this desire which sages determined to be the connection between That, *viz.*, pure thought or abstract consciousness and the world of everyday existence.

5. This stanza has always been a focal point of discussion, and many interpretations advanced. The main difficulty is its extreme condensation and economy of expression, words being omitted which Sanskrit idiom allows, but English does not. As here rendered, the purport is: The sages, having discovered that desire is the link between the existent and the non-existent, extended out their line of vision. Was That above or below this line? In answer to this query they learned through their insight that That had now evolved into two sets of energies, male and female, of which the former was above their psychological line, the other below. From the interaction of these primal forces arose the physical world. This array of male and female factors was doubtless suggested by old dualities like heaven and earth, the former as impregnator with his fructifying rains, the latter as the ground of man's abundance.

Tapas

Certainly one of the latest of the creation hymns in the Ṛgveda, the following hymn begins the universe from Tapas, the sort of heat or warmth of deeply concentrated thought such as is implied by this term in the abstract hymn X.129, where it is rendered, somewhat inadequately, by 'brooding thought.' Though the principal elements of the cosmos that arose from Tapas are enumerated, nothing at all is said, curiously enough, about living beings, whether gods, mortals or beasts. One has the impression of a superficially concocted piece, hardly more than a fragmentary statement of one of the various theories of creation that were current in the ferment of Vedic thought.

X.190

Tapas

1. Cosmic Law and Truth were born of blazing Tapas. Therefrom the night was born, therefrom the waving sea.
2. From the waving sea was the year born, ordaining the day and night, ruler o'er all that winks its eyes.
3. Sun and moon the creator in due order formed, the heaven and the earth, the space between, likewise the realm of light.

Notes

1. 'Cosmic Law and Truth': By 'Cosmic Law' is meant the Ṛta, so frequently alluded to in the Ṛgveda, whereby all operations of the universe are controlled, including the behavior of the gods. It is difficult to say exactly what is intended by 'Truth,' but, in any case, it seems to imply a more comprehensive concept than, according to Sāyaṇa's view, the mere *speaking* of truth as opposed to thinking the truth, the interpretation he imparts to the foregoing Ṛta. Truth here must have a dimension bordering on that of the Cosmic Law, something like Cosmic Truth, *i.e.*, truth in its highest aspects, almost reality itself, hinted at in the etymology of the Vedic word *satyá*, literally 'what is derived from or related to what is.'

'blazing Tapas': *v.* the discussion of this term at ṚV X.129.3; the rendition 'brooding thought' is avoided here in the absence of an expressed agent of thought, such as in that hymn, where the one reality, however abstract in conception, fulfils that function. The performer of the Tapas here is not mentioned until stanza 3. Sāyaṇa, however, attributes the Tapas to Brahman in his desire to create, but Brahman as the ground of all existence is a development that belongs to the later phases of the Vedic period, and at so early a period as this the concept of Tapas as the primal reality was probably less particularized and more personalized.

'Therefrom the night was born': that is, from Tapas; so also the following 'therefrom.' As Sāyaṇa correctly points out, 'night' implies also day, so that the meaning is 'night and day were born.'

2. 'From the waving sea was the year born': Again as noted by Sāyaṇa, 'year' here implies time as a whole. That its origin should be connected with the sea may be due to the natural and obvious association of the sun and moon, the producers of the days, nights and months, with the sea, whence they rise and into which they disappear in the course of their regular movements through the sky.

The Sacrificial Post

Among the various material objects which are deified in the Ṛgveda and to which hymns or parts of hymns are addressed is the sacrificial post, the wooden post to which the victim to be sacrificed was tied. It is asked to bestow upon the worshipper the same sort of boons as other Ṛgvedic gods, viz., riches and heroic sons in great abundance as well as good fortune, whether it is still growing in the forest or already felled by the axe and made into a sacrificial post, dripping with ghee and adorned with a garland. Addressed as 'lord of the forest,' the post is figured as a youth, whose beauty is enhanced through regeneration as a post at the sacrifice, to which he comes to be accorded his place before the sacrificial fire.

III.8

The Sacrificial Post

1. The god-revering anoint you at the sacrifice, O lord of the forest, with sweetness divine. When upright you stand, bestow riches here, or when your abode is in the bosom of this, our mother!
2. Situated in front of the kindled fire and getting for yourself an undying hymn rich in goodly heroes, pushing dearth of mind far away from us, raise yourself up for our great good fortune!
3. Raise yourself up, O lord of the forest, on the earth's summit! While being set up with a goodly setting up, bestow lustre upon him who brings the sacrifice!
4. He has come hither, a youth well-garbed, girded 'round: when being born, he becomes still fairer. Him the wise, the sages, erect, intent in their heart, god-revering.
5. Having been born, he is born at an auspicious time, thriving in the contest, at the assembly. The wise, the skilful, purify him with prayer; the seer, turned to the gods, lifts up his voice.

6. Those of you whom god-revering men have set in, O lord of the forest, or the axe has fashioned, may those divine posts, standing up, be willing to bestow upon us a gift rich in progeny!
7. Those that have been cut down on the ground and set in, to whom the sacrificial ladle is extended, may they, causing our fields to prosper, enjoy our treasured gift among the gods!
8. The Ādityas, the Rudras, the Vasus, whose guidance is good, Dyāvāpṛthivī, Pṛthivī, the intermediate region - all together let the gods favor our worship! Let them make upright the banner of the sacrifice!
9. Arranged in rows like geese, garbed in brightness, the posts have come hither to us. Being erected by the sages in front, gods they go to the gods' domain.
10. The posts in the earth with their garlands look just like the horns of the horned. Us may they favor in the contests, hearkening unto the responsive invocation by the priests!
11. O lord of the forest, grow hither and thither with a hundred branches: may we grow hither and thither with a thousand branches! - you whom this sharpened axe has brought forth for our great good fortune!

Notes

1. 'The god-revering anoint you . . . with sweetness divine': That is, the various priests smear the post with liberal quantities of ghee or clarified butter.
2. 'rich in goodly heroes': that is, bestowing goodly heroes, the same figure of speech seen in 'well-minded' as an epithet of Soma in ṚV VIII.48.1, on which v. note.
3. 'on earth's summit': Doubtless the place of sacrifice is meant.
4. 'when being born, he becomes still fairer': The conversion or metamorphosis from tree in the forest ('lord of the forest') to sacrificial post is conceived as a new birth or re-birth, perhaps not in its way very different from that experienced by members of the three upper castes, whence they are called 'Twice-born.'

5. 'Having been born, he is born at an auspicious time': said with reference to the tree's regeneration as a post at the sacrifice, which is regarded as an auspicious moment in its life. One might almost render 'he is re-born.'
- 'thriving in the contest, at the assembly': By 'contest' is meant the poetic rivalry of the priests, each of whom strives to compose the better hymn in praise of the sacrificial post, the consequence of which competition can only conduce to the greater elevation of the post. Concerning the 'assembly,' which is a tentative rendition of a much disputed term, *v.* note at *ṚV V.63.2.*
7. 'to whom the sacrificial ladle is extended': that is, in order to pour the ghee onto the posts.
- 'may they . . . enjoy our treasured gift among the gods': that is, may they bring our gift of the sacrificial meal to the gods and enjoy partaking of it in company with them.
8. The Ādityas, usually six in number, are personified abstractions, the chief ones being Mitra (Contract), Varuṇa (Truth) and Aryaman (Hospitality). The Rudras or Sons of Rudra are the Maruts or storm-gods, and the Vasus are a shadowy assemblage of gods headed by Indra, but of unspecified number and function. Dyāvāpṛthivī is the dual divinity Heaven and Earth (*v.* *ṚV I.185*). That Pṛthivī or Earth is immediately mentioned separately is probably due to her greater individuality as the Mother of all growing things, whereas Heaven's personification as a Father is more vague, there being addressed to him no separate hymn as to Pṛthivī.
10. 'The posts in the earth with their garlands look just like the horns of the horned': The posts were apparently provided with a garland, if the word so rendered is correctly interpreted, a combination which, projecting up from the ground, is boldly compared to the horns of horned animals, which are also provided on certain occasions with garlands.

The Cows

The following hymn, called the 'Āgāvīya Hymn' from its initial words (*ā gāvō*), is, practically speaking, addressed to the cow, although the second stanza and finale of the last are directed to Indra. The great importance of the cow to the Vedic Indian cannot be exaggerated, as his survival depended on it, much as even now the survival of the Lapplander is dependent upon the reindeer. Moreover, the products of the cow, *e.g.*, milk and ghee, were intrinsic elements of the sacrifice, which simply could not be performed without them. It is no wonder, then, that a hymn should be devoted to it.

