CHAPTER – IV

The Religious Aspect of the
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The four Vedas, i.e., the Rgveda, the Yajurveda, the Sāmaveda and the Atharvaveda are the sources of religion propagated by the Vedic seers, which lead the human race to the attainment of the fourfold goal of human life. According to Manusmr̥ti, the sources of the knowledge of Dharma are the Vedas, the Smṛtis, the practise of the virtuous and the approval of an enlightened conscience.1 These Vedas are the ultimate foundation of the knowledge of dharma. Among the four Vedas, the most important as well as the oldest is the Rgveda. The Rgvedasamhitā presents an earlier stage of beliefs based on the personification and worship of natural phenomena than any other literary monument of the world.

The Sapta-Sindhu Pradesā was the cradle of the early Rgvedic culture. The major part of the country was inhabited by the people called Āryans.2 A new era emerged in the socio-religious history of India with the coming of the Āryans. During the process of Āryanisation, pre-Āryan elements also got mingled into Āryan beliefs which gave birth to popular Hindu Religion.3 Dharma or religion is a multi-focal concept with several meanings. It includes both the socio-moral duties as well as religious commands. The word dharma is derived from the root dhr, meaning to uphold, to support and to nourish. According to P.V. Kane, it is used in the sense of upholder or supporter or sustainer in the Rgveda (1.187.1, 10.92.2).4 So, it can be said that Dharma contains all the principles required to sustain and uphold human existence. Religion in its widest sense, includes on the one hand, the conception which men entertain of the divine or supernatural powers and, on the other, that sense of the dependence of human welfare on those powers which finds its expression

1 vedo’khilo dharmamūlaṁ śmr̥tiśāle ca tadvidām /
   acāraścaiva sādhūnāṁ manastuṣṭireva ca // Manu., 2.6
   Also vide, Ibid., 2.12
2 Vide, Chaubeey, B.B., Vedic Concepts, p. 23
3 Vide, Srivastava, M.C.P., Mother Goddess in Indian Art Archaeology and Literature, p. 32
4 Kane, P.V., History of Dharmaśāstra, vol. 1, part. 1, p.1
in various forms of worship. Various definitions of religion have been given by different scholars, which differ from one another.

It is said that religion is an attitude of reverence towards the higher object. About religion J. Frazer says – ‘Religion is a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man, which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and human life.’ According to him, religion consists of a theoretical and a practical element, a belief in power higher than man and an attempt to propitiate or please them. The belief and practise, or faith and work are equally essential to religion. But it is not necessary that religious practise should always take the form of a ritual. This definition suits the purpose of the religion of the Rgveda.

Among the different theories of the origin of religion, in general and Rgvedic religion in particular, mention may be made of the ‘theory of Naturalism’. Max Müller supports this theory. According to him, religion sprang from spontaneous emotional reactions of wonder, awe and fear, evoked in man by natural phenomena, such as the sun, the moon, rain, lightning etc. Impressed by these powerful and inexplicable forces of nature, early man reacted with the emotional attitudes and behaviour to which has been given the name of religion. Max Müller is of the opinion that religion is a mental faculty or disposition which inspite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the definite under various disguishes. It begins with the idea of infinite. To the seers of the Veda, the infinite first revealed itself in the various phenomena of nature.

In the beginning, the phenomena of nature were the objects of worship for the human being. The deities were conceived as the presiding deities of natural phenomena. The seers revealed the grandeur of the natural objects surrounding them. They were amazed to see the different aspects of nature, which stimulated religio-aesthetic consciousness, and consequently these arouse reverence. Such reverence for nature compelled them to deify the objects of nature. Moreover, the various phenomena of nature impelled the Vedic seers to glimpse law in the world of nature. This attitude was the root of religion, wherefrom the Rgvedic religion originated.

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5 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., The Vedic Mythology, p. 1
6 Vide, Chaubey, B.B., Treatment of Nature in the Rgveda, p. 30
7 Vide, Ibid., p. 29
8 Vide, Ibid.
9 Vide, Ibid., p. 48
Various aspects of nature evoked in the seers spontaneous emotional reactions of wonder, awe and fear which impelled them to glimpse striking phenomena of nature as gods. Nature stood as a never ending perplexity to them due to its power and sublimity. The sense of awe and wonder made them to worship the hostile forces of nature. So, creation, sustenance and destruction were assigned to them. Through magic and sacrifices, people tried to affect the supernatural for their own benefits. Their helplessness compelled them to believe in the omnipotence of the supernatural, which inspired them to worship the various phenomena of nature. This belief almost amounts to blind faith and this is the root of religion.10 By the method of personification, natural phenomena were given the distinct personalities of gods. Aurobindo also supports that there was worship of powers of nature. He observes - 'There can be no doubt that in the beginning there was a worship of the powers of the physical world, the Sun, Moon, Heaven and Earth, Wind, Rain and Storm etc., the sacred Rivers and a number of Gods who presided over the workings of nature. That was the general aspect of the ancient worship in Greece, Rome, India and among other ancient peoples...''11 Thus, the ancient people propitiated the phenomena of nature as gods and they, in return, helped the worshippers for their sustenance. Hence, all the phenomena of nature were the objects of reverence and became gods and goddesses. The Rgvedic hymns deal with a number of nature gods of varying importance. Such as, Agni, Indra, Sūrya, Rudra, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, the Aśvins, the Maruts, Savitr, Varuṇa, Usas, Parjanya etc., praising their mighty deeds, their greatness and beneficence or prayers for wealth, offspring, prosperity, long life, victory, cattle, so on and so forth.

In the Rgvedic period, different people had different religious concepts. Some of them believed in the plurality of gods and worshipped many gods and goddesses. There were still others who did not believe in the plurality of gods and worshipped only one god. It is held that in the Veda, there is a progression from a multitude of gods to a single god and then to a unity of the world (polytheism to monotheism and then to monism).12 The Rgvedic Āryans were originally Polytheistic, but their Polytheism soon changed into Monotheism and they believed that there is only one God, of whom the many gods are different names or descriptions.13

10 See, Srivastava, M.C.P., op.cit., p. 13
11 Vide, Chaubey, B.B., op.cit, p. 87
12 Vide, Raja, C.K, Vedas, A Cultural Study, p. 74
13 R.V., 1.167
Henotheism

The important characteristics of Rgvedic worship is that every god was regarded as the supreme. In the earlier stages, the Vedic seers worshipped each god in the hymns as if it were the greatest and even the only god. This practise of invoking different gods as if each of them were paramount is termed by Max Müller as ‘Henotheism’ or ‘Kat henotheism’, according to which the individual gods are alternately believed to be the highest, absolutely independent of the Supreme deity. According to this theory of Henotheism, the particular god is raised to the most exalted position. In the Rgvedic worship, Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, Savitṛ and many other gods have been mentioned as chief of the gods. But this theory does not find much support from the scholars.

Polytheism

According to this theory, gods are many. This theory finds ample support in its favour in the Veda itself, for there are so many deities being praised in the Rgveda, which are supposed to possess supernatural powers. But when the Vedic seers tried to find out a single cause of the whole universe, which was stated to be uncreated and imperishable, the polytheistic anthropomorphism was replaced by a spiritual Monotheism.

Monotheism

As the number of gods increases, all the gods were reduced to three, viz. Agni whose place is on the earth, Vāyu or Indra, whose place is in the air and Sūrya, whose place is in the sky. The seers realised that all the phenomena were the aspects of one all pervading Divine Being, which manifests itself in different ways. According to this theory, god is one. He appears in many forms because of his supernatural powers. The Rgvedic seers tried to establish the fact that god is only one and the other gods are the various manifestations of that Supreme Spirit. This is theoretically termed as Monotheism. This theory can be supported by the internal evidence of the Rgveda itself. There was one Supreme Spirit under various manifestations and the different names are the names of one and the same Divine Being. It is stated in the Rgveda that, though one, the god is called by the seer, by many names, such as, Agni, Yama, Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa or Mātariṣvān. It

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14 Vide, Shastri, Gaurinath, A History of Vedic Literature, p. 47
15 Vide, Sharma, S.N., A History of Vedic Literature, p. 40
16 See, Shastri, Gaurinath, op.cit., p. 47
17 tisra eva devatā iti nairuktāh / agniḥ prthivīsthānāḥ / vāyuvendra vāntariṇiśasthānāḥ / sūryo dyuṣṭhānāḥ // Nir., 7.5
18 indraṁ mītraṁ varuṇamagnimāhuratho divyaḥ sa suparṇo garutmān / ekāṁ sadviprā bahudhā vadantyagninī yamāni mātariṣvānamāhuh // R.V., 1.164.46
can be said that the foundation of Monotheism rests in this verse of the hymn of Dirghatamas in the *Rgveda*. Similarly, a verse in the tenth *mandala* of the *Rgveda* states the one existing god in many forms of expressions.¹⁹ The wise seers here through their praise made into many forms the bird which is only one. In the present context, Sāyaṇācārya states that the bird referred to is the supreme soul (*paramātmā*), i.e. *viprāḥ medhāvinaḥ kavyaḥ krāntaprajñā manusyaḥ suparṇam supatanam ekam santam paramātmānam vakobhiḥ stutilaksanairvacanaih bahudhā bahuprakāram kalpayanti kurvanti! In the *Hiranyagarbha sūkta*, mention is made of that one Hiranyagarbha as the first originator of world, all powerful and lord of all.²⁰ Hiranyagarbha, the golden embryo, or who had the golden germ, or Prajāpati, the creator²¹ was the sole existing lord of universe who supported this earth and heaven.²² It is stated that no one except Prajāpati, did encompass all these created things.²³ In the present context, Monotheism subsequently took the form of Pantheism, because here the highest god is identified with the whole universe. In the tenth *mandala*, Viśvakarman is represented as the one who is all seeing (*viśvacaksu*), producing heaven and earth²⁴, who has eyes on all sides (*viśvatāscaksu*), a mouth on all sides (*viśvatomukha*), arms (*viśvatobāhu*) and feet (*viśvataspāt*) on all sides.²⁵ He is the father of the eye because he made the light which enables the eye to see, engendered water and then the heaven and earth²⁶ Viśvakarman is the sole god, who produces earth and heaven. He is the maker and disposer, who knows all races and existing things.²⁷ A passage of the *Rgveda* asserts all things to be the manifestations of one all-pervading principle. It is said— *aditirdyauradirantarikṣamaditirmātā sa pitā sa putrāh viśve devā aditiḥ paṇca janā aditirjātamaditirjanitvam /²⁸*

i.e. 'Aditi is the heaven, Aditi is mid-air, Aditi is the mother and the Sire and son... Aditi all that hath been born and shall be born.'²⁹ Aditi is described here as the infinite being, the