VI.28

The Cows

1. The cows have come hither and brought us prosperity: let them lie down in the cow-shed! Let them be pleased in us! Many-colored, may they be rich in young here, yielding milk to Indra many mornings!
2. Indra aids the one who sacrifices and the one who is liberal. He alone gives, he does not rob him of what is his own. Only increasing his wealth again and again, he sets down the god-revering man on unbroken ground.
3. The cows do not get lost. The thief shall not injure them! An enemy shall not venture to lead them astray! With those cows that he sacrifices to the gods and gives to them, long indeed does the cowherd stay.
4. The charger that throws up the dust does not overtake them; they do not go to the place where are kept the ones readied for slaughter. The cows of the man who sacrifices graze where it is wide-ranging and free of danger.
5. The cows are Good Fortune. The cows have seemed Indra to me. The cows are a draught of freshest Soma. These cows, O peoples, are *the* Indra! I long for Indra with heart and mind.

6. Do you, O cows, fatten even the lean man! The unlovely make of goodly countenance! Prosperous make our house, you of prosperous speech! Mighty is your nourishment called in the assemblies!
7. Be rich in young! Graze on a goodly pasture! Drink pure water in a goodly drinking-place! Let not the thief be your master, nor speakers of ill! May Rudra's missile avoid you!
8. Let this mixture be mixed - be mixed with respect to these cows, be mixed with respect to the seed of the bull, be mixed for the sake of your virility, O Indra!

Notes

1. 'yielding milk to Indra many mornings': The Soma juice that was offered to Indra to provide the exhilaration and strength he needed to combat various demons was freely mingled with milk.
2. 'he sets down the god-revering man on unbroken ground': The words rendered 'unbroken ground' here have given rise to infinite discussion; 'ground' is, in this rendition, intended to mean 'open land for the pasturing of cows' and 'unbroken' perhaps both that it has not been previously upturned by the plow and also that it is not fragmented, but a single, fairly extensive plot.
3. It is remarkable that here and elsewhere in this hymn (and fairly commonly throughout the R̥gveda) a situation or condition that is desired by the composer or reciter of the hymn is referred to not as a wish on his part, but as though it were a fact; stated in grammatical terms, the indicative is used in place of one of several possible verb forms expressing a wish or request. Thus, by 'The cows do not get lost' is meant 'Let the cows not get lost' and similarly throughout this stanza and the rest of the hymn, wherever the context states a fact which should be expressed by a wish or a request. We do this in English too, as, for example, when one says: 'One does not talk while the play is going on.'
4. The first part of this stanza seems to imply a raid by enemies bent upon taking away cows as part of their booty. The word translated by 'the place where are kept the ones readied for slaughter' is problematical: it seems literally to mean '(a place or perhaps a person) that keeps what has been made ready,' which is simply a euphemism for 'keeps what is destined for slaughter.'

5. Here the poet identifies the cows with the god of Good Fortune (Bhaga), the general dispenser of happiness and welfare, and with Indra, who is constantly busy defeating the demons that take away the cows. So, then, as the giver of cows he is practically identical with them.
 'The cows are a draught of freshest Soma': this refers, of course, to the mixing of the Soma juice with milk.
6. 'you of prosperous speech': Since the lowing of the cows is thought to be productive of prosperity, it is itself regarded as prosperous; v. the note on RV VIII.48.1.
7. 'May Rudra's missile avoid you': Rudra is an irascible deity, capable, in a flight of wrath, of slaying or injuring his worshippers or their cows. Hence, the wish for safety from his missile expressed here and elsewhere in the Ṛgveda.
8. This stanza is somewhat obscure, but it appears essentially to be a prayer for Indra's virility, needed in his perpetual fights with the demons, which are furthered by his drinking great amounts of Soma juice. The 'mixture' referred to, then, may be the admixture of Soma juice, called figuratively 'the seed of the bull,' with milk, expressed here synecdochically by 'cows'. Thus, in effect: 'Let this mixture be made with the milk of these cows and the juice of Soma in order that Indra may become the more virile!'

Ghee

Tradition has been divided as to what deity the following hymn is ascribed. Sāyaṇa mentions Agni, Sūrya, the Waters, the Cow or Ghee! The reason for this divergence lies in the concatenation of nebulous and highly fanciful conceptions that pervade the hymn, which are susceptible of many different interpretations, often with seemingly equal justification. Some stanzas refer clearly enough to Soma or Ghee, but most of them to a combination of Soma and Ghee along with Poetic Composition or Speech, a triad in which the predominance of the one over the other two shifts from stanza to stanza. But the hymn seems really to be directed to Ghee, which is transfigured and envisioned as Soma and Poetic Diction as well as Ghee itself, so that the hymn glides almost imperceptibly from the literal to the metaphorical and vice versa. It should be remembered that Ghee was an essential constituent of the sacrifice, on a par with Soma, without which no oblation could be offered. That it should be identified mystically with Soma, therefore, is not surprising.

Whatever may have been the true intent of its author, this hymn is a fine example of the poetic art of the Ṛgveda on its more abstruse, ethereal level, and even though it is not possible to penetrate completely the thick veil of mystic symbolism with which it is enshrouded, it may yet be appreciated in its own right, as indeed are many things not fully explained, with which we have daily experience.

IV.58

Ghee

1. From the sea the honied wave rose up; together with the stalk it attained the status of the elixir of immortality. That which is the secret name of Ghee is the Tongue of the Gods, the Navel of Immortality.
2. We shall declare Ghee's name, at this sacrifice we shall keep it with homage. The priest shall hear it, when it is uttered. This the four-horned buffalo emitted.
3. Four horns, three feet it has, two heads, seven hands it has. Bound three ways, the bull roars loudly: the mighty god has entered mortals.
4. The gods found Ghee again in the cow, disposed in three ways, hidden by the Paṇis. Indra produced the one, Sūrya the one, and from Vena they fashioned the one through their inherent power.
5. These streams flow from the sea of the heart in a hundred channels, not to be seen by the false. I see the streams of Ghee: a golden reed is in their midst.
6. Without pause the words flow like streams, being purified within by heart and mind. These waves of Ghee run like deer fleeing from a hunter.
7. As in the channel of a river, the streams of Ghee, quick-moving, outstripping the wind, rush onward, youthful, breaking through their bounds - as does a reddish race-horse - with their waves overflowing.
8. Let them run smiling to Agni, just as comely women to engagements! Let the streams of Ghee join with the fuel: relishing them, Jātavedas is happy.
9. I see them as young girls putting on unguents to go to a wedding. Where the Soma is pressed, where the sacrifice is, there the streams of Ghee are purified.
10. Flow unto goodly praise, a contest for cows! Unto us prosperity, riches bestow! Take this sacrifice to the gods for us! The streams of Ghee are purified until sweet.

11. Upon your ordinance rests the whole world: within the sea, in the heart, within the life-essence: the one that is borne hither upon the face of the Waters at their coming together - that honied wave of yours may we obtain!

Notes

1. Here the Ghee is identified with the Soma. By 'sea' is meant the water in which the Soma juice is mixed to produce the drink of immortality. Since the Ghee is identified with the Soma, the Ghee too, is said to have obtained the status of the drink of immortality.

'the honied wave': because the water is mingled with honey, *i.e.*, Soma.

The Tongue of the Gods and Navel of Immortality are names of the Soma, hence also of Ghee, as being here identical. The name Tongue (or Speech) of the Gods probably derives from the sound which the Soma makes when dripping into the vats through the filter.

2. 'This': that is, this name: Soma or its alternatives, *viz.*, Tongue of the Gods and Navel of Immortality.

'the four-horned buffalo': This refers to the Soma, and the figure is continued in stanza 3: 'Four horns . . . it has'. Soma may be called a buffalo either because of the sound it makes, because of its color (often referred to) or because of its virility (a feature, however, attributed to all the gods, not to Soma alone), perhaps because of all three reasons simultaneously.

3. Here the Ghee-Soma is equated with the Poetic Speech of the sacrificial rite, but the figure of the buffalo is continued. It is not possible to say with certainty what the numbers refer to, but a reasonable suggestion comes from the Indian commentator Mahīdhara, according to which the four horns are the parts of speech (recognized in the oldest grammatical system in India), *viz.*, nouns, verbs, prepositions and particles; the three feet are the three persons of the verb or the three tenses; the two heads may be the subject and object; the seven hands are the seven grammatical cases (nominative, accusative, instrumental, dative, ablative, genitive and locative, which are usually called by the ordinal numbers first, second, third, etc.); the three bonds may be the three numbers, singular, dual and plural. The two expressions 'the bull roars loudly' and 'the mighty god has entered mortals' refer to the Soma being filtered and imbibed by the priests.

4. According to the legend related in the Ṛgveda, the cows had been imprisoned by the Paṇis, a robber folk. The Ghee, as a product of the cow, was, therefore,

also in their hands. After the cows had been released by Indra, the gods found the Ghee; it is said to be 'disposed in three ways', just as it is regarded in this hymn *viz.*, as Ghee itself, and figuratively as Soma and as Poetic Speech.

'Indra produced the one': by freeing the cows he produced or obtained Ghee in the literal sense of the products of the cows (milk, butter and curds).

'Sūrya [produced] the one': that is, the Sun-god produced the Soma by causing the plants, among which, of course, is Soma, to grow.

'from Vena they fashioned the one': The gods produced Ghee in the form of sacred speech from Vena, who may be Agni, though this identification is very doubtful.

5. Here Ghee in the form of both Soma and Poetic Speech is meant. The 'sea' is the Soma that has been imbibed by the priests and is within them, in their heart, whence it will flow forth in smooth-flowing poetic verses in hymns of praise; but it is beyond the perception of the false or adverse.

'a golden reed is in their midst': Sāyaṇa suggests that by 'golden reed' is meant the lightning form of Agni. But Geldner, on the basis of parallel wording at Atharvaveda X.7.41, suggests the primal god Prajāpati, who was born in the Waters as a golden egg.

6. In this stanza the flow of Poetic Speech, 'being purified within by heart and mind' is thought of as the flowing Ghee.
7. The identification of Poetic Speech with Ghee is continued here in a comparison of Speech-Ghee with a great river hurtling in its channel and overflowing its banks, to which is annexed a subsidiary simile of a racehorse breaking over the boundaries of the track.
8. Here the streams of Ghee are finally presented as Ghee in its own form, flowing into the sacred fire from the ladle of the officiating priest. These streams are likened to women hastening to rendezvous with their lovers, a simile used also at VI.75.4, where it is oddly applied to the ends of the warrior's bow as he is going into battle.
9. The streams of Ghee shine like young girls applying unguents before going to a wedding. Here Ghee in the three aspects (Ghee, Soma and Poetic Speech) is meant, as shown by the allusion to the pressing of the Soma, the sacrifice (at which the poem of praise is recited) and the streams of Ghee itself.
10. As in the previous stanza, the three aspects of Ghee are united, but in the first part with emphasis on Ghee as the Poetic Speech of the hymn of praise and in the last part on Ghee as the purified Soma.

'Flow unto goodly praise, a contest for cows': This is addressed to the streams of Ghee, in tripartite aspect, as just pointed out, to form a fine hymn of praise for the poet-worshipper, the hymn being tantamount to a contest for cows, in that the hymn to be composed will vie for a prize or dakṣiṇā consisting of a cow or cows.

11. Only a hesitant conjecture can be offered as to the intended meaning of this final stanza: the whole world depends on Ghee in its threefold sense, the sea being the Ghee as Soma, the heart being Ghee as Speech (which flows from the heart), and the life-essence being the Ghee as Ghee or rather, more expansively, as the triple product of the cow (milk, butter, curds). The Ghee as Soma is brought hither on the surface of the Waters, with which the two (Ghee and Soma) as separate entities are mixed 'at their coming together' in the vat.

Dakṣiṇā

The following hymn is a eulogy of the dakṣiṇā, the fee or honorarium that is paid to the priests by the institutor of the sacrifice (the yajamāna) for their performance of the sacrifice. The author of the hymn lauds the bountifulness of the givers of the dakṣiṇā in a train of lofty allusions to the god-like estate they will enjoy here and hereafter in consequence of their munificence. Their gift is said to be a divine gift, a sacrifice to the gods, whereby is implied its absolute incumbence upon the givers as part of the order of things.

The dakṣiṇā, as appears from the hymn itself, might consist of any of various gifts, such as horses, cows, gold, and doubtless almost any object considered of value in those days. But certainly originally the dakṣiṇā was a cow, the old basis of wealth and barter even among the Indo-European peoples, as dakṣiṇā is properly an adjective meaning 'able' with the word for 'cow' implied, as it was quite unnecessary to express it; hence, literally the 'able, *i.e.*, productive, cow.' In the course of time dakṣiṇā came to mean any sort of gift.

X.107

Dakṣiṇā

1. The great bountifulness of these has become manifest. All life has been delivered from darkness. The great light given by our Fathers has come hither. The broad path of Dakṣiṇā is seen.
2. The givers of Dakṣiṇā abide on high in heaven: those who give horses are with Sūrya, the givers of gold share immortality, the givers of garments, O Soma, prolong their life.
3. A divine gift is Dakṣiṇā: a sacrifice to the gods. It is not from the niggardly, for surely they do not give. Many, therefore, who have proffered Dakṣiṇā, give out of fear of wrong.
4. Beholders of men, they look upon Dakṣiṇā as hundred-streamed Vāyu, as Arka, bestower of light; they look upon Dakṣiṇā as a sacrifice: those who give and proffer in the assemblage milk Dakṣiṇā, who has seven mothers.

5. One who gives Dakṣiṇā is the first to be called. One who gives Dakṣiṇā goes ahead as the village-leader: him alone do I reckon a king of peoples, who first offered Dakṣiṇā.
6. Him alone do they call a seer, him a priest, leader of the sacrifice, chanter of the Sāman, singer of hymns of praise: he knows the three forms of the light, who first succeeded with Dakṣiṇā.
7. Dakṣiṇā gives a horse, Dakṣiṇā gives a cow, and Dakṣiṇā wins food, which is our life's breath: he who is discerning makes Dakṣiṇā his armor.
8. The generous do not die, they do not go to ruin, they suffer no harm; the generous do not go astray. This whole world and heaven too - Dakṣiṇā gives all this to them.
9. The generous are the first to win a pleasant abode. The generous win a wife who has fine clothes. The generous win a draft of spirituous liquor. The generous win over those who advance unchallenged.
10. For the generous they furbish a swift horse. For the generous there waits a resplendent maiden. This dwelling of the generous is adorned like a lotus-pond, splendid as is a home of the gods.
11. Horses that are good carriers carry the generous: smooth-rolling rolls the chariot of Dakṣiṇā. Protect the generous, O Gods, in combat: the generous conquers his foe in battles.

Notes

1. Probably by 'these' are meant the Fathers, mentioned in the second half of the stanza, who in ṚV VII.76.4 are said to have produced the Dawn (Uṣas). Their gift, then, the example *par excellence* of their bountifulness, is the Dawn, which has now arrived, dispelling the darkness. But it is also possible that by 'these' are meant the institutors of the sacrifice, the yajamānas, who bestow the sacrificial fee on the officiating priest. According to this interpretation, it would be the munificence of these yajamānas that is manifested in the coming of the Dawn, as though their payment of the sacrificial fee were responsible for the appearance of the Dawn. These two interpretations, which on the surface appear quite

divergent, are in reality quite close, and both may be simultaneously involved, since the yajamānas, through their gift to the priests, are only repeating the gift initiated by the Fathers whose descendants they are.

‘The broad path of Dakṣiṇā’: perhaps the light of the Dawn as the gift of the Fathers or the path to be followed by the Dakṣiṇā.

3. ‘A divine gift,’ *i.e.*, a gift to the gods. The giving of the Dakṣiṇā or sacrificial fee to the priests is thus viewed as tantamount to a gift to the gods. Many who give it, therefore, feel that not doing so would be wrong or sinful.
4. This stanza is obscure, and it has accordingly been variously interpreted. The interpretation given here is intended to mean that the yajamānas, called the ‘beholders of men’ because of their concern for men, look upon the Dakṣiṇā as being in essence a sacrifice to Vāyu who, by means of the abundant rain he brings, produces the crops and hence supports life itself, and also to Arka, the sun, that provides light and warmth to men. These yajamānas are said to ‘milk Dakṣiṇā,’ that is extract the best therefrom, as though Dakṣiṇā were a cow able to benefit those who would milk her. The attribution of seven mothers to Dakṣiṇā may be based on the seven forms of sacrifice, each of which has its own particular Dakṣiṇā.
6. While it is possible to refer stanza 6 to the recipient of the Dakṣiṇā, *i.e.*, the officiating priest, who may be said to be thus ennobled by the receipt of his fee, it seems more in accordance with the tenor of the hymn, which is focused on the giver of the Dakṣiṇā, to refer this stanza to him. Furthermore, the repetition of ‘him alone’ at the very outset of 6 certainly suggests that the same person is meant.
‘the light,’ *i.e.*, the sacred word, whose three forms are the three Vedas. The giver of Dakṣiṇā is said, then, to comprehend in himself all the chief ministrants of the sacrifice as well as to know the three Vedas.
10. Sāyaṇa points out that, just as a lotus-pond is adorned with lotuses, swans, etc., so is the dwelling of the generous adorned with canopies and such like.
11. The Vedic poets were extremely fond of juxtaposing etymologically related words, as exemplified in the first half of this stanza.

Generosity

In the Ṛgveda are to be found glimmerings of that Indian predilection, later to be greatly extended and developed, for succinctly stated bits of general wisdom, especially about matters of a practical sort. From a very early period there must have been a large mass of these aphoristic sayings in common usage, by nature of unknown authorship, that had become an inseparable part of traditional culture, transmitted entirely orally from generation to generation. It is not possible to say whether the following hymn is just a solitary remnant of this predilection that has chanced to be preserved from ancient times, or whether it represents the beginning of the tradition. It is devoted, in a moralizing vein, to the exaltation of the virtues of generous giving, whether of food or wealth, and to the deprecation of non-giving. Any of its stanzas might be quoted independently as a maxim or precept concerning the proper attitude of the wealthy man toward the poor and needy. Isolated in both content and purpose, it forms an interesting and refreshing departure from the typical hymn of praise with its repetitious allusions and often perplexing obscurities.