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¹⁹ *suparṇa viprāḥ kavyaḥ vacobhīrekaṁ santam bahudhā kalpayanti / Ibid., 10.114.5*
²⁰ *hiranyagarbhaḥ samavartatāgre bhūtasya jātaḥ patireka āśīt / Ibid., 10.121.1*
²¹ *hiranyagarbhaḥ hiranyagayasyāṁśasya garbhabhūtaḥ prajāpatirhiranyagarbhaḥ / Sāyaṇā, Ibid.*
²² *Ibid., 10.121.1*
Also vide, Nir., 10.23
²³ *prajāpatē na tvadetānanyo viśvā jātāni pari ta bhāhuva / R.V., 10.121.10*
Also vide, Nir., 10.43
²⁴ *yato bhūmīṁ janayanviśvakarmā vi dyāmaurṇonmahīṁ viśvacaksāṁ / R.V., 10.81.2*
²⁵ *Ibid., 10.81.3*
²⁶ *Ibid., 10.82.1*
²⁷ *Ibid., 10.82.2,3*
²⁸ *Ibid., 1.89.10*
²⁹ *See, Griffith, R.T.H., The Hymns of the Rgveda, on 1.89.10, p. 57*
prime cause of the creation. In yet another verse, addressing the gods, a Rgvedic seer says—O Wise! great and glorious is this title of yours, that all ye deities abide in Indra', i.e. *mahattadvah kavayaścāru nāma yaddha devā bhavatha viśva indre.* In the present context, Ludwig states that the glory of the Gods consists in their recognition as forming a part of the true, supreme and all-embracing divine principle, in which, as the Absolute God, all their individual attributes are absorbed and vanish.31

Moreover, many other contexts of the *Rgveda* support the view that god is one.32 It is stated that god is one, the single primordial substance, the unit out of which the universe was developed.33 All moving and stationary being rest upon the one basis.34 In the present context, Wallis states—‘We find mention in one hymn of a primordial substance or unit out of which the universe was developed. This is ‘the one thing’ (ekam) which we have met with in connection with Aja, the Unborn. (Book 1.164.6,46), and which is also used synonymously with the universe in accordance with the principle which is the Key to much of the later mysticism that cause and effect are identical.’35 According to Yāska, the soul of the gods is one. On account of the supereminence of the deity, a single soul is praised in various ways, and other gods are the individual limbs of that single soul.36 This view is also supported by Saunaka in his *Brhaddevaitā.*37

In the *Rgveda*, identification of the Vedic gods is seen. Conceiving the gods as many in one, one god is identified with another as well as with all the other gods in the *Veda*. In the present context, mention may be made of Agni. The identification of fire in heaven and earth was closely stated by the Vedic seers.38 Yāska has mentioned this identity of Agni with lightning in air, and sun in heaven, on the authority of Śakapūṇi.39 The entire opening

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30 R.V., 3.54.17
31 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 3.54.17, p. 192
32 mahaddevānāmasuratvamekam / R.V., 3.55.1-22
   Also vide, Ibid., 6.45.16
33 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.129.2, p. 633
34 R.V., 3.54.8
35 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 3.54.8, p. 191
36 māhābhāgyād devatāya eka atmā bahudhā stūyate / ekasyātmano’nye devāh pratyāṅgāni bhavanti//Nir., 7.4
   Also vide, Sarup, Lakshman, *The Nighantu and the Nirukta*, p. 115
37 BD., 1.71.73
38 divaspari prathamam ajīte agnirasmad dvīśyam pari jñātavedāh /
   trīyamapsu nṛmaṇā ājasramindhāna enam jārāte svādhiḥ// R.V., 10.45.1
39 ayaśevānārāvānārāni śakapūṇiḥ / visvānārāvītyapyte uttare jyotiṣi /
   vauṣyānaro’yaṁ yat tābhyāṁ jāyate // Nir., 7.23
hymn of the second *mandala* gives the identification of Agni with all gods, viz. Dyaus, Indra, Viṣṇu, Brahmacā, Brahmanāspati, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aryaman, Rudra, Bhaga, Tvāṣṭr, and so on and so forth. Yāska also supports this view. In another hymn, Agni is identified with other gods and goddesses like Indra⁴¹, Viṣṇu⁴², Brahmanāspati⁴³, Varuṇa⁴⁴, Mitra⁴⁵, Aryaman⁴⁶, Rudra⁴⁷, Savitṛ⁴⁸, Aditi⁴⁹, Bhārati⁵⁰, Iljā⁵¹ and Sarasvatī⁵². Varuṇa is identified with Indra.⁵³

Some particular deities, who shared certain functions in common, were joined in the form of a special kind of dual compound in the *Rgveda*, and known as Dual divinities. The most important of these Dual divinities are—Asvina, Dyāvāprthīvī, Agniṣoma, Indravāṇī, Indrāgni, Indrāpūṣanā, Indrābhāṣpati, Indrāvarunā, Indrāviṣṇu, Indrāsomā, Somārudra, Rodasī etc. Some of the Dual divinities, viz. Uṣāsānaktā, called Naktosāsa, Indrāmarutah, Agniparjanya, Parjanyāvātā are praised in a small number of hymns. Due to close similarity, sometimes one of the two names with a dual termination became indicative of the two. Thus, it is seen that Varuṇa indicates Mitrāvarunā.⁵⁴

Later on, the seers eulogised a number of groups of gods which form a troop and mentioned only in plural, viz. the Maruts, the Ādityas, Rudras, Vasus etc. All gods came to be jointly worshipped in a group with the name of Viṣvedevā, i.e. all gods. The cause behind this is that all of the Vedic gods are personified phenomena of nature, and these phenomena are interrelated which prompted the people to worship the nature gods in a group. Keith also supports this view.⁵⁵ The task of extending the earth and propping of air and the sky was ascribed to many deities. Sometimes Indra, sometimes Varuṇa, sometimes Viṣṇu, sometimes Agni. According to Keith, ‘The result was that the tendency was certainly

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⁴⁰ *agniḥ sarvāḥ devatāḥ* / Ibid., 7.17
⁴¹ R.V., 2.1.3
⁴² Ibid.
⁴³ Ibid.
⁴⁴ Ibid., 2.1.4
⁴⁵ Ibid.
⁴⁶ Ibid.
⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.1.6
⁴⁸ Ibid., 2.1.7
⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.1.11
⁵⁰ Ibid.
⁵¹ Ibid.
⁵² Ibid.
⁵³ Ibid., 4.42.3
⁵⁴ udvām caṅsurvaruṇa supratikāṁ devayoreti sūryastatanvān / Ibid., 7.61.1
⁵⁵ ‘The tendency to syncretism is also increased by the close connection of the elements in nature’ -- Keith, A.B., *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upaniṣads*, p. 88
steadily growing throughout the period of the *Rgveda* to regard the gods as closely related."

In the *Rgvedasamhitā*, sometimes one god is described as Viśvadeva, i.e. the general god or (identical with) all the gods. In the present context, Muir states that *viśvadeva* means ‘who possesses all divine attributes.’

So, it can be said that by the end of the *Rgvedic* period, the polytheistic idea had received a monotheistic tinge. Ultimately Monotheism also was displaced by monism which found its most comprehensive expression in the *Upaniṣadic Literature*.

**Origin of Gods**

About the origin of the gods, it can be said that they are not regarded as self-existent beings. The philosophy of the *Veda* makes them born after the creation of the world, or derives their being from the non-existent or the element of water, while the mythology finds in them most often the children of sky and earth. Gods are, in general, described as the offspring of Heaven and Earth, as the term *devaputre*, i.e. ‘having gods for progeny’ is mentioned in the *Rgvedic* verses. Heaven and Earth are also regarded as parents of all, which is indicated by the terms *pitarə* and *maṭarə* and sometimes *janitṛ*. The *Atharvaveda* states that they arise from the non-existent. From a cosmogonic hymn, it is known that after the creation of the universe, the gods were born. Sometimes their origin is described from other deities also. They are said to be the sons of Aditi. Dawn is also called the mother of the gods. *Brahmaṇaspati* and Soma is said to

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56 Ibid.
57 R.V., 5.82.7
58 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 5.82.7, p. 280
59 Vide, Ibid.
60 Vide, Ibid.
61 See, Shastri, Gaurinath, op.cit., p. 47
62 Vide, Keith, A.B., op.cit., p. 82
63 *devaputre devah sarve putrasthāntyā yayoste ...dyāvāprthivyau...* / Sāyaṇa on R.V., 1.106.3
   Also vide, Ibid., 1.159.1, 1.185.4, 4.56.2, 6.17.7
64 *dyaurvah pitā prthivī mātā somo bhrāṭādīthi svasā / Ibid., 1.191.6*
65 *pitarā mātā ca pitā ca pitarau dyāvāprthivyau...* / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.159.2
   Also vide, Ibid., 3.3.11, 7.53.2, 10.65.8
66 *maṭarā dyāvāprthivyau...* / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.155.3
   *maṭarā mātarau sarvasva mātṛbhute dyāvā prthivy dyāvāprthivyau...* / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.35.3
   Also vide, Ibid., 10.64.14
67 *ya ime dyāvāprthivyjanitṛ rūpāpitaramādhuvarnāni viśvā / Ibid., 10.110.9*
68 A.V., 10.7.25
69 R.V., 10.129.6
70 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., op.cit., p. 14
71 R.V., 1.113.19
72 *devānāṁ yaḥ pitaramāvivāvasi śardhāmanā haviṣā brahmaṇaspatim // Ibid., 2.26.3
devānāṁ pitaramā pālayātāṁ brahmaṇaspatim... / Sāyaṇa, Ibid.*
be their father. In another place, Soma is said to be the generator of Heaven, Earth, Agni, Surya, Indra and Viṣṇu as well as of holy hymns. In a Ṛgvedic verse, gods are said to be born from Aditi, from the waters, from the earth. Gods are also declared to have been born after Aditi. In a commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, it is stated - aditeḥ adināya devamārūḥ putrāsah putrā mitrādayāḥ The birth of the devas, i.e. the manifestation of the divinity is described in a Ṛgvedic hymn. It is stated that Brahmanaspati, the lord of food, who is the same as Aditi as referred to in the Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary, produced the gods as a blacksmith blows up his fire and melts metal. It is stated that Dakṣa was born from Aditi and Aditi from Dakṣa. Sāyaṇācārya states that there is a contradiction here, since a self produced effect cannot be the cause of itself: na svotpannam kāryam svasyaiva kāraṇamapi bhavaṇīti vipratiṣṭhāhātmīti vācyam. In the present context, Yāska remarks - aditerdakṣo ajāyata dakṣādvādītīḥ pari / iti ca/ tatkathamupapadyate / samājanajamānānu syātāmīti / api vā devadharmaṇetaretarajamānānu syātām / itaretaraprakṛtii The purport of the passage is that Dakṣa was born from Aditi, and Aditi sprang into life from Dakṣa. They may have had the same origin, or, in accordance with the nature of gods, they may have been born from each other, or they may have derived their characteristics from each other. After Aditi, the gods, i.e. the Ādityas were born free from the bonds of death: aditiḥ ajanīṣṭha hi putrāṇādītyān /...tāṁ devā anvajāyanta... amṛtabandhavah ammonaḥ bandhanāḥ There were eight sons of Aditi who were born from her body. These were Mitra, Varuṇa, Dhātri, Aryaman, Amśa, Bhaga, Vivasvata and Āditya (the sun). In another place, Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuṇa, Dakṣa and Amśa are probably called the Ādityas or the sons of Aditi. About the eight sons of

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73 Ibid., 9.87.2
Also vide, Ibid., 9.42.4, 9.86.10
74 Ibid., 9.96.5
75 viśvā hi vo namasyāṇī vandyā nāmāṇi devā uta yajāyāṇi vah /
ye stha jātā aditeradhyasparīye prthivyāste mā iha śruta havam // Ibid., 10.63.2
76 tāṁ devā anvajāyanta bhadrā amṛtabandhavah / Ibid., 10.72.5
77 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.185.3
78 Ibid., 10.72
79 brahmanāḥ annasya patiḥ aditiḥ.../ Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.72.2
80 Ibid., 10.72.4
81 Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
82 Nir., 11.23
83 Sāyaṇa on R.V., 10.72.5
84 Vide, Wilson, H.H., Ṛgveda Sārīhitā, vol. 6, on 10.72.8, p. 246
85 imā gīrā ādityeṣhībhīṃ gīrṣṭansūḥ sanādṛṣṭābhīḥ jihvā jihomī /
ṣrṇottu mitrō aryanā bhago nastuvijātō varuṇo dakṣo amśāḥ// R.V., 2.27.1
Aditi the Taïtirîya Âranyaka states – mitraśca varuṇaśca dhātā cāryamā cāṁśaśca bhagaśca vivaṣvānādityaśca. In a Rgvedic verse, Indra and Agni are mentioned as the twin brothers who had one common generator named Prajāpti and mother Aditi as interpreted by Śāyānācārya – he indrāgni... prajāpatih samānah eka eva vāmyuvayoḥ janiṭā janayitāl... aditirhi anayormātā... Yāśka in his Nirukta has mentioned the birth of Agni from lightning and sun. It is said that Agni has two births.