X.117

Generosity

1. Surely not have the gods given hunger alone as a cause of death: death of one sort or another comes also to the well fed. The wealth even of one who gives diminishes not: but the one who gives not finds none to comfort him.
2. He who, having food, makes hard his heart to the needy, to the one desirous of drink, to the wretched who has approached - and even to one who served him formerly - that one finds none to comfort him.
3. Bountiful indeed is he who gives to a beggar, to one desiring food, to the weak man wandering about. Enough it is for him to be called on in time of need. Also for future days he makes a friend.

4. He is not a friend who to a friend, to an associate who is closely attached to him, does not give of drink. He should go away from him: he is not a haven. He should seek out another - even a stranger.
5. The one who is better off should really give to the one in need. He should look down the longer path. For like the wheels of a chariot do riches roll hither: now to one, now to another they'll come.
6. The unfeeling man finds his food without advantage. I speak the truth. It is really his ruination: he nurtures neither a companion nor a friend. He who eats alone has his sins alone.
7. The plow that actually plows makes one well fed; he who goes surmounts the road with his feet; the priest who speaks gets more than the one that does not speak; the friend that gives would be above the one that gives not.
8. The one that has one foot strides out the more than the one that has two feet; the one that has two feet overtakes from behind the one that has three feet; the one that has four feet comes at the call of those that have two feet - looking over the fives while standing nearby.
9. The two hands, though the same, do not work the same; though of the same mother, two cows do not milk the same; even twins' strengths are not the same: even though two are kinsmen, they do not give the same.

Notes

1. The import is that the wealthy man loses nothing by giving to the poor man who would otherwise die of starvation and, in any case, being well fed will not keep him from death, as it comes to everyone in one way or another besides hunger.
3. 'Enough it is for him to be called on in time of need': This translation is provisional: the key-word, rendered 'to be called on in time of need,' is of uncertain interpretation, and translations vary greatly.

5. 'He should look down the longer path': that is, take into view the whole path of life with all its vicissitudes and realize that one's fortunes rise and fall, and good fortune may be replaced by deep adversity.
6. 'The unfeeling man finds his food without advantage': that is, finds that his food serves him no purpose beyond that of immediate satiation, as he has no one with whom to share his woes.
7. 'The plow that actually plows makes one well fed': It is only the plow that is put to its proper use to plow the field, instead of being left idle, that will provide the wherewithal to feed one to the full. The purport of the stanza is that, just as the plow, the traveller and the Brahman priest have specific activities to perform, so also does a friend, on whom it devolves to give.
8. The point of this stanza, which is made up of a series of riddles, is that it is not necessarily the greater number that comes out ahead, the implication being, of course, that the wealthy man is not necessarily superior to the poor man. Solution to the riddle: 'the one that has one foot' is the sun which crosses the vast expanse of the sky; 'the one that has two feet' is a human being; 'the one that has three feet' is an old man with a staff; 'the one that has four feet' is the dog that watches over the herds and is at the beck and call of the cowherd; and 'the fives' are the cows themselves, as though they were in groups of five or pentads. But probably this curious addition to the series of one through four is just by way of continuing the play with numbers.
9. Even where there seems to be complete equality, as in the instances enumerated, there is not: how, then, can there be equality between the rich man and the poor man?

The Weapons

This hymn, the only one of its kind in the Ṛgveda, is somewhat Atharvavedic in tenor, as it is, practically speaking, a blessing pronounced upon the warrior's weapons and paraphernalia, presumably just prior to his entry into battle. The blessing is implicit, however, as the phraseology is that of a hymn of praise and homage. The implements are endowed with personality, incipient in some cases, but more developed in others where similes involving living beings are introduced.

Each stanza is addressed to a different implement of the panoplied warrior, but this pattern is not uniformly carried out due to the intrusion of stanzas directed to various deities of the Ṛgvedic pantheon and the inter-spersion of several stanzas devoted to the arrow.

VI.75

The Weapons

1. As of a thundercloud is his appearance when the armored one goes into the bosom of battles. With body unpierced be victorious! May this might of the armor preserve you!
2. With our bow we would win cows, with our bow the match, with our bow we would win fierce battles. Our bow causes the enemy's dislike of us: with our bow we would win all the regions.
3. As though to speak, she keeps coming to his ear, closely embracing her dear friend; like a woman, she whispers, stretched out upon the bow: this bowstring that preserves him in an engagement.
4. May these two, going to engagements as does a woman, bear it as a mother a son on her lap; joining together may they drive the enemy away by piercing him: these two ends of the bow that make the foe dart off!
5. A father of many daughters - he has many a son - he makes a rattling when he goes into engagements: the quiver, fastened at his back, when sent forth, wins all encounters and contests.

6. The goodly charioteer, standing in his chariot, directs the horses in front, wheresoever he wishes. Admire the might of the reins: the reins from behind check them according to his mind.
7. Fierce sounds the horses make, having powerful hoofs, hurrying along with the chariots. Treading down the foe with the tips of their feet, they destroy the enemy unrelenting.
8. The chariot-carrier is called his oblation, whereon his weapon, his armor is set down; his able chariot thereon we would honor always, we in goodly spirit.
9. Sitting together at the sweet drink are the Fathers, bestowers of nourishment, refuge in danger, possessing spears, resolute, with splendid missiles and strength in arrows, not to be slighted, equally heroic, great, overpowerers of hordes.
10. O priests, Fathers, you who are worthy of the Soma! May Dyāvapṛthivī, the unrivalled, be propitious unto us! May Pūṣan keep us from hardship! O you who prosper in the Ṛta, protect us! Let no one who utters sin rule us!
11. The arrow wears fine feathers; a deer is its tooth; fastened with thongs, it flies, when sent forth. Where men run together and hither and thither, there may the arrows afford us protection!
12. O you who hurry straight on, spare us! May our body be stone! May Soma speak on our behalf! May Aditi afford protection!
13. It keeps striking upon their back; it strikes their flanks: O whip, spur the attentive horses in the battles!
14. As a serpent with its coils, it goes around the arm, fending off the impact of the bowstring: may the handguard, knowing all the rules, a man, the man protect on every side!
15. The one that is smeared with poison, has the head of a stag and whose tip is iron - to the divine arrow, whose seed is in the raincloud, this lofty homage!
16. Released, fly away, O arrow sharpened by prayer! Go! Fall upon the enemy! Leave not anyone of them remaining!

17. Where the arrows fall together, tuftless, like young boys, there let Bṛhaspati, Aditi afford us protection, afford protection always!
18. I protect your vulnerable parts with armor. May Soma the king clothe you with his drink of immortality! May Varuṇa afford you ampler than the ample! May the gods greet you as winner!
19. The one who, our own and a foreigner, a stranger, desires to slay us - him may all the gods hurt: prayer is my nearest armor.

Notes

1. The implement, which is the subject of this stanza, is the armor of the warrior, which probably consisted of some sort of metal plate that was strapped to his chest, rather than mail, as the word is sometimes translated. The likening of his appearance to a thundercloud is no doubt due to the minatory mien of each, the one bristling with lightning-flashes as it moves across the heaven, the other encased in glistening metal as he moves onto the battlefield, both filling the viewer with awe.
2. In this and the next three stanzas are praised the bow and its inseparable parts, the bowstring and the ends of the bow (!) and the indispensable quiver. Note that the first-mentioned prize of battle is cows, the basis of the Ṛgvedic Indian's concept of wealth.
 'Our bow causes the enemy's dislike of us': The meaning is that the bow will inspire the enemy with aversion because of his fear of the destruction of his forces that the bow will wreak. It does not mean 'our bow brings harm to the enemy' or the like, as translated by some.
 'we would win all the regions': Sāyaṇa points out that by 'regions' are here implied the people who abide there, just as when one says 'the seats cry out', is meant 'the people sitting in the seats cry out'.
3. In this and the following two stanzas the subject is postponed until the very end, leaving it to the reader to guess, much as in a riddle, what the subject is, using the gist of the text to guide him. In agreement with English idiom, however, which requires a subject to be expressed either as a noun or pronoun (whereas in Sanskrit it is regularly omitted if it is sufficiently evident from the context), a pronoun of the appropriate gender has been supplied as the subject, the identity of which is revealed at the end where the particular weapon is mentioned. In this way an impression of the intended effect, it is hoped, may be created. The structure, then, is: 'As though to speak, *she* keeps coming . . . *she* whispers: who? *viz.*, the bowstring'. The bowstring, which is of the feminine

gender in Sanskrit, is punningly personified as a woman who comes repeatedly to the ear of the warrior to whisper something to him. While doing so, she is in the embrace of her beloved friend the arrow!

‘embracing her dear friend’: Sāyaṇa construes ‘dear’ not as an adjective qualifying ‘friend’, but as a noun in the sense of ‘pleasant words’ as object of ‘speak’, thus: ‘As though to speak pleasant words, she keeps coming . . . embracing her friend’.

4. ‘May these two, going to engagements as does a woman, bear it as a mother a son on her lap’: Mention of the subject, *viz.*, the ends of the warrior’s bow, is deferred to the end of the stanza. The ends of the bow are depicted as moving out to their engagements with the enemy, just as a woman (singular!) to engagements with her beloved, and the wish is expressed that these ends of the bow hold the arrow as does a mother a son on her lap. The latter simile is a bit irregular, since, strictly speaking, it is not the bow-ends that hold the arrow, but the bowstring.
5. ‘A father of many daughters - he has many a son’: This refers to the quiver, which is mentioned later on in the stanza; the arrows are, poetically speaking, the sons and daughters of the quiver into whose care they are entrusted. That the children are of both sexes is due to the fact that the word used for arrow may be of either gender. Note how the bowstring, ends of the bow and here the quiver are all invested with personality; later in the hymn the arrow, whip and handguard are similarly personified.
6. The first half-stanza is devoted to the skillful charioteer, in the second half the worshipper asks that the reins be lauded.
‘the reins from behind check them according to his mind’: The horses are meant by ‘them’ and the charioteer by ‘his’.
7. ‘Fierce sounds the horses make’: probably both the sound of the hoofs striking the ground and the horses’ neighing are meant.
‘having powerful hoofs’: according to Sāyaṇa, ‘having hoofs that rain dust’, *i.e.*, whose hoofs stir or raise the dust, as he takes the first member of the Vedic compound as ‘raining, showering’, in which he is followed by several translators. But this word also has the figurative sense of ‘impregnating’, whence ‘male’ and further ‘powerful’ are derived meanings, so that the compound is susceptible of both interpretations.
8. This stanza has not been satisfactorily explained. The difficulty primarily turns on what exactly is meant by the word here rendered ‘chariot-carrier’. According to this interpretation, it means the cart or other vehicle in which the warrior’s chariot was transported to the battle-area. This subsidiary vehicle, though

nowhere else mentioned in the Ṛgveda, is referred to in the later Vedic literature and seems to correspond, in some measure at least, to a similar contrivance among the Greeks, called a βωμός.¹ This carrier, if the translation is correct, serves in effect as the oblation offered by the warrior, much like the ghee, milk, etc. ordinarily offered by the priests. According to Sāyaṇa, however, the word in question means 'what is carried in the chariot', viz., the plunder taken from the enemy, which is borne on the warrior's chariot from the battlefield, to be offered in the sacrifice. But this explanation does not well fit the tenor of the hymn, which seems clearly to refer to the time prior to battle, when the warrior is readying himself and his equipage before entering upon the battlefield.

'his able chariot': that is, his chariot that is able or capable of serving him in all the needs of warfare.

9. According to Sāyaṇa, the Fathers are the 'protectors of the chariot', but he offers no amplification; very probably they are the spirits of deceased warriors, as suggested by some of their epithets, who are invited to this benediction of the weapons and subsequently will accompany the warriors in battle and offer them protection.
10. This stanza, which is grammatically irregular, seems irrelevant to the context. There is no verb with the first three addressees; perhaps 'protect us' might be supplied from the subsequent occurrence of this phrase, as is done by Sāyaṇa, but it has seemed preferable to reproduce the text as it is.
11. 'a deer is its tooth': The tooth or point of the arrow is made from the deer's tooth, here figuratively expressed simply by 'deer'; but Sāyaṇa says that by 'deer' is meant its horn, i.e., its antlers.

'fastened with thongs': the arrow, fastened to the pointed tip with leather-strips (called literally 'cows' in the original!).

'Where men run together and hither and thither, there may the arrows afford us protection': where the warriors run, perhaps in some sort of defensive or offensive formation, and also each on his own, or, as Wilson puts it: 'whenever men assemble or disperse', there the arrows cast by our side should afford protection.

12. 'O you who hurry straight on': The arrow of the enemy is meant.

'May our body be stone': or, as explained by Sāyaṇa, 'like stone, not able to be pierced, hard'.

¹ For further details and references, v. Arthur Anthony Macdonell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, Indian Text Series (London, John Murray & Company, 1912; reprinted ed. Varanasi, Motilal Banarsidass, 1958), vol. 2, p. 205 under *Ratha-vāhana*.

'May Soma speak on our behalf': Soma was regarded as a great warrior, unconquerable in battle, an aspect which may stem from Indra's imbibition of abundant quantities of Soma juice prior to his contests with demons, notably Vṛtra. It is probably as a supreme warrior himself that Soma is asked to speak on behalf of those beleaguered in battle and later in stanza 18 to clothe the warrior with his drink of immortality, so rendering him invulnerable.

'May Aditi afford protection': Aditi often has the role of a releaser from distress and sin, and hence of a bestower of well-being and safety, which seems to be the reason for her being invoked here and in 17 for protection.

13. 'It keeps striking': The whip, subsequently to be addressed, is referred to. 'their back . . . their flanks': By 'their' is meant 'of the horses'.
14. 'As a serpent with its coils, it goes around the arm': Perhaps the extended simile would be: 'as a serpent goes around the arm of the snake-charmer, so does it, *i.e.*, the handguard, go around the warrior's arm.
15. 'The one that is smeared with poison, has the head of a stag': The poison, called *āla*, has been identified with yellow arsenic.² The word is said to have been borrowed from the autochthonous inhabitants of India, who used it in their warfare.³ It is of interest to note that in the Lawbook of Manu (*Mānavadharmasāstra*) VII.90 kings are forbidden to slay their enemies with concealed, barbed or poisoned weapons or with arrows set afire. Here an arrow whose tip is made from the antlers of a stag is meant, *cf.* stanza 11: 'a deer is its tooth'. Other arrows had an iron tip.
- 'whose seed is in the raincloud': because the shaft of the arrow consisted of a reed which grew plentifully in the water produced by the rainclouds.
17. 'Where the arrow fall together, tuftless, like young boys': that is, where the arrows fall in great numbers, devoid of feathers, in this respect like young boys who, their hair having grown out, are without the tuft of hair left when their head is shaved in the tonsure ceremony.
- 'there let Bṛhaspati, Aditi afford us protection': Because of Bṛhaspati's close association with Indra in the release of the cows held by Vala and his vanquishing of various demons, it is not surprising that his protection of the warrior in battle should be solicited; regarding Aditi, *v.* note at stanza 12.
18. On the invocation of Soma here, *v.* note at stanza 12.

² For a discussion of this word, *v.* Heinrich Lüders, 'Ali und Āla', *Aufsätze zur Kultur- und Sprachgeschichte vornehmlich des Orients, Ernst Kuhn zum 70. Geburtstag gewidmet* (Breslau, Verlag von M. & H. Marcus, 1916), pp. 313-25.

³ So according to Karl Ammer, 'Die L-Formen im Ṛgveda', *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, 51, 1.-2. Heft (1948), p. 132.

The Gambler

In this hymn, a gambler describes his intoxication with the game of dice and the ruin this infatuation brought upon him and his family. But he is released from its magic clutches when, upon a firm avowal of his absolute destitution and explicit inability to play anymore, the god Savitṛ restores his wife and property.

This hymn has been regarded as the oldest example of a so-called Truth Act,¹ such as is often described in later Indian literature, whereby a person, by drawing upon the power inherent in the perfect performance of his office or duty, is able to perform an act that borders on the miraculous, but which is beyond the capability of an ordinary person. Since a particular Truth Act can *only* be performed by the person who has attained the necessary perfection of behavior, it seems that, if this hymn were an example of this rare and miraculous ability, it would be useless for anyone other than the gambler who is the subject of the hymn to recite it. It seems more reasonable, therefore, to suppose that, while it is an example of the immense power latent in truth, it is, nevertheless, not strictly a Truth Act in the technical sense. It was perhaps employed as a potent force by one whose behavior and circumstances corresponded to those of this particular gambler, in which case the hymn could be viewed as a kind of magic spell designed to cure the afflicted of the habit.

¹ The view of W. Norman Brown in 'Duty as Truth in Ancient India', pp. 106-107; for bibliographic details v. note to sketch on the Ṛbhus.

X.34

The Gambler

1. The pendants on the lofty tree, coming from a windy place, delight me as they keep tumbling about on the board: the Vibhīdaka, ever wakeful, has pleased me like a draught of Soma from Mūjavat.
2. She has not reproached me, not shown anger: she was kind to me and my friends. On account of the die one over I drove away a devoted wife.
3. His mother-in-law detests him, his wife drives him away; one who needs help finds no one to comfort him. 'I find no use for a gambler, who is like an old horse that ought to be sold.'
4. Others embrace the wife of him to possess whom the potent die has craved. Father, mother, brothers say of him: 'We know him not. Bind him and lead him away!'
5. When I think to myself: 'I won't play with them,' I am left behind by my friends as they go off, and when the ruddy fellows, cast down, have raised their voice, I go to their appointed spot, like a courtesan.
6. The gambler goes to the hall, asking himself: 'Am I going to win?' full of confidence. The dice go contrary to his desire, bestowing the lucky throws on his opponent.
7. The dice have hooks, goads, they're deceitful, distressing, they cause him to distress others; they give gifts as do children and strike back at winners. They're coated with honey, with magic power over the gambler.
8. A host of them, numbering three times fifty, frolics about, true to their law, as the god Savitṛ to his. They bow not down even before the wrath of the mighty; even the king pays them obeisance.
9. Down they roll! Up they jump! Though without hands, they overcome him who has hands! Magic coals from heaven thrown down on the board: cold as they are, they burn up the heart!