Concept of God in the Rgvedasamhitā

The Vedic poetry is supposed to be the poetic manifestation of the seeric vision of the deva. Generally, western scholars translate the word deva or devatā as a deity. The word deva is derived from the root div, meaning to shine or to illuminate. He who has shined through the mantra is called a deva. Yāśka interprets the word deva in his seventh chapter of the Nirukta. Here deva or god is so called for making gifts (from the root dā) or from being shining (from the root dip), from being radiant (from the root dyut), or because his sphere is heaven. In the Sarvānukramaṇī, it is stated by Kātyāyana that a deity is propounded through a mantra. Yāśka in his Nirukta says the same thing. A particular stanza is said to belong to a deity, to whom a seer addresses his panegyrics with a particular desire, and from whom he wishes to obtain his object. So, when a seer, desiring to impart instruction about a particular object, describes its properties in a mantra, it is said to have that object as its devatā. Thus, there are so many abstract ideas which are mentioned as devatās, viz. Śraddhā, i.e. genuine faith, Dānastuti, i.e. praise of the gift, Daksīṇā, i.e. largesse, Aranyakā, i.e. dense forest, Dyūtanindā, i.e. the censure of gambling, Oṣadhaya, i.e. herbs, etc., are devatās.
Yaska regards every object that is praised by a worshipper in a hymn or even in a single verse in his technical language as a *devatā.* Thus, sun, moon, lightning, day, night, seasons, storm, water, river, tree, house, birds, frogs, stone, chariot, bow, mortar, pestle, etc., everything praised in the *mantra* were regarded as devatās.

So, when a seer overcomes by the poetic emotion and employs a symbol to express a deeper meaning through a hymn, the symbol becomes the *devatā* of that *mantra.*

**Characteristics of the Rgvedic Gods**

i) **Common Characteristics**—Gods are said to have brilliance, power, benevolence, wisdom, infinity, omnipotence, righteousness, holiness and mercy. Besides the function of creation, preservation and destruction are ascribed to them. They are said to extend the earth and prop the air and the sky.

ii) **Immortality**—In the Vedic religion, gods are characterized as immortal (*amṛṭāh*) and unaging (*ajarah*). Śaṅkarācārya, it is known that Śaṅkarācārya bestowed on the gods Soma and other means to attain immortality. Śaṅkarācārya also gave immortality on the Rbhus. Agni is implored to confer immortality. To obtain immortality, gods also drank Soma. It is inferred from a verse of the *Rgveda* that gods attained immortality by drinking *amṛta* or celestial Soma juice. The undecaying nature of the gods is alluded to in the Rgvedic verses. Indra is described as ever youthful (*yuna*) and undecaying (*ajuryata*).

The concept of immortality and unagingness of the gods arose from the observation of the regular recurrences of the phenomena of nature. Nature repeating itself in unbroken regularity made gods eternal.

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101 athāto daivatam / tadyāni nāmāni prādhānyastutāni devatānām tad daivatamityācakṣate // saiṣā devatopaparīkṣā // Nir., 7.1

102 R.V., 1.90 3

Also vide, Ibid., 2.1.14, 10.66.13

103 ā svamadaya yuvamāno ajarastrvyavāśyanataseṣu tiṣṭhati // Ibid., 1.58.2

Also vide, Ibid., 6.5 7

104 Ibid., 4.54.2

105 devebhyaḥ...amṛṭatvam tattādhanam uttamam uṭkṛṭātamaṁ bhāgaṁ somādilakṣānam suvasi anujānāiḥ...// Sāyaṇa, Ibid.

106 Ibid., 1.110.3

107 Ibid., 6.7.4

108 Ibid., 9.106.8

109 sato nāmaṁ kavayaḥ sam śīta vāśbhiryābhhiramṛṭaya takṣaṁtha / vidvāṁsaḥ padda guhyāni kartana yena devāya amṛṭatvatmāṁsaḥ // Ibid., 10.53.10

110 Ibid., 3.46.1, 6.24.7, 5.42.6
iii) **Benevolence** – Gods are said to be exclusively beneficent beings, bestowers of prosperity and immense wealth\(^{111}\), who grant happiness in life. They protect against enemies and destroy the enemies of the human beings.\(^{112}\) They are friends of the sacrificer. They came to earth to be present at the worship of the devoted people and partook of their offerings. That gods bring bliss is stated thus: “Blessed is all that Gods regard with favour.”\(^{113}\)

iv) **Morality** – In the *Rgvedasamhitā*, a well developed conception of ethical conduct is noticed. The word used to denote the conception of the order of the world is *ṛta*. Everything in the Universe which is conceived as showing regularity of action may be said to have the *ṛta* for its principle. In its most general application the conception expressed by the word occupied to some extent the place of natural and moral law, fate, or the will of a supreme God.\(^{114}\) *Rta* or ethical order is the principle of Rgvedic religion. *ṛta* is said to be the highest truth and all beings are supposed to follow its laws. Those laws are *vratas*\(^{115}\), and if someone violates them, he would become *avrata* and would face the consequences which would lead him to the dark region. The character of the Vedic gods is moral.\(^{116}\) Gods were the embodiments of the human values and ideals of human character. They were described as the guardians of honesty and virtue. They were holy ones and wise. Gods were guileless (*adruha*)\(^{117}\) and are never remiss.\(^{118}\) They were the furtherers of Law, pure in spirit and infallible.\(^{119}\) The Eternal law makes Indra mighty. It is stated that the offerers of sacrifice magnify Indra by their praises, i.e. *ṛtasya satyasya yajhasya vā pradīśāḥ pradesṭāro vidvāṁsāḥ stotraiḥ vardhayanti...*\(^{120}\) It is stated that Indra is purified by the śastras.\(^{121}\) In the first *mandala* of the *Rgvedasamhitā*, Agni is called the guardian of Eternal Law (*gopāmrṛtyasya*).\(^{122}\) Varuṇa and the Ādityas were considered as

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\(^{111}\) *Agni nārayaṇasatpoṣameva divedive / yaśasāṁ vṛavattamam* // *Ibid.*, 1.1.3

\(^{112}\) Vide, Chaubey, B.B. (ed.) *The New Vedic Selection*, part 2., p. 77

\(^{113}\) *Viśvāni tadbhadrāṁ yaḍavanti devā bhṛadvadema vidathe suvīrāḥ* / *R.V.*, 2.35.15

\(^{114}\) Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.1.8, p. 1

\(^{115}\) *R.V.*, 2.28.8

\(^{116}\) Vide, Macdonell, A.A., *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, p. 59

\(^{117}\) *R.V.*, 2.11.14

\(^{118}\) *Aprayuccataḥ apramādyataḥ viśvān sarvān devān...* / *Sāyaṇa*, *Ibid.*, 10.66.13

\(^{119}\) *ṛtasya vo rathyaḥ pūtadakṣāṇṛtasya pastyasado adadbhān* / *Ibid.*, 6.51.9

\(^{120}\) *Sāyaṇa*, *Ibid.*, 8.100.4

\(^{121}\) *Indra uṣṇadhaḥ uṣṇadbhaḥ sāmabhāḥ śastraīśca pariṣuddhastvam...* / *Sāyaṇa*, *Ibid.*, 8.95.8

\(^{122}\) Also vide, *Ibid.*, 8.95.9

\(^{122}\) *Ibid.*, 1 1.8
the founders and protectors of moral order, i.e. Rta. Varuṇa is the great upholder of physical and moral order (ṛta), the punisher of sin.\textsuperscript{123} He is called dhṛtavrata, i.e. whose laws are established.\textsuperscript{124} He is well-knowing. If someone acts against the law of Rta, is liable to be bound in the fetters or pāsas of Varuṇa and only Varuṇa can release him from that sin.\textsuperscript{125} It is seen that none can escape from the spies of the gods to save himself from sin.\textsuperscript{126} Agni is invoked to free from guilt.\textsuperscript{127} Indra too is a punisher of sin.\textsuperscript{128} It is said by Max Müller that ‘The consciousness of sin is a prominent feature in the religion of the Veda, so is likewise, the belief that the gods are able to take away from man the heavy burden of his sin.’\textsuperscript{129}

v) Anthropomorphism – The physical aspect of the Rgvedic gods is anthropomorphic. Gods are often addressed as men. Various qualities and virtues of human being are attributed to them. Agni is called nrnāmrnrama\textsuperscript{130}, i.e. the manliest hero.\textsuperscript{131} Moreover, from the appellations of the Gods as nrpeśasa\textsuperscript{132}, as having the form of men, it can be said that Vedic seers represented the gods in a sensible manner. A Rgvedic verse of the first mandala appears to be a sensible representation.\textsuperscript{133} Head, face, eyes, arms, hands, feet, shoulders, belly and other portions of the human body are ascribed to the Vedic gods. Gods are described as beautiful. Agni is wondrous.\textsuperscript{134} The twin pair, i.e. Day and Night are called the twin beauties that adopt various forms. One of them shines brightly, and the other is black.\textsuperscript{135} The Maruts are handsome like Kings, decked with bright adornment, like spotless gallants.\textsuperscript{136} Varuṇa is said to be the sage who cherishes the acts of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[123] kimāga āsa varuṇa yjeṣṭhaṁ yatstotāraṁ jighāṁsasi sakḥāyaṁ / \\
pra tanme voco dūḷabhā svadhāvo'va tvānenā namasā tura iyām // Ibid., 7.86.4 \\
\item[124] pra sū na etvadhvarognā deveṣu pūrvyāḥ / \\
ādityeṣu pra varuṇe dhṛtavrata marutsu viśvabhaṅṣu // Ibid., 8.27.3 \\
\item[125] Ibid., 6.74.4 \\
\item[126] Ibid., 4.4.3, 6.67.5 \\
\item[127] Vide, Macdonell, A.A., op.cit., p. 98 \\
\item[128] R.V., 2.12.10 \\
\item[129] Vide, Phillips, M., The Teaching of the Vedas, p. 140 \\
\item[130] R.V., 1.77.4 \\
\item[131] Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.77.4., p. 50 \\
\item[132] nrpeśasaṁ nararūpāḥ ... / Sayana on R.V., 3.4.5 \\
\item[133] bibhradṛapiṁ hiranyayaṁ varuṇo vasta nirmijam / \\
pārī spaśo ni śedire // Ibid., 1.23.13 \\
\item[134] Ibid., 6.6.7 \\
\item[135] yamya yamarūpe mithunabhūte ahaśca rātrīścetyeṇa nānā nānāvidhaṁ vapiṁśi śuklakṛṣṇādīṁ \\
rūpāṇi cakrāte kurutah / Sayana, Ibid., 3.55.11 \\
\item[136] rājano na citrāḥ susanidrśaḥ kṣitīnāṁ na maryā arepasāḥ / Ibid., 10.78.1
\end{footnotes}
sages, as the heaven cherishes numerous forms, i.e. saḥ varuṇah kaviḥ prājñāḥ san kāvyā kāvyāṇi kavikarmāṇi puruḥ bahūni rūpam dyauriva pusyaṁ / Indra has been the model for every figure. He moves multiform by his illusions. He presents himself as Agni, Viṣṇu or Rudra, or any other deity and is identifiable with each as referred to in the Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary- indraṣya tat prāptamagnyādidevatāsvarūpam pratīcakṣanāya pratiniyatadarśanāya ayamagnirayam viṣṇurayam rudra ityevamasaṁkārṇadarśanāya bhavati / According to Wilson, Indra is here identified with Paramēśvara, the supreme first cause, identical with creation. Gods are associated with things seen in human society. Some of the gods appear as warriors, wearing coats of mail and helmets and armed with spears, battle-axes, bows and arrows. Such as, Indra is armed with a bolt (vajra). They all drive through the air in luminous cars. They are said to have wearing garments, such as, Dawn is described as decked in bright attire. The limbs or parts are often simply meant figuratively to describe their activities. A god is the most father-like or mother-like and best friend etc. Agni is regarded as a father, as a kinsman, as a brother and as a constant friend. The worshippers seek Agni as a father with their prayers, who acts as a son to them, who duly worship him, and as a trusty friend he guards from attack. Vāta is called the father, brother and friend of the worshipper. Sarasvatī is called the most motherly. Similarly Day and Night are imagined as the twin sisters. Thus, they are associated with family members. Such as wives, sons, brothers etc. Yāska also supports this view. Different gods are described as performing human acts. Yāska furnishes four different views in this context—

a) That the gods are anthropomorphic.

b) That the gods are not anthropomorphic.

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137 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.41.5
138 Ibid., 6.47.18
139 Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
140 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.47.18, p. 313
141 R.V, 1.32.3
142 agniṃ manye pitaramagnimāpimāgniṃ bhṛtārāṃ sadamitsakhāyam / Ibid., 10.7.3
143 Ibid., 2.1.9
144 uta vāta pitāśi na uta bhṛtota naḥ śakhā / Ibid., 10.186.2
145 Ibid., 2.41.16
146 Ibid., 3.55.11
147 apāḥ somamastamindra prā yāhi kalayānījāyā suraṇām grhe te / Ibid., 3.53.6
148 athākāraṁcintaṁ devatānāṁ / pauruṣāvīdhāḥ syuriyekam / cetanāvadvaddhi stutayo bhāvantī / tathābhūdhiṁanī // athāpi pauruṣāvīdhikairāṇāgaiḥ sanistuityante / athāpi pauruṣāvīdhikairdravyasanyogaiḥ// Nir., 7.6
c) That the gods may be both anthropomorphic and unanthropomorphic.

d) That the unanthropomorphic appearance of the gods, who are really
anthropomorphic, is their counterself in the form of action.\(^{149}\)

It can be said that god never appears before the worshipper, though mentally the
seers imagine his approach and sometimes his features. One who doubts his existence
Indra says- 'Here I am, worshipper, behold me here.'\(^{150}\) It is stated that the Deity does not
make a physical appearance; the worshipper is expected to follow \(Vibhūti\)-yoga and find
him in the glory of the universe and the working of \(R̄\)ta. In other words, the Divinity is to be
apprehended in terms of moral and aesthetic values.\(^{151}\)

**Religion of the R̄gvedic people**

The religion of the R̄gvedic Āryans was of intellectual character. Most of the R̄gvedic
hymns are dedicated to the deities, presiding over the diverse phenomena of nature. The
gods are the deified conceptions of the spirits, who pervaded fire, water, sky, the sun, the
rivers, dawn etc. The sense of reverence was at the root of the R̄gvedic religion. Everything
that impressed the soul with awe or was regarded as capable of exercising a good or evil
influence on man, might in the Vedic age still become a direct object not only of adoration
but of prayer.\(^{152}\) The sense of reverence became so important to religion, that it became a
separate deity named Śraddhā in the tenth mandala of the R̄gveda.\(^{153}\) During the R̄gvedic
age, existence of divinities was believed in the inanimate nature also, such as, the plough,
the furrow, wood, trees, weapons, the war chariot, the drum, as well as ritual elements. In
the R̄gvedic hymns, the deity of the field, i.e. Kṣetrapati is also invoked to grant cattle with
sweetness of heaven and earth, the plants and the waters.\(^{154}\) He is also asked along with
Savitṛ, Dawn and Parjanya to bestow prosperity.\(^{155}\) Similarly, there is prayer to Sītā, the
furrow to grant rich blessings and crops.\(^{156}\) Śunā and Śīra are two deities or deified

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\(^{149}\) puruṣavidhāḥ syurryekam / ...apuruṣavidhāḥ syurryaparam / ...api vobhayavidhāḥ syuh /
api vā puruṣavidhānāmeva satāṃ karmātmana ete syuh / Ibid., 7.6,7

\(^{150}\) ayamasmijaritah pasyameha viivajatanyabhyasmi mahna/R.V., 8.100.4

\(^{151}\) Vide, Bose, A.C., *Hymns from the Vedas*, p. 24

\(^{152}\) Vide, Macdonell, A.A., op.cit., p. 2

\(^{153}\) śraddhāṃ prātarhavāmahe śraddhāṃ madhyāṁdinaṁ pari /
śraddhāṃ śūryasya nimruci śraddhe śraddhāpayeṣa naḥ // R.V., 10.151.5

\(^{154}\) Ibid., 4.57

\(^{155}\) Ibid., 7.35.10

\(^{156}\) arvācī subhage bhava sīte vandāmahe tvā /
yathā naḥ subhagāsasi yathā naḥ suphalāsasi // Ibid., 4.57.6
objects, who bless or are closely connected with agriculture. According to Roth, these two words mean ploughshare and plough. God Indra is called Urvārāpati or lord of the plough field. Similarly Vāstäşpati or lord of the dwelling is invoked to bless man and animals to remove diseases, to make cattle prosper, to afford protection and to grant a favourable entry. In a Rgvedic verse, he appears as an observer of ordinance, who was fashioned by the gods. The warrior attributes divinity to his arrow. Besides sacrificial post, the sacrificial grass and the divine doors are also celebrated. Similarly there is reference to pressing stone, the mortar and pestle. Yāśka also states that in the Rgvedasamhitā, many inanimate objects are invoked as if they are alive. The Rgvedasamhitā contains many references in support of this view. In the Rgvedasamhitā, every object in the visible creation, as well as every idea of mind, is elevated to the rank of gods. There are some gods which are the personified abstractions, praised in the Rgveda, viz. Puramdhi, i.e. abundance, Aramati, i.e. piety, Asunīti, i.e. blessedness, Mrtyu, i.e. death, Manyu, i.e. wrath, Sunṭṭā, i.e. bounty etc. The names of other abstract gods are Dhātr, Vidhātr, Tvastr, Prajāpati etc., the names of which denote an agent. Moreover, different animals, like the cow, the horse, even the dog, the bird of omen, and other animals are invoked. Dadhikra or Dadhikravan, the most famous horse is praised. A bull plays an obscure part in the legend of Mudgala and his wife. Yama, the god of dead is called Sārameya, a name denoting descent from Saramā. Even frogs are

157 Ibid., 4.57.5  
Also vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 4.57.5, p. 235  
158 Vide, Ibid.  
159 याह्म इदावो ध्वचुपहो गुप्त उर्वारापते / सोमाम सोमापत्रूलिपु // R.V., 8.21.3  
160 Ibid., 7.54.1,2,3  
161 Ibid., 10.61.7  
देवाः वास्तोपतिम् याज्ञाव्यास्वास्वायम व्रतपानि व्रतस्या कर्मनाह रक्षाह्प्रभुत्तिभ्यह दलकामि निराकस्य समुददाययं // Sāyaṇa, Ibid.  
162 Ibid., 6.75.11,16  
163 Ibid., 2.3.4, 10.70.4  
Also vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 2.3.4, p. 132  
164 R.V., 1.142.6  
165 Ibid., 10.76,10.94  
166 Ibid., 1.28.5,6  
167 acetanesvapanyetadbhavati // Nir., 7.7  
168 R.V., 10.94.2, 10.75.9, 10.94.2  
169 Ibid., 4.38-40, 4.40.5, 7.44  
170 Ibid., 10.102  
171 Ibid., 10.14.11  
Also vide, Nir., 11.25
treated as having power to send prosperity through the rain.\footnote{R.V., 7.103} So, everything, that impressed the seers by their sublimity and aroused reverence in them, became the direct objects of devotion.