10. Forsaken, the gambler's wife is distressed, as also the mother whose son roams anywhere. Laden with debt, fearful, seeking money, he goes by night to the home of others.
11. It distresses the gambler to see a woman, the wife of others and their well-made home. Since he yokes the ruddy horses early in the day, he sinks down beside their fire, a poor wretch.
12. To the one who is the general of your mighty throng, as king the first of your host, I extend the ten fingers: I'm not keeping any money back! This Truth do I declare.
13. 'Don't play dice! Plow your field! Take pleasure in what you've got, valuing it highly! There are your cows, gambler, there's your wife.' The lord Savitṛ here proclaims this to me.
14. Make friends, please, have mercy upon us! Bewitch us not with cruelty audaciously! May your wrath now come to rest, your disfavor! May another now be in the ruddy fellows' net!

Notes

1. The dice used in Vedic times were the nuts of the Vibhīdaka tree (*Terminalia bellerica*), which seem not to have been provided with 'eyes,' as are our dice, or with figures, the number of dice having been the basis of the game (v. note on stanza 2). Here the nuts are called 'pendants,' because to the gambler who sees them hanging high up in the Vibhīdaka tree they are as charming and attractive as the ornamental pendants worn by a woman. The 'board' was probably nothing more than a depression or declivity in the ground into which the dice could be thrown.

'the Vibhīdaka, ever wakeful': Here the name of the tree is used metaphorically for the die; 'ever wakeful' because the die is always ready with its magical charms over the gambler. But the word also might mean 'keeping awake,' and the double sense is doubtless intended.

The best Soma was said to come from the mountain Mūjavat, the location of which, however, is unknown.

2. 'On account of the die one over': While no details are known about how the game of dice was played in Vedic India, it is known that a large number of dice were employed - stanza 8 speaks of 150! - and that the result of a throw was determined by dividing by four the number of dice thrown, whether by the challenger or his opponent or the two combined or perhaps the number of dice retained by the one or the other. In any case, the winning throw, called 'kṛta,' was evenly divisible by four; the losing throws, based on remainders of three, two and one when the division was made, called respectively *tretā*, *dvāpara* and *ekapara* (or *kali*), were in a descending order of catastrophe for the loser, the *ekapara* or *kali* throw, then, being the worst. It is this particular throw yielding 'one over' when divided by four that brought ruination upon the subject of this hymn.¹
3. Since the second half of this stanza, though in the first person, is clearly not from the focal point of the gambler, it is assumed to reflect the thoughts of a typical detractor and so enclosed in quotation marks.
4. 'Bind him and lead him away': His family will have nothing to do with him, as though he were a stranger and are therefore quite willing to allow his arrest and punishment.
5. 'the ruddy fellows': The dice, which are reddish brown, are, of course, meant. In stanza 11 they are figuratively called 'ruddy horses.'
7. 'they give gifts as do children': that is, they take back what they give.
8. 'true to their law, as the god Savitṛ to his': that is, they are not an unorganized crew, each doing as it wishes, but are bound by the particular laws which pertain to them, just as are all the other elements of creation, as also the god Savitṛ, of whom it is said: 'Not to be deceived, illuminating all creatures, the god Savitṛ observes the laws' (RV IV.53.4). Savitṛ was, after all, the great stimulator of life and motion in the world, the personification of the power of the sun, the perfect regularity of whose daily operation is ever apparent.
9. They are 'magic' coals because, though cold, they burn, unlike ordinary coals.
10. 'he goes by night to the home of others': probably for shelter, since he is *persona non grata* in his own home (stanza 4) or perhaps to borrow money; others suggest 'to steal.'

¹ For further particulars on the game of dice in ancient India, v. Heinrich Lüders, *Das Würfelspiel im alten Indien* (Berlin, Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1907) in *Abhandlungen der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse. Neue Folge, Band IX, Nr. 2.*

11. Very likely this stanza is to be connected closely with 10, so that the scene here described unfolds in the 'home of others' to which he goes by night.
 'he yokes the ruddy horses': that is, gets ready to go to the place of the dice game, 'ruddy horses' being figuratively used for the dice, as though he were to commence a journey in lordly estate - but alas! he returns to his lodging spent and wretched, virtually a beggar.
12. 'To the one who is the general of your mighty throng,' etc.: Since so little is known about dice playing in Vedic India, it is hard to say what precisely is meant by these words. Perhaps no 'general' or 'king' in the technical language of dicing is meant, the terms being merely a way of addressing the whole group of dice as a unit, as though they did indeed have a leader who controlled all their moves. Anyway, to their leader or to the dice as a confederation of forces the gambler openly confesses he has exhausted his funds and can play no longer. He has frankly confessed to the irrepressible fascination by which the dice have captivated him, described their seductive devices and the ruination they have brought upon him and his family. Now as a sign of his complete destitution the gambler extends his open hands.
13. From Ṛgvedic times down to the present in India truth has been regarded as possessing great power. One need only be reminded of the application of this power inherent in truth by Mahatma Gandhi, who called his campaign of non-violence 'Satyāgraha,' *i.e.*, adherence to the truth. The gambler in this hymn has proved himself to be a perfect gambler and has gone as far as his resources will permit. This confession suffices to release the power of truth, as a result of which the god Savitṛ is enabled to restore to him his wife and possessions. Such seems to be the import of this stanza.

The Ascetic

The following hymn, implicitly a eulogy of the ascetic or yogin, is unique in the Ṛgveda and, although certainly one of the very latest additions to the collection, is of the greatest intrinsic interest for affording us our earliest account of the ascetic-yogin and his sensation of flying through the air on the winds. Of perhaps hardly less interest in this hymn is its suggestion of great antiquity for the link between these yogins and the traditional Rudra-Śiva cult and their employment of toxic means for inducing a trance-state.

X.136

The Ascetic

1. The longhaired ascetic bears the fire; the longhaired ascetic bears the toxic drink; the longhaired ascetic bears the two worlds; the longhaired ascetic is everything: the heavenly light to behold! The longhaired ascetic is called this light.
2. The hermits have the wind as their girdle. They wear soiled brown garments. They go along the path of the wind, when the gods have entered them.
3. 'Made ecstatic due to our hermit-state, we have mounted upon the winds. Only our bodies do you as mortals perceive!'
4. Through the air he flies, looking down upon all forms. The hermit for every god's benefaction is established as a friend.
5. The wind's horse, Vāyu's friend and also one who is impelled by the gods is the hermit. Both oceans he inhabits: the one that is eastern and the western.
6. Going in the path of Apsarases, Gandharvas, beasts, the longhaired ascetic is aware of their intent, a friend most sweet, most exhilarating.
7. Vāyu stirred the draught for him, Kunannamā ground it, when the longhaired ascetic along with Rudra drank of the poison from the goblet.

Notes

1. 'The longhaired ascetic,' literally simply 'the longhaired (one),' and 'hermit' are the terms used in this hymn for the recluse who has severed ties with the world. The latter term 'hermit' is in the original 'muni,' which might well have been retained in the translation, as it has come to be used rather freely in English books on India. It is perhaps worth noting that according to one etymology that has been advanced for 'muni,' the original meaning is 'the silent one,' but in any case, let it be borne in mind in this connection that hermits are typically dedicated to vows of silence.

Throughout this first stanza 'bears' is preferred to a more specific translation such as 'carries,' 'holds,' 'supports,' 'contains,' etc., since 'bears' implies all of these concepts and is just as ambiguous as its Vedic counterpart, with which, incidentally, it happens to be cognate.

'toxic drink' refers to some sort of narcotic substance used by the ascetics to induce a trance-like, ecstatic state. The preparation of it is alluded to in stanza 7. That the Vedic word refers to some poisonous material, whether gotten from an herb or flower, is not subject to doubt, as the cognate words in the various Indo-European languages all mean poison.¹

2. 'have the wind as their girdle,' *i.e.*, are exposed to the air, naked; *cf.* 'Digambara,' the name of one of the two great sects of the Jainas, which means literally 'one whose garment is the directions.' Presumably two different sorts of ascetics are here referred to: those that are naked and those that 'wear soiled (*i.e.*, unwashed) garments,' although translators generally make the wearing of the soiled garments a predication about the naked ascetics: 'The hermits, girdled by the wind, wear' etc., which seems an incongruity. Sāyaṇa interprets the compound here translated 'have the wind as their girdle' very differently, *viz.*, as a proper noun explanatory of the hermits, thus: 'The hermits, the sons of Vātaraśana, wear soiled brown garments' and specifies that the garments are 'bark-garments.'

'They go along the path of the wind,' etc., describes the ecstasy of the hermits due, at least in part, to the effects of the 'toxic drink' which gives them the impression of moving through the air on the winds and consorting with the gods. From the hermits' point of view, of course, 'the gods have entered them.'