**Reverence for the Cow**

Animal worship is very common in the religious history of ancient India. People attributed divinity to animals which give rise to various forms of animal worship. The cow has been regarded as a sacred being by the Āryans, from very early times, and it occupied the highest position among other animals. The *Rgvedasamhitā* contains a number of passages which proclaim the sanctity of the cows.\footnote{Ibid., 6.28.5} The worshipper also regards the cows as the deities like Bhaga and Indra, who bring him happiness: \[ \text{gāvo bhago gāva indro me acchān gāvah somasya prathamasya bhakṣah /imā yā gāvah sa janāsa indra icchāmīddhrādā manasā cidindram } \] \footnote{Also vide, Ibid., 8.101.16}

A group of celestial Apsarases are even compared to the milch-cows.\footnote{Ibid., 10.95.6} The Rgvedic people were anxious about the safety of their cattle. Therefore, Soma is implored for the wellbeing of the cows, of the people, of the horses and of the plants.\footnote{Ibid., 9.11.3} Another Rgvedic verse also expresses the wish for the health and safety of the cows.\footnote{Also vide, Ibid., 9.11.7} The cows of the *yajamāna* roam over a wide and secure path and it is hoped that they would not be carried off in predatory incursions.\footnote{Also vide, Ibid., 8.69.6} For the great reverence towards cow, her milk was used in sacrificial purposes.\footnote{Ibid., 8.69.6} She is the supplier of milk and milk products which were used for the oblation.\footnote{Also vide, Ibid., 8.69.6} Her importance in the sacrifices is indicated by the term *havyasūdāḥ,* i.e. oblation supplying kine.\footnote{Also vide, Ibid., 8.69.6} That the term is used especially to mean the cow is clear from the Sāyaṇācārīya’s commentary also- *havyasūdāḥ kṣirādihaviśāmutpādayitryāḥ*
usriyahasmadiyā gāvaśca.../\(^{182}\) Gavāśira prepared from the blend of Soma juice with the milk of the cow is one of the common ritual oblations.\(^{183}\) It is also stated that indu, i.e. Soma is purified with cows milk.\(^{184}\) The Soma juice has been pressed out with the stones, strained through the filters, and then mixed with water and milk before it is offered to Indra.\(^{185}\) Soma cleansed with water and milk bestows delightful wealth to the worshipper.\(^{186}\) Adding milk to Soma juice makes it sweet\(^{187}\), powerful\(^{188}\) and exhilarating to the gods.\(^{189}\) Besides milk, other products supplied by the cow to be mixed with Soma are sour milk or curd\(^{190}\) and butter.\(^{191}\) Cow was also a form of wealth desired by the priests and patrons. It is used as daksīnā too.\(^{192}\) The cow together with male offspring, and other cattle was the cherished desire of the yajamāna.\(^{193}\) It is stated that Indra rewards his worshippers with the gifts of cattle.\(^{194}\) For all these, in one place of the Rgvedasamhitā, Agni is said to value highly the cows and the woods.\(^{195}\) In view of such a reverence for the cow, the Rgveda disapproves of her slaughter and consequently uses the term aghnīyā, i.e. not to be killed.\(^{196}\) Yāska in his Nirukta also states aghnīyāhantavyā bhavati / aghaghṛṇītī vā \(^{197}\) However, it cannot be said that cow-slaughter was absolutely unknown to the Rgvedic age. There is a hymn addressed to cow which proves that cow was offered to the gods in the sacrifice.\(^{198}\) In another place, bulls and barren cows were said to be

\(^{182}\) Ibid., 1.137.1
\(^{183}\) Ibid., 9.61.13
\(^{184}\) Ibid., 2.36.1
\(^{185}\) Ibid., 9.68.9
\(^{186}\) Ibid., 8.2.3, 9.62.5
\(^{187}\) Ibid., 9.14.3
\(^{188}\) Ibid., 9.43.1
\(^{190}\) Also vide, Ibid., 9.45.3
\(^{191}\) Ibid., 9.81.1
\(^{192}\) Ibid., 6.27.8, 6.47.24, 7.18.22
\(^{193}\) Ibid., 9.9.9, 10.68.12
\(^{194}\) Ibid., 2.30.7
\(^{195}\) Also vide, Ibid., 1.4.2,
\(^{196}\) goṣu prāṣastini vaneṣu dhīse bharanta viśve balim śvarnaḥ / Ibid., 1.70.9
\(^{197}\) R.V., 10.169
\(^{198}\) Also vide, Ibid., 5.83.8, 8.69.2, 10.87.16
offered as oblation to Agni. It is seen that the ritual connected with the cremation of the dead required the slaughter of a cow and the caul and other parts of it being used to envelop the corpse to prevent and too quick and complete cremation. Moreover, a verse of the Rgvedic Sūryā Sūkta is quoted by some scholars to prove the custom of immolating cows at the time of marriage. Zimmer refers to this verse in connection with the custom of killing a cow at the time of wedding. According to Griffith, in Maghā days oxen are slaughtered on the occasion of marriage. But on the basis of the Śāyaṇācārya’s interpretation, it means - gāvah somagrham prati hanyante daṇḍaistādyante preranārtham / Wilson translates the word hanyante as ‘are whipped along’, which means the cows were beaten or driven away to the bridegroom’s home. Thus, a tendency to avoid cow-immolation was successively growing in the days of the Rgveda and reverence for the cow was on the increase, though her slaughter was still prevalent in the society.

Tree Worship

Forests and trees were of immense value to the life and prosperity of human beings, which greatly influenced their social and economic status. The Rgvedasamhitā contains some passages which represented that plants and trees were also deified by the Rgvedic people. At that period, plants and trees were considered as deified objects. According to the Veda, the plants have sacred origin. In the tenth mandala of the Rgvedasamhitā, it is stated that plants or herbs are produced three ages (yugas) earlier than the gods or from the presence of the gods, i.e. yāḥ oṣadhīḥ oṣadhayaḥ pūrvāḥ purātanyah jātāḥ utpānāḥ / kebhyaḥ sakāśāt / deverbhyah jagannirmātrbhyaḥ /...kasmin kāle / triyugam triṣu yugeṣu/...krāṭādyugatrayamuktam../ athavā triṣu yugeṣu vasante prāṃśi śaradi cetyarthaḥ/ Yāska in his Nirukta states - yā oṣadhayaḥ pūrvā jātā deverbhyastrīṇī yugāṇi purā../ At another place, plants are said to have descended from the sky. It is also stated that from the wood of a tree, the Earth and Heaven

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199 Ibid., 6.16.47
200 Ibid., 10.16.7
201 Vide, Gopal, Ram., India of Vedic Kalpasūtras, p. 486
202 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10 85.13, p. 594
203 Śāyaṇā on R.V., 10.85.13
204 Vide, Gopal, Ram., op.cit., p. 486
205 Śāyaṇā on R.V., 10.97.1
206 Nir., 9.28
207 avapatantiravadan diva oṣadhayasmari / R.V., 10.97.17
formed. Osadhayah or herbs and Aranyānī or dense forest are considered as goddesses. There is a hymn of this Veda devoted to the deification of the plants with their healing properties. In this hymn addressed to medicinal plants or herbs, glorification and praise of herbs by the physician is seen. Herbs are personified, divinized and looked upon as a bestower of good luck. Such herbs are called mothers to assert their position in the plant kingdom, i.e. amba mātara osadhayah... Soma is said to be the king of the plants or herbs of hundred forms. As the herbs possessed of hundred powers and have tremendous healing properties, the healer invoked various plants spread all over the earth. Such herbs are implored to driven away the malady and release one from pain and grief. Moreover, the herbs are prayed to release one from the curse’s of plague and woe that comes from Varuṇa, from Yama’s fetter and from sin and offence against the gods.

Vanaspati is also invoked along with the waters and the mountains. In the Āprī hymn applied to in the Animal sacrifice, the sacrificial post to which the animal was tied, is extolled and it becomes an animated being. The post made of a tall tree, i.e. Vanaspati, when consecrated is considered a deified object and is regarded as a form of Agni. From the description contained in the Rgvedasamhitā, it appears that the Aryan settlements were encircled by deep forests. There is a hymn to Aranyānī or dense forest, in which the seer depicts the dark forest attributing the characters of a conscious human being to it. Aranyānī is the presiding deity of forest solitude. She is regarded as the mother of all plants. Yāśka in his Nirukta explains the term aranyānī as aranyasya patnī. The
scene of the dark forest was very much different from the village.\textsuperscript{223} It was full of various kinds of lives, and rich in food and full of sweet fruits.\textsuperscript{224}

During the Rgvedic period, plants were used in religious rites too. Soma, the fermented juice of the plant was highly extolled and even worshipped in the ninth \textit{mandala} of the \textit{Rgveda}. It was offered to gods in sacrifices.\textsuperscript{225} Sacrificial vessels are made of the wood of the trees called Aśvattha and Parṇa or Palāśa.\textsuperscript{226} These are therefore said to be the home of plants used in religious ceremonies.\textsuperscript{227} Wilson remarks that from the wood of Śāmi and Aśvattha tree are made the \textit{araṇī}, the two pieces of wood which are rubbed together to produce the sacred fire.\textsuperscript{228} Moreover, there are some sacred grasses used in sacrifices, viz. kuśa\textsuperscript{229}, barhi\textsuperscript{230}, praśī\textsuperscript{231} etc. Thus, trees and plants were regarded as sacred in the age of the \textit{Rgveda} and are, therefore, worshipped as gods to show high value they contain in them.

\textbf{The Sanctity of Waters and Rivers}

Rivers are treated as deities in the Rgvedic period. Right from the Rgvedic times to the post-Rgvedic period, the Sanskrit literature is replete with vivid descriptions of rivers. In the \textit{Rgvedasamhitā}, waters and rivers are referred to with great reverence and are deified. There are many hymns which address waters as divinities\textsuperscript{232} and describe themselves as pure\textsuperscript{233} (\textit{sātapavitrāḥ}) and purifying others\textsuperscript{234} (\textit{punānāḥ}). In the Rgvedic age, the Āryans believed in the efficacy of waters in removing sins. The divine waters which come from the heaven\textsuperscript{235}, are invoked very frequently to protect the worshippers (\textit{tā āpo devirīha mānavantu}).\textsuperscript{236} Such waters are invoked to remove all sins and lapses of the worshippers—

'O Waters, take away whatever sin is in me, whether I have knowingly done an evil-deed,
or have told a lie or falsely sworn.²²³ Rivers are alluded to in many a verse of the Rgvedasamhitā.²²⁸ Indra is said to have created seven rivers and secured for gods and men ninety-nine flowing streams of water.²²⁹ Another verse mentions the rivers that are twenty-one in number.²³⁰ These are the seven rivers of the Āryans having their counterparts in heaven and in the firmament.²³¹ According to Sāyanācārya’s interpretation, Sarasvatī, Sarayu and Sindhu are the principal rivers among them, i.e. sarasvatī sarayuhsindhuritī trayānām ganaṇānām pradhānāhūtāḥ.²³² Seven rivers are mentioned in many verses of the Rgveda²³³, and are called seven precious objects.²³⁴ These are according to Max Müller, the Indus, the five rivers of the Panjāb (Vitastā, Asiknī, Paruṣṇī, Vipās, Śutudrī) and the Sarasvatī.²³⁵ Such rivers are personified and invoked as deities in the Rgvedasamhitā. From the attitude of reverence for waters or rivers, sprang a couple of goddesses, viz. Sindhu, Sarasvatī, Vipās, Śutudrī, Sarayu, Paruṣṇī etc. Among the rivers, the only names of frequent occurrences are those of the Sarasvatī²³⁶ and the Sindhu.²³⁷ The Drsadvatī is mentioned along with the Sarasvatī in several verses²³⁸, while there are only occasional references to the Gaṅgā²³⁹ and Yamunā.²⁴⁰ During the Rgvedic period, rivers are not regarded as merely a flowing mass of waters, but as life-bestowing, life-protecting divine mothers.²⁴¹ These rivers are worshipped by the devotees and asked for various cherished boons. They are implored for protection.²⁴² They are prayed to grant people nourishment and delight.²⁴³ They are asked for

²²³ idamāpah pra vahata yatkim i duritam mayi / yadvāhamabhidroha yadviśeṣa utāntam // Ibid., 10.9.8
²²⁸ Ibid., 5.53.9, 10.64.9, 7.75
²²⁹ saptapo devīḥ sūraṇā avartta yābhīḥ sindhumatara indra purbhīt / navatiṁ sṛtvā nava ca sraavantīrdevebhyo gāturī manuṣe ca vindāḥ // Ibid., 10.104.8
²³⁰ Also vide, Ibid., 1.32.14
²³¹ Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.64.8, p. 578
²³² Sāyaṇa on R.V., 10.64.8
²³³ Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., 1.32.12, 1.34.8, 1.35.8, 2.12.12, 4.28.1, 8.24.27, 10.43.3
²³⁴ Ibid., 5.1.5, 6.74.1
²³⁵ Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.32.12, p. 21
²³⁶ R.V., 1.3.10, 12.2.30.8, 5.43.11, 6.61, 7.95, 96
²³⁷ Ibid., 10.75.1
²³⁸ Ibid., 3.23.4
²³⁹ Ibid., 6.45.31, 10.75.5, 10.104.8
²⁴⁰ Ibid., 10.75.5
²⁴¹ Ibid., 2.41.16
²⁴² Also vide, Ibid., 7.36.6
²⁴³ avantu mānuṣuṣaṃ jñayānām avantu mā sindhavah pinvamānāḥ // Ibid., 6.52.4
²⁴⁴ āpo hi śhā ca mayobhuvaṣta na tīrde dadhātana / mahe rāṇāya cakṣase // Ibid., 10.9.1
pleasure\textsuperscript{254}, felicity\textsuperscript{255}, wealth\textsuperscript{256} and the like. Even they are invoked as the killer of enemies.\textsuperscript{257} However, during the Rgvedic period, sacrifices are said to have been performed on the bank of the Drśadvatl, the Āpayā and Sarasvatī.\textsuperscript{258}

**Worshipping of Mountains**

In addition to these, mountains were worshipped by the people in the Rgvedic age. Mountains have been held by ancient peoples to be the abodes of gods. Parvata, i.e. a mountain is frequently mentioned with Indra. In one passage, both Indra and Parvata are invoked to sharpen or purify the intellects of the worshippers.\textsuperscript{259} R.T.H. Griffith holds that Parvata is the presiding Genius of the mountains and ruler of the clouds\textsuperscript{260}, which is clearly interpreted in the Śāyaṇācārya’s commentary too: *parvataḥ parvavān vrṣṭyādipūranāvān parjanyāḥ*\textsuperscript{261} Indra and Parvata are also implored to destroy the enemies in battle with the thunderbolt\textsuperscript{262}, and Parvata separately to grant food together with the waters.\textsuperscript{263} Moreover, the downward slopes of the mountains and the confluences of the rivers are regarded as sacred, where men used to perform sacrifices. By such prayers and sacrifices, according to Śāyaṇācārya’s commentary, Indra manifested there, i.e. *girinām parvānām upahvare upahvartavye prānte nadinām saritām samagatē samgamane ca idṛgvidhe deṣe kriyamāṇāyā dhīyā yāgakriyayā stutyā...indraḥ ajāyata prādurbhavati*\textsuperscript{264}

**Rgvedic Goddess Worship**

In the Vedic literature, not only gods but also goddesses have been invoked by the Vedic seers. To trace the evolution of Goddess worship in India, mention may be made of the Vedas, which are the earliest written records of the religion of India. Right from the

\textsuperscript{254}Ibid., 1.89.3
\textsuperscript{255}Ibid., 6.49.7
\textsuperscript{256}Ibid., 6.61.12, 7.96.2
\textsuperscript{257}Ibid., 6.61.3,5,7
\textsuperscript{258}ni tvā dadhe vara ā prthivyā īlāyaspade sudinatve ahnām / drṣadvatyāṁ mānuśa āpāyāyāṁ sarasvatyāṁ revadagne didiḥi // Ibid., 3.23.4
\textsuperscript{259}śiśāṁsindrāparvataḥ yuvam nastanno viśve varivasyantvā devaḥ // Ibid., 1.122.3
\textsuperscript{260}Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.122.3, p. 83
\textsuperscript{261}Śāyaṇa on R.V., 1.122.3
\textsuperscript{262}yuvāṁ tamindrāparvataḥ puroyudhā yo naḥpṛtanyādapa tamtamiddhatāṁ vajreṇa tamtamiddhatam/ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.132.6
\textsuperscript{263}tanno’hirbudhnyo adhirakṣataparvatatsavītā cano dhīt / tadoṣadhiḥbhīrapī rātiṣāco bhagah puramdhirjīnvaḥ praḥyey // Ibid., 6.49.14
\textsuperscript{264}Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.6.28
Vedas down to the present times, the worship of Goddesses occupies an important place in the religion. The Vedic hymns contain references to goddess worship. From the study of the Vedic religion, it is seen that the goddess played only a subordinate role in the pantheon. The Vedas are dominated by the male deities like Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, Śūrya and others, and the female deities are often given a secondary place. In the Rgveda also, gods are getting preference over the goddesses. A few female deities are praised here. Among them, Uṣas and Sarasvatī occupy a prominent position. Iḷā, Sarasvatī, Mahi or Bhāraṭī are praised together in the Āprī Sūktas. Vāk, the personified Speech is celebrated as the Supreme power in the hymn, known as Devīsūkta. Other goddesses mentioned in the Rgvedic literature are- Aditi, Diti, Pṛthivī, Rātri, Rākā, Sinivālī, Svasti, Pṛṣṇi, Purāṇḍhi, Anumati, Aranyānī, Indrāṇī, Varuṇānī, Śaci, Rodasī, Sītā, Arāṇī, Śraddhā, Dhiṣanā, Nirṛti, Śrī, Śūryā etc.

Yāśka in his Nirukta grouped all these goddesses under the three divisions of terrestrial, aerial and celestial. With reference to these threefold divisions, the goddesses named and discussed by him as to their etymological significance and cogitational nature are as follows—

**Terrestrial (Pṛthivīsthāna)**

Agnāyī (7.8, 9.33), Pṛthivī (7.8, 9.31), Iḷā (7.8, 8.13), Uṣāśanaktā, Dawn and Night as duel deity (8.10), Tisro Devyaḥ (8.12-13): Iḷā, Bhāraṭī, Sarasvatī, Nadyaḥ, i.e. Rivers (9.25), Āpah, i.e. Waters (9.26), Oṣadhayaḥ, i.e. Herbs (9.27), Rātri, i.e. Night (9.28), Aranyānī (9.29), Śraddhā (9.30), Apvā (9.32)

**Aerial (Madhyamasthāna)**

Aditi (11.23), Saramā (11.24), Sarasvatī (11.25-26), Vāk (11.27), Anumati (11.29), Rākā (11.30), Sinivālī (11.31), Kuhū (11.32), Yamī (11.33-34), Urvasī (11.35), Pṛthivī (11.36), Indrāṇī (11.37-38), Gaurī (11.39-40), Gauḥ (11.41), Dhenu (11.42), Aghnyā (11.43), Pathyā Svasti (11.44), Uṣā (11.46), Iḷā (11.48), Rodasī (11.49-50)

**Celestial (Dyāsthāna)**

Uṣas (12.5-6), Śūryā (12.7), Vṛṣākapāyi (12.8), Saranyū (12.9), Pāvīravī Vāk (12.30), Pṛthivī (12.30), Devapatnyāḥ (12.44-46): Indrāṇī, Agnāyī, Aśvinī, Rāj, Rodasī, Varuṇānī.

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265 Nir., 7.5
Among these goddesses, some of them are nature goddesses, some are abstract goddess personifications, some are tutelary goddesses, some are female assumptions or wives of the male deities. Moreover, there are some collective goddesses such as – Tisro Devyaḥ, Devapatnyah etc. During the Ṛgvedic period, the natural element was given the status of celestial mothers, in the form of rivers and pools. In such cases, the personification is well evolved and imputed with significant attributes: Sarasvatī and the Apsarases. There are fertility goddesses in this Veda, viz. Āpaḥ (personified waters), Sarasvatī (the river goddess and speech), Sinīvāli (personification of a lunar phase). The abstract goddesses are Deṣṭrī (instructress)266, Dhiṣaṇā (wish or abundance)267, Śraddhā (reverence), Anumati (favour) etc. The tutelary goddesses such as Apvā268, a female deity who presides over sin, Sītā (furrow)269, Diti (gift)270, Nirṛti (decay)271 etc., find mention in the Ṛgveda and their individual definitions are largely based on abstract ideas or objects of human utility. The Ṛgveda mentions plural goddesses or maids. They are often counted as three, seven or ten and are collectively called Mothers, Sisters or Virgins. These goddess hosts are associated with Agni as his sisters or mothers who are mostly seven in number.272 Mother character is explicit in case of the goddesses such as Aditi, Prthivī, Prśni, Vāk, Brhaddevā and the Waters (Āpaḥ). Cow is unequivocally lauded as the mother par excellence. There are some female deities which are called the supreme one of the class as their mother. Thus, Sarasvatī becomes the mother of all waters.273 Aranyānī, the presiding deity of Forest is the mother of all wild beasts274, Dawn is the mother of kine,275 i.e. rays of light,276 or said to be the productress of sunbeams.277 Herbs or oṣadhis are also called the mothers.278 Moreover, a few of the dominant male deities are found represented by their wives who

266 R.V., 10.85.47
267 Ibid., 1.22.10, 4.34.1, 5.41.8
268 Ibid., 1.103.12
269 “apva pāpabhimānini devate...” Sāyana, Ibid.
270 Ibid., 4.57.7
271 Ibid., 7.15.12
272 Ibid., 1.24.9, 5.41.17, 6.74.2, 10.10.11
273 Vide, Agrawala, P.K., Goddesses in Ancient India, p. 69
274 R.V., 7.36.6
275 “mṛgānāṁ mātaram janayitrīn aranyānim / Sāyana, Ibid., 10.146.6
276 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 7.77.2, p. 372
277 “rāmīnāṁ nirmātri...” Sāyana on R.V., 7.77.2
278 Also vide, Wilson, H H., op.cit., vol. 4, on 7.77.2, p. 391
279 oṣadhiḥ oṣadhayaḥ...mātaram mātrīḥ mātrīḥ / Sāyana on R.V., 10.97.4
are given specific names, usually derived by adding feminine suffix \( \text{ani} \) to the name of the respective god, i.e. Indrāñi, Varuñāñi, Agnāñi etc. Such goddess wives play an insignificant part and simply represent the spouses of the gods. A. Bergaigne, the great French scholar, elaborated a view which considers sexual dualism or antithesis as an important element of Vedic worship. Such goddess wives play an insignificant part and simply represent the spouses of the gods. A. Bergaigne, the great French scholar, elaborated a view which considers sexual dualism or antithesis as an important element of Vedic worship. For example, the Sun has his female companion the Dawn. Similarly, Dyaus and Prthivī form the parental pair of Vedic divinities.