¹ On the use of narcotic drugs or poisons by certain ascetics in ancient India, *v.* Jakob Wilhelm Hauer, *Die Anfänge der Yogapraxis im alten Indien: eine Untersuchung über die Wurzeln der indischen Mystik nach Ṛgveda und Atharvaveda* (Berlin, W. Kohlhammer, 1922), p. 58ff.

3. 'Only our bodies do you as mortals perceive,' etc., *i.e.*, ordinary mortals who have not subjected themselves to the hermits' regimen, of course, see only their corporeal shell or tegument, quite unaware of the miraculous powers attained by their incorporeal selves.
4. Apparently the hermit's ethereal flight renders him a companion of the gods and a recipient of their goodwill.
5. Here the situation is reversed from that described in 3, where the ascetics stated they had mounted upon the winds. The hermit is here alleged to embrace the whole world, as he is capable of traversing it sea to sea with the speed of the wind.
6. The hermit is able to move in the same path as these divine beings (the Apsarases and the Gandharvas) as well as the beasts of the forest and read their thoughts.
7. This passage is of exceptional interest, as it is the oldest reference to the Rudra-Śiva cult of traditional Indian civilization, which has always been characterized by wild, frenzied rites and revelry involving the consumption of intoxicating beverages and hallucinatory drugs. Here Rudra and the ascetic, who is his devotee, consume the trance-stimulating concoction together in co-revelry, after it has first been stirred by Vāyu - an office not unnatural to the god who presides over the winds upon which the ascetic travels! - and ground by Kunannamā, who may have been a witch or demon, but whose name occurs only here. It is possible that, instead of being taken as the name of a person, Kunannamā may be the name of the drug itself, in which case we have to impute both the stirring and the grinding to Vāyu, thus: 'Vāyu stirred for him and ground the *kunannamās* (herbs or flowers?).' But then too, precisely as little would be known as to the identity of *kunannamā* as a toxic substance as of Kunannamā as the name of a demon specializing in the art of compounding hallucinogenic potions. The word itself seems to mean etymologically 'inclining or stooping badly,' which could serve either interpretation: as a proper name 'The Hunchback' or 'Deformed One,' and as the name of a plant, referring to some peculiarity typical of its appearance.

Saramā and the Paṇis

The following hymn is one of a number of so-called 'narrative' or 'dialogue' hymns in the Ṛgveda. These hymns are at once among the most interesting and tantalizing in the whole of the Ṛgveda. This is due to the remarkable lack of details by which they are characterized, often to the exclusion of what we should consider essential parts of the narrative. Various explanations have been advanced for this lack of detail, which causes these hymns to seem more like skeletons of narratives than narratives themselves. Perhaps the missing connective matter was simply cast in unfixd prose and this was omitted from the hymns in the form in which they were taken into the redaction of the Ṛgveda that has come down to us. Apparently, therefore, the prose parts, which carried the thread of the narrative, were never put into final form, but were composed anew on each occasion that the hymns were recited, probably even with slight variations of detail, though insufficient to require any alteration in the metrical parts. Essentially, then, the prose parts provided a sort of commentary on the dialogue, varying with each reciter, but always adhering to the basic details, which must certainly have been known to all who heard the hymns.¹ The purpose of this class of hymns, however, is obscure, as they are not in praise of any deity nor do they contain any request by the worshipper. Whatever their origin and purpose may have been, it is precisely because of their skeletal character that their correct interpretation is so difficult.

In the case of a number of these narrative hymns, as, for example, that of Saramā and the Paṇis, later retellings in expanded form in other Vedic books help to fill in some of the gaps. However, these expansions have to be viewed with some hesitation, as they may contain material that did not belong to the original, but became encrusted about it in the course of time. But even with the help of these expansions, there always remain dark spots for one reason or another. There are yet other narrative hymns, like that of Yama, the first man, and his sister Yamī, of which there is no later version to help us solve the problems, so that any translation of these hymns is bound to be unsatisfactory and tentative.

¹ Comparison may here be made with the Buddhist Jātakas or stories of the Buddha's prior rebirths, which in their present narrative form are really commentaries on the verses imbedded in them.

The story of Saramā and the Paṇis, at least in the broad outline which is essential for understanding the hymn below, is simple: the Paṇis, who seem to have been a kind of robber folk living at the ends of the world, have stolen Bṛhaspati's cows. Indra sends Saramā to find the culprits, apparently with a view to convincing them that it would be better to return the cows than risk certain devastation. Saramā eventually succeeds in finding the Paṇis and the imprisoned cows, after some difficulty in getting across the vast Rasā river that blocks her path. That obstacle having been overcome, she engages one of the Paṇis, presumably their chief or, in any case, their collective spokesman, in the following exchange.

X.108

Saramā and the Paṇis

- Paṇis: 1. With what desire has Saramā come here? For long is the way, wearying, far off. What is your mission to us? What was the issue? How did you cross Rasā's waters?
- Saramā: 2. As Indra's emissary sent I roam about in search of your great treasures, O Paṇis. Because of her fear of our crossing, therefore did she help us. In this way I crossed Rasā's waters.
- Paṇis: 3. What sort is Indra, O Saramā, what is the appearance of him, as whose emissary you have come here from afar? If he comes hither, we'll make friends with him. Then let him become the cowherd of our cows!
- Saramā: 4. I do not know him as one to be deceived: the deceiving will he do, as whose emissary I have come here from afar. Deep streams hide him not. Struck down by Indra, you will lie prostrate, O Paṇis!
- Paṇis: 5. These are the cows, O Saramā, which you sought, as you flitted about to the ends of heaven, fair one. Who would release them to you without fighting? And we have sharp weapons!

- Saramā: 6. Unbarbed are your words, O Paṇis! Immune to arrows may your wretched bodies be, irresistible to traverse may your path be: Bṛhaspati in either case shall show you no mercy!
- Paṇis: 7. This treasure, O Saramā, based in the mountain, consists of cows, horses, goods. The Paṇis, who are good cowherds, guard it: to a rich place to no avail have you come.
- Saramā: 8. Hither will come the sages, sharpened by Soma: Ayāsyā, the Aṅgirasas, the Navagvas! They will divide up this pen of cows! Then these words will the Paṇis indeed spit out!
- Paṇis: 9. If thus, O Saramā, you have come hither, impelled by divine might, I shall make you a sister: do not go back! We shall give you a share of the cows, fair one!
- Saramā: 10. I know not brotherhood nor sisterhood: Indra and the dreaded Aṅgirasas know it. Longing for the cows they seemed to me when I came: therefore, go away, O Paṇis far off!
11. Go afar, O Paṇis, far off! Let the cows go forth lowing, in accordance with the Ṛta, the ones that Bṛhaspati, Soma, the pressing-stones, the sages and the poets found hidden away!

Notes

1. It is almost invariably stated in books on the Ṛgveda and in translations of hymns that contain her name that Saramā was a dog or a dog of the gods. Yet nowhere in the Ṛgveda is she called a dog, an identification which apparently belongs to the later myths about Saramā, where it arose from the natural assumption that the word 'Sārameyau,' which means the two dogs of Yama (v. ṚV X.14), is a metonymic made from Saramā, hence literally the 'sons of Saramā.' Nevertheless, in the same contradictory breath it must be admitted that, if Saramā was a dog, as she may have been, she was a logical choice to be dispatched in search of Bṛhaspati's stolen cows.

The Rasā was a huge river believed to encircle the world; v. note on Rasā at X.75.6.

2. The 'treasures' are, of course, the cows which the Paṇis have stolen and penned up in caves in their mountain-fortresses. According to this myth as given in expanded form in the Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa (II.440-41), the Rasā allowed herself to become fordable when Saramā wished to cross, probably out of fear of the damage to the Rasā's reputation as a mighty stream, if a dog could succeed in jumping across!
4. 'Deep streams hide him not': that is, in effect, Indra is so tall and mighty that he could walk right across the Rasā, ford or not!
5. At this point the Paṇis admit they have the cows she has been searching for, but they indicate that they have no intention of relinquishing them without a fight and have adequate weapons to back up their threat.
6. A much disputed passage; as here interpreted it means: 'your words carry no threat. Bṛhaspati will be unmerciful to you, whether your bodies are impervious to missiles or whether approach to your stronghold is well-nigh impossible.'
7. 'to a rich place to no avail have you come': two problematical words render this translation doubtful. It has been suggested that the Vedic word rendered by 'to no avail' is a place-name Alaka (related to the Alakā of Kālidāsa's Meghadūta), the mountain retreat of Kubera, the god of wealth.
8. 'these words will the Paṇis indeed spit out': *i.e.*, regret having spoken. The English idiom is just the opposite, *viz.*, to swallow one's words. The notion behind the expression is, of course, that of getting rid of what proves to be disagreeable - or indigestible.
9. The Paṇis are a bit taken aback by Saramā's firm response and now seek to win her over by enticing promises of joining the Paṇis as a sister and sharing in their wealth of cows.
10. No commentator seems to comment on this somewhat puzzling remark by Saramā, which is the more comprehensible if we do assume that Saramā is a member of the canine species, to which, of course, sisterhood and brotherhood are meaningless terms, a fact that would be known to both Indra and the Aṅgirasas.
11. Most probably the last stanza is an appendage by the author of the hymn, as it spoils the symmetry to assign it to Saramā.