**Reverence to the Pitṛs**

*Pitṛ* or *Pitarah* means the deceased ancestors or ancient forefathers of human race, who lived in a separate world as interpreted by Śaṅkara—*pūrve purātanāḥ pitarah pitāmahādādayah...*. Such pitṛs are, according to Śaṅkara’s commentary, classified into lowest, highest and midmost in accordance with their degrees of merit acquired on earth, i.e. *trividhāḥ pitara uttama madhyamā adhamāsceti* / *yathāvidham śrautaṁ karmānuṣṭhāya pitṛtvam prāptā uttamāḥ / smārtakarmamātraparā madhyamāḥ / atrāpi kaiścitsamskārāirvikalā adhamāḥ*. They are also said to be those who passed earlier (*pūrvāsah*) and those who later followed (*upārāsah*), and those whose bodies have been burnt by Agni (*agniśvattāḥ*). Arigirases, Navagvās, Atharvans and Bhṛgus are the pitṛs or fathers. The priestly names or titles called *Navagvā* (one who performs satras in nine months) and *Daśagvā* (one who performs satras in ten months) are connected with the Arigirases. The ancient fathers or Arigirases are identified with the seven wise sages. The term *pitryajña* or father-worship occurs in a Rgvedic verse, which indicates that rites were performed immediately on the death of a person instead of performing it long after their deaths. The *pitryajña* or father-worship is celebrated in the...
most excellent assembly (parame sadhasthe) in which Agni is the bearer of the kavyas or kavya-worship, i.e. ...āgniḥ kavyavāhanah. The term kavya means an offering to the pitṛs. In the Āsvalāyana Śrautasūtra also, it is stated- yo āgniḥ kavyavāhanastvamagna īlito jātaveda iti samyājyate. Though the pitṛs were different from the gods, people attributed divinity in them. The pitṛs, who are eaters (haviradah) and drinkers (havispaḥ) of oblations, truthful (satyaśah) and who travels with the deities and Indra, are invoked with Agni to partake the offerings. Agni is said to be the bearer of the offerings to the pitṛs who eats them with the sacrificial exclamation Svadhā.

Jātaveda Agni is also implored to take the spirit of the body of the departed to the world of the pitṛs when being partially consumed on the funeral pile. The pitṛs are called barhisadah as they enjoy pressed juices with oblation seated on sacred grass. Sāyaṇācārya in his commentary interprets the term as- pitarah barhisadah barhisi sīdanti... or barhisadah/ yajñe sīdantītī barhisadah/ Such fathers are invited to their favourite oblations laid on the sacred grass. The pitṛs are said to be fond of Soma juice. By such offerings, the pitṛs in the company of gods, particularly of Yama rejoice and eat them. Such pitṛs are credited with powers possessed by the gods as they are said to have found the light that lay in darkness and begat the morning or Dawn. The pitṛs or the fathers have decorated the Heaven or sky with constellations like Aśvini, etc., and set the light in day and in night the darkness. In this context, it is stated that the connection of the fathers with the light, of which they are both the embidiments and the guardians, is alone sufficient to explain their action in placing the stars in

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292 tam hārāmī pitṛyajñaṁ devanī sa dharmamin vā parame sadhasthe / Ibid., 10.16.10
293 kavyavāhanaḥ kavyasya havīśo vodha yo'gniḥ / Sāyaṇā, Ibid., 10.16.11
294 Ibid., 10.16.12
295 ĀśŚ, 2.19
296 R.V., 10.15.10
Also vide, Ibid., 10.16.12
297 tvamagna īlito jātavedo vāddhvyāṁi surabhīṁi kṛtvī / prādāḥ pitṛbhyaḥ svadhaya te aksanandaḥ tvaṁ deva prayata havinīṣi // Ibid., 10.15.12
298 Ibid., 10.16.12.
299 barhisadah ye svadhaya surasasya bhajanta pitvasta ihāgamiṣṭḥaḥ / Ibid., 10.15.3
300 Sāyaṇā, Ibid.
301 Sāyaṇā, Ibid., 10.15.4
302 Ibid., 10.15.5
303 Ibid., 10.15.1,8
304 Ibid., 10.14.10, 10.15.8,9
305 Ibid., 7.76.4
306 abhi śyāvam na krāṇebhirāśvam nakṣatrebhīḥ pitaro dyāmapinīsat / rātryaṁ tamo adadhurjyotirahān brhaspatibhinadadrīṁ vidadgāḥ // Ibid., 10.68.11
the sky. Ludwig remarks that the Fathers themselves may be the stars. The pitṛs are invoked for various cherished boons. In one passage, they are sought for favour (sumati) and kindness (saumanasa). They are implored for protection, to grant happiness without any trouble, wealth and heroic sons. The pitṛs with the gods are implored not to injure the worshippers. According to Ludwig, the Fathers, or spirits of the departed, who are acquainted with the region in which the Sun first appears, and who have transmitted their knowledge to their descendants are invoked not to deceive the worshippers in calculating correctly the time of the Sun’s approach to begin the sacred ceremonies. The worshippers also prayed the pitṛs not to punish them for the sins they have committed.

**Minor Divinities, Demons, Apsarases**

The hymns of the *Rgvedasamhitā* are mainly addressed to the various gods of the Vedic pantheon such as Agni, Indra, Sūrya, Rudra, Viṣṇu, Pūṇa, the Aśvins, the Maruts, Savitṛ, Varuṇa, Uṣaṣa etc., praising their mighty deeds, their greatness and beneficence. In addition to the higher gods, a number of lesser divinities appear in the *Rgvedasamhitā*. The most prominent of these are the Ṛbhus. Besides, a number of deified Men and Semi Divine Beings are mentioned, who were either men, raised to the rank of divine beings, or some who could not get full divine rank. Manu, the universal father or the first sacrificer is deified, who is said to be among the priests and heroes mentioned in the *Rgvedasamhitā*. Trita was also deified. Griffith states that Trita is the celestial purifier of the Soma, the fingers of the earthly purifiers are called his dames, or his maidens.

The *Rgvedasamhitā* also mentions the Gandharvas and Apsarases, who were male and female mythical beings. Gandharva occurs many times in the *Rgveda,*

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307 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op. cit., on 10.68.11, p. 582
308 Vide, Ibid.
309 teṣāṁ vayaṁ sumatau yajñīyānāmaḥ bhadre saumanase syāma / R.V., 10.14.6
310 Ibid., 10.15.5
311 barhiṣadāḥ pitāra ūtyarvāgīmā vo havyā cakrma jūṣadhvam /
   ta ā gatāvasā śaṁtamenāthā nah śaṁ yoraśapo dadhāta // Ibid., 10.15.4
312 agniśvātāḥ pitāra cha gacchata sadāḥ sadaḥ sadaḥ supraṇātayaḥ /
   attā havānī prayaṭṭāni barhiṣathāḥ rayim saravāraṇi dadhātana // Ibid., 10.15.11
   Also vide, Ibid., 10.15.7
313 ma hiṁṣasta pitāraḥ kena cinno yadva āgaḥ puruṣātā karāma / R.V., 10.15.6
315 mā himiṣiṣta pitāraḥ kena cinno yadva āgaḥ puruṣātā karāma / R.V., 10.15.6
316 Ibid., 1.20, 1.110-111, 1.161, 4.33
317 Ibid., 8.63.1
318 Ibid., 9.32.2, 9.34.4, 9.38.2, 9.102.2
but only thrice in the plural.\textsuperscript{320} They are the spirits of the clouds and the waters. Apsarases or water nymphs have their connection with the Gandharva or the wives of the Gandharvas. An Apsara named Urvasī is mentioned in the \textit{Rgveda} who is the mother of Vasistha.\textsuperscript{321} Besides the gods, demons often play a part in the \textit{Rgvedasamhitā}. Among these, the higher class of demons fights against the gods, such as, Vṛtra, the ‘encompasser’ of the waters. The lower class comprises terrestrial goblins which are usually called Rākṣasas and appear as obstructors of the sacrifice. The Ṛgvedic Āryans believed in some demons, who were believed to cause harm in the guise of beasts or birds like dog, owl etc. Various kinds of mischiefs like the killing of people, causing ailment etc., were believed to be caused by them.\textsuperscript{322} Even the funeral place is believed to be haunted by evil spirits.\textsuperscript{323} Kṛtyā, Nīrṛti\textsuperscript{324} and Piśācī\textsuperscript{25} were the malevolent demigoddesses who were believed to cause various kinds of mischiefs. Wilson states that Kṛtyā is the goddess practising magic or Magic personified.\textsuperscript{326} According to Griffith too, Kṛtyā is Magic personified or a female deity or fiend.\textsuperscript{327} Yātudhāna is the appellation of demons causing various harms.\textsuperscript{328} Wilson calls them Rākṣasas.\textsuperscript{29} There are hymns for protecting sacrifice from the Rākṣasas and Yātudhānas or driving them away.\textsuperscript{330} Druhas\textsuperscript{331}, Kṣvīṁkās\textsuperscript{332} were also noted as evil spirits. The word \textit{asura}, which in later age, denotes being hostile to gods, appears as an epithet of gods, such as Parjanya, Varuṇa etc.\textsuperscript{333} While interpreting a passage of the \textit{Rgveda}, Wilson

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item udīrṣvātāḥ pativatī hyesā viśvāsasnam gīrthirī /
\item anyāniccha piṛṣadāni vyaktānī sa te bhūgo januṣā tasya viddhi // R.V., 10.85.21
\item viśvāsvam etannāmanāni gandharvani.../ Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
\item Also vide, Ibid., 10.85.22
\item \textsuperscript{320} udīrṣvātāḥ pativatī hyesā viśvāsasnam gīrthirī /
\item anyāniccha piṛṣadāni vyaktānī sa te bhūgo januṣā tasya viddhi // R.V., 10.85.21
\item viśvāsvam etannāmanāni gandharvani.../ Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
\item Also vide, Ibid., 10.85.22
\item \textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 7.33.11,12
\item \textsuperscript{322} Ibid., 1.35.10, 7.104.15
\item \textsuperscript{323} Ibid., 10.14.9
\item \textsuperscript{324} mo suṇā parāparā nirṛtirdurhanā vadhīt /
\item padīṣṭa trṣṇāya saha // Ibid., 1.38.6
\item Also vide, niśalohitam bhavati kṛtyāsaktirvyajyate / Ibid., 10.85.28
\item \textsuperscript{325} Ibid., 1.133.5
\item \textsuperscript{326} Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol.6, on 10.85.28, p. 283
\item \textsuperscript{327} Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.85.28, p. 595
\item \textsuperscript{328} R.V, 10.87.2
\item \textsuperscript{329} Wilson, H.H., op cit., vol. 6, on 10.87.2, p.294
\item \textsuperscript{330} R.V., 10.87, 10.162
\item \textsuperscript{331} ... druhaḥ droghduḥ apahartuh / riṣaḥ himśakasya ... / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.35.6
\item \textsuperscript{332} yātudhānam āmādah apakvasya māṁsasya bhaksakāḥ kṣvīṁkāḥ śabdakārinyāḥ / tuksu sabde /
yadvā/ kṣvīṁkā/ nāma pākṣiviśesāḥ/enih gaṇtryaḥ adantu bhaksayantu // Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.87.7
\item \textsuperscript{333} Ibid., 5.63.3, 5.85.5
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
explains the term *asura*, as life-giving, from *asu*, vital breath, and *ra*, who gives, as one of the epithets of *Suparna*, i.e. the well-winged.\(^{334}\)