Dadhikrā

Dadhikrā or Dadhikrāvan, to use the extended form of the name, is a horse to whom are dedicated four hymns in the Ṛgveda. At times he appears to have been a real horse, who was glorified and eulogized for his great prowess and skill in combat and ultimately deified. His earthly character manifests itself in some stanzas where his exploits in battle are described, but merges almost imperceptibly with the divine, so that for the most part the two are inextricably intermingled. In any case, he is said to have been given to man by Mitra and Varuṇa and, like other gods, is asked to prolong the lives of his worshippers. Freedom from sin is supposed to be granted unto the one who celebrates Dadhikrā when the sacrificial fire is first kindled at the break of dawn. Dadhikrā is sometimes portrayed as winged like a bird, his locomotion through the heaven being thus somewhat more easily imagined.

The name Dadhikrā or its alternative Dadhikrāvan seems etymologically to mean 'bestrewn or sprinkled with curds',¹ which presents the picture of a horse flecked with white, a variety of uncommon occurrence befitting his divine status.

¹ The view of Karl Hoffmann, v. Manfred Mayrhofer, *Kurzgefasstes etymologisches Wörterbuch des Altindischen* (Heidelberg, 1953-76), Band III, p. 730, addendum to article *Dadhikrāh*, Band II, p. 15.

IV.39

Dadhikrā

1. Speedy Dadhikrā - him let us now praise! Heaven and Earth let us celebrate! May the effulgent dawns guide me! May they convey me beyond all hardships!
2. I celebrate the mighty steed Dadhikrāvan, who fills the spirit, a stallion richly tailed, whom you two, O Mitrāvaruṇā, have given to the Pūrus, shining like fire, as our transporter.
3. One who has celebrated the horse Dadhikrāvan when the fire has been kindled at the flush of dawn - him may he, free of bond, make free of sin: he is of one accord with Mitra, with Varuṇa!
4. When we thought of Dadhikrāvan's strength, his great might, the Maruts' auspicious name, we invoke Varuṇa for well-being, Mitra, Agni and Indra, holder of the thunderbolt.
5. As they do Indra, they both call upon him separately: those starting out, those approaching the sacrifice. The horse Dadhikrā you have given us, O Mitrāvaruṇā, as a guide to the mortal.
6. I have celebrated Dadhikrāvan, the horse, the victorious one, the bestower of nourishment. May he make sweet-scented our mouths! May he prolong our lives!

Notes

2. 'I celebrate the mighty steed Dadhikrāvan, who fills the spirit': The words 'who fills the spirit,' which translate a single Vedic word, might grammatically be taken (with necessary change of 'fills' to 'fill!') either with 'I,' the worshipper, or, as rendered here, with Dadhikrāvan; but the former interpretation, adopted by some translators, seems scarcely to convey any sensible meaning.

‘a stallion richly tailed’: The Vedic words translated by ‘stallion’ and ‘richly tailed’ each simultaneously convey two senses, a circumstance which cannot be reproduced in English. The word employed for ‘stallion’ means literally ‘showerer’ with reference both to the great impregnating power of Dadhikrāvan as well as to his showering of gifts upon the worshipper. The word translated by ‘richly tailed’ means also ‘richly gifted,’ *i.e.*, possessing and hence also bestowing a wealth of gifts.

‘the Pūrus’: one of the Five Tribes which made up the Aryan people; *v.* note on RV III.59.8.

‘as our transporter’: that is, from afflictions of one sort or another.

3. ‘him may he, free of bond, make free of sin: he is of one accord with Mitra, with Varuṇa’: ‘him’ refers, of course, to the worshipper who has celebrated Dadhikrāvan, who, in turn, is meant by both the first and second ‘he’ that follows; ‘free of bond’ is a literal translation of the word *āditi*, which is usually a proper name, Aditi, a personification and deification of the ‘boundlessness’ or infinite expanse of the heaven. Aditi is frequently implored to release the worshipper from sin, a function which is reflected in the meaning of her name. In this passage, if it has been correctly interpreted, *āditi* in its original adjectival sense is transferred to Dadhikrāvan with a pun on Aditi in her sin-releasing capacity. That ‘he is of one accord with Mitra, with Varuṇa’ probably means he is of one mind with them, absolutely undeviating from their laws, so that appealing to Dadhikrāvan is tantamount to an imploration of Mitrāvaruṇā.

In essence, then, the passage means: May Dadhikrāvan, who is, like Aditi, without bond and unbinding, release from sin the worshipper who celebrates him, as Dadhikrāvan is of the same mind as Varuṇa and Mitra (who gave him to man!), to whom one also prays for release from sins.

5. ‘As they do Indra, they both call upon him separately: those starting out, those approaching the sacrifice’: The both sides or parties are ‘those starting out,’ *viz.*, soldiers starting out for battle, and ‘those approaching the sacrifice’ *viz.*, priests getting ready to perform it, probably for victory in the same campaign. Both address separate prayers to Dadhikrāvan as the embodiment of valor and skill in combat.
6. ‘May he make sweet-scented our mouths’: probably because they have been defiled by inelegant language (so Wilson), but it is unclear why the rectification of this particular circumstance should fall to Dadhikrāvan.

**List of the Selected Hymns Arranged According
to Their Sequence in the Ṛgveda by
Maṇḍala and Hymn Number**

Maṇḍala I

1. Agni
12. Agni
20. Ṛbhus
25. Varuṇa
32. Indra
35. Savitṛ
42. Pūṣan
50. Sūrya
53. Indra
58. Agni
85. Maruts
89. All-gods
92. Uṣas and the Aśvins
114. Rudra
115. Sūrya
118. Aśvins
143. Agni
154. Viṣṇu
157. Aśvins
172. Maruts
185. Dyāvapṛthivī

Maṇḍala II

12. Indra
16. Indra
21. Indra
33. Rudra
35. Apāṛṇ Napāt
38. Savitṛ

Maṇḍala III

8. Sacrificial Post
29. Agni
34. Indra
45. Indra
59. Mitra

Maṇḍala IV

33. Ṛbhus
34. Ṛbhus
39. Dadhikrā
50. Bṛhaspati
52. Uṣas
58. Ghee

Maṇḍala V

11. Agni
55. Maruts
57. Maruts
63. Mitrāvaruṇā
80. Uṣas
83. Parjanya
84. Pṛthivī
85. Varuṇa

Maṇḍala VI

6. Agni
28. Cows
54. Pūṣan

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| 55. Pūṣan | 58. Spirit |
| 57. Indra and Pūṣan | 68. Bṛhaspati |
| 61. Sarasvatī | 75. Sindhu and the Other
Rivers |
| 75. Weapons | 81. Viśvakarman |

Maṇḍala VII

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| 35. All-gods | 107. Dakṣiṇā |
| 46. Rudra | 108. Saramā and the Paṇis |
| 49. Waters | 117. Generosity |
| 61. Mitrāvaruṇā | 119. Indra |
| 63. Sūrya | 121. Prajāpati |
| 68. Aśvins | 125. Vāc |
| 86. Varuṇa | 127. Rātrī |
| 87. Varuṇa | 129. Creation |
| 88. Varuṇa | 136. Ascetic |
| 89. Varuṇa | 146. Araṇyāñī |
| 103. Frogs | 168. Vāta |
| | 190. Tapas |

Maṇḍala VIII

- | |
|--------------|
| 29. All-gods |
| 48. Soma |
| 65. Indra |

Maṇḍala IX

- | |
|----------|
| 3. Soma |
| 13. Soma |
| 40. Soma |
| 74. Soma |

Maṇḍala X

- | |
|------------------|
| 14. Yama |
| 15. Fathers |
| 16. Funeral Hymn |
| 34. Gambler |

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E. Translations of Selections

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Bhawe, S.S.

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Hillebrandt, Alfred

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Lommel, Herman

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One of the best translations.

Macdonell, Arthur Anthony

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California Press, 1977. xxxvii, 937 p.

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Velankar, H.D.

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3. Atharvaveda and Ṛgveda

Edgerton, Franklin

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Muir, John

Original Sanskrit Texts on the Origin and History of the People of India, Their Religion and Institutions. Collected, Translated, and Illustrated. London, Trübner & Co., 1870. 5 vols. Reprinted New Delhi, Oriental Publishers Distributors, 1976. A great many hymns, perhaps the majority, are scattered throughout these volumes in excellent, quite literal translations.

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F. Religion

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Winternitz, Moriz

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H. Special Studies

Atkins, Samuel D.

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Pischel, Richard and Geldner, Karl Friedrich

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Scharbau, Carl Anders

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This index is based on the notes to the hymns and in some measure also on the preliminary material given in the Communication to the Reader, the Introduction, and the sketches preceding the hymns. The page references are followed, whenever appropriate, by the stanza number under which the point being sought out is treated. Thus, 157.4 means that the desired information is to be found among the notes to stanza 4 on page 157. The explanatory matter that sometimes precedes the notes is indicated by a 0, following the page number.

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