The Modes of Worship

Sacrifice

The Vedic people had their religion consisting of a system of rituals to propitiate the gods and the gods helped the people in response to such worship. Ritualistic performances comprising an important part of sacrificial ceremonies known as the yajñas formed an integral part of the religious practices of the Vedic Āryans. The history of such ritualistic tradition is as old as the history of Indian culture and civilization. R̥gvedic culture is incomplete without the mention of yajña or sacrifice which had great impact on the religious life of the people. In the *R̥gvedasamhitā*, yajña has been described as *bhuvanasya nābhī\(^{335}\)*, i.e. the very source of the creation. The sacrifice is conceived as the nābhī or navel of the entire cosmos. In the present context, Aguilar holds – “The cosmos is conceived as expanding outward from an original point, identified, as we have seen, with the sacrifice in verse 1.164.35.”\(^{336}\) It is also called *rtasya nābhī\(^{337}\)* or central place of Cosmic Order. In a R̥gvedic verse, the juxtaposition of the two passages, viz. *sukṛtasya loken* and *rtasya yoni* is note-worthy, which is explained by Śāyaṇācārya as – *rtasya yajnasya yonau sthāne yagabhūmaṃ sukṛtasya loke karmakṣetre bhūloke\(^{338}\)*, which means that the place of sacrifice is in the world of good deeds.\(^{339}\) Here sacrifice is considered as a good deed. Sacrifice is conceived as the principal of all things. In a R̥gvedic verse, it is said – “The sacrifice is Manu, Providence our Sire. We ask for freedom and complete felicity.”\(^{340}\) It is stated that everyone owes their existence and preservation to sacrifice, which is said to be another Manu, the father of Āryan men. From the *Puruṣasūkta* it is known that the universe itself along with the laws which governs it, proceeds from yajña, which reads:

\[
yajñena yajñamaya janta devaśāni dharmāni prathamānyāsan / te ha nākam mahimānāh sacanta yatra pūrve sādhyaḥ santi devāḥ //\(^{341}\)
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\(^{334}\) Wilson, H.H., *op.cit.*, vol. 1, on 1.35.7, p 117  
\(^{335}\) R.V., 1.164.35  
\(^{336}\) Aguilar, H., *The Sacrifice in the R̥gveda.*, p. 32  
\(^{337}\) R.V., 10.13.3  
\(^{339}\) Vide, Wilson, H.H., *op.cit.*, vol. 6, on 10.85.24, p. 282  
\(^{340}\) R.V., 10.100.5  
\(^{341}\) *Ibid.*, 10.90.16
Commenting on a Rgvedic verse, Ludwig states that the oblation offered by the gods was destined to produce the universe. A Rgvedic hymn indicates that the creation was typified and originated from the mysterious primeval sacrifice. From the commentary of the Śāyana, it is clear that the sacrifice constitutes creation: *sargātmako yajñastham yajñam ime pitarah pālakāḥ praṇāpateḥ praṇabhūtā viśvasrjō devāḥ vayanti nirmimate*. It is stated that Prajāpati or Dakṣa by his might, beheld the waters all around containing the creative power and gave birth to sacrifice: *yajñam yajnopalaksitam vikārajātam janayantih utpādayantih tadartham daksam praṇācātmanā vardhiṣṇum praṇāpatimātmani dadhanāḥ dhārayitrīḥ / īḍrśīḥ āpah*. In another verse, it is stated that Prajāpati created yājña or sacrifice, i.e. *pumān puruṣā ādīpuruṣah praṇāpatih enam yajñam tānute vistārayati / srṣṭavānityarthah*. It is also applied in the Brāhmaṇa literature.

The Rgvedasamhitā contains instances of the sacrificial rituals. The fire for sacrifice was kindled by friction from two arāṇis, and then put in three separate places within the sacrificial ground. Agni is asked to bring the other gods to the sacrifice and sit down in the three places where fire is kindled by the priest Āgnidhra. The three fire-altars, i.e. the Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya and Dakṣīṇa fires are mentioned in other passages of the Rgveda, which is indicated by the term *triṣadhasṭha*, etc. The Gārhapatya fire is mentioned clearly in a Rgvedic verse. The Gārhapatya is said to be the sacred fire related to a Gṛhapat, i.e. the householder and perpetually maintained by him, the fire

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342 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.88.9, p. 600
343 R.V., 10.130
344 Śāyana, Ibid., 10.130.1
345 Śāyana, Ibid., 10.121.8
346 Śāyana, Ibid., 10.130.2
347 A.B., 5.32, 7.19
348 Asīdamaḥmāthananamastī prajānanam kṛtam / etāṁ viḍāpatītāṁ bharāṅgini manthāma pūrvvathā // R.V., 3.29.1
Also vide, Ibid., 3.29.2, 5.9.3, 6.48.5
349 ā vākṣi devā īha vipra yaksī co śanhotarni śadā yonisu triṣu / prati vihi prasthitāṁ somayaṁ madhu piḥāṅginiḥrāttava bhāgasya tṛṇuhi // Ibid., 2.36.4
350 Ibid.
351 āgniṁ triṣadhasṭhe tristhāne viḥārapradeśe prathamam samihdhir samaindhata // Śāyana, Ibid., 5.11.2
352 gārhapatyanā ṣaṇṭya ṛtuṁ yajñanīrasi / devānde vyāyate yaja // Ibid., 1.15.12
353 gārhapatyanā gṛhapatisambandhinā... // Śāyana, Ibid.
from which fires for sacrificial purposes are lighted. Thrice a day, honour was paid to the fire with offerings and hymns. The three savanas, i.e. pressing of soma in the morning, mid-day and evening is referred to as prātaḥsāva, i.e. prātaḥsavana, mādhyaṃdina savana, and trīyā savana in the Rgvedic verses. That the sacrificial food is offered to Agni, thrice a day, is alluded to in the Śāyaṇācārya’s commentary—

he agne...te tubhyāṃ trih trīvāram savanastraye annam havīrakṣamam annam kṛnavat kuryāt

In the mid-day and third libations, roasted corn which is called dhānāḥ, and sacrificial cake named puroḍaśa are offered to Indra to please him. The various parts of a sacrifice are mentioned in a Rgvedic hymn.

The very first mantra of the Rgvedasamhitā indicates that the concept of yajña along with its rules and conventions of performance had its origin in the Rgveda itself. The verse is dedicated to Agni that runs as—agnimīle purohitam yajñasya devaṃṛtvijam / hotāram ratnadātāmam! i.e. ‘I praise Agni, the priest of the sacrifice, the donor, the Hotṛ-priest and the best bestower of wealth.’

The Agnisūktā is employed in the Āgneya kratu of the Prātaranuvāka and the first mantra of the Agnisūktā is used in praise of the Śvistakṛt fire in Pavamāneśi: ‘agnimīle’ iti süktam prātaranuvāke āgneye kratau viniyuktam / ...tasānāṃ prathamāyā rco dvītyasyāṁ pavamāneśtau śvistakṛtā yājyātvena viniyoγaḥ. The term yajña is derived from the root yaj, which expresses three senses, i.e. devapūjā or glorification of the deities, samagatikarana or establishing a connection between men and the gods, and dāna, or offering of oblations to the gods. Such senses suit the purpose of the Rgvedic yajña. In the Śrautasūtra of Kātyāyana, yajña has been defined as—dravyam devatā tyāgaḥ. It means yajña is primarily consists of three factors, viz. dravya, i.e. materials

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354 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.15.12, p. 9
355 agne juṣasva no haviḥ purolāśaṁ jātavedah / prātaḥsāve dhīyyavaso // R.V., 3.28.1
356 mādhyaṃdine savane jātavedaḥ purolāśamih kave juṣasva / Ibid., 3.28.4
357 agne trīyā savane hi kāniśaḥ purolāśaṁ sahasaḥ śūnavāhutam / Ibid., 3.28.5
358 Also vide, Ibid., 4.33.11
359 Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 4.12.1
360 mādhyaṃdinaśa savanasya dhānāḥ purolāśamindra kṣrveha cārum / Ibid., 3.52.5
361 trīyā dhānāḥ savane puṣṭuta purolāśamāhutam māmhasaḥ naḥ / Ibid., 3.52.6
362 Ibid., 10.130
363 Ibid., 1.1.1
364 Ibid., 1.1.1
365 Vide, Borooah, Anundoram, Dhatuvrittisāra, p. 30
366 Śraut., 1.2.2
of offering (*havis*), *devatā*, i.e. the Vedic deities and *tyāgah*, i.e. the act of offering to the deities, materials, one possesses, after relinquishing their ownership. The gods, to whom, such sacrifices were offered had varied and complex character. Almost every object of nature, which impressed the imagination or was supposed to be possessed of the power of doing good or evil, received the homage and worship of the Āryans. It is stated that all the forms or names of the gods were worthy of obeisance, worthy of adoration and sacrifice, who were born from the heaven, from the firmament and from the earth.\(^{366}\) In the hymns meant for ritualistic purposes, gods are invoked to confer blessings on the sacrifice.\(^{367}\) In a *yajña*, the deity is invoked for the sake of wealth and the deity being pleased with the invocations gives whatever is needed by the worshipper. The priests invoke the gods to come and have seats in the altar place: *edambahiryajamanasya śīdā.*\(^{368}\) He prays the gods to give immensely to the sacrificer.\(^{369}\) Gods also promise to fulfil all the desires of the sacrificer.\(^{370}\) In accordance with their need, the people performed their religious duties. For a particular desire, a particular god was worshipped. The supreme position was ascribed to different gods at different times. Fire is described as a guest in the house of the sacrificer.\(^{371}\) Agni is said to be their favourite guest and the fire-place has been imagined as his bed.\(^{372}\) He is the guest of men and people.\(^{373}\) All the Vedic ritual rests on the institution of the fire. He acts as an intermediary between the sacrificer and the god and through Agni, the oblations and libations offered to the other gods could be easily conveyed to them. Agni is even considered as the mouth of the gods, which is clear from the term *agni jihvā,*\(^{374}\) i.e. having Agni for their mouth. He is both the Hotṛ and Adhvaryu priests because he invites the gods to the sacrifice and carries the oblation to the seat of the immortals. Agni is therefore called *havyavāḥ,* i.e. the bearer of oblations to the gods.\(^{375}\) In the present context, Wilson states that the *Veda*, besides the usual fires, recognizes three Agnis, viz. *Havyavāḥ* or

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\(^{366}\) viśā hi vo namasyāni vandyā nāmāni devā uta yajñiyāni vah/ ye stha jāṭā aditeradhyaspari ye prīthivyāste ma iha śrutā havam // R.V., 10.63.2

\(^{367}\) Cf, Ibid., 10.65.14,15

\(^{368}\) Ibid., 3.53.3

\(^{369}\) Ibid., 8.70.4

\(^{370}\) aham dadhami draviṃṣe haviṃṣe suprāvye yajamanāya sunvate // Ibid., 10.125.2

\(^{371}\) juṣṭo damūṇā atithiduroṇa imāni no yajñamupa yāhi vidvān /

\(^{372}\) viśā agne abhiyujo vihāya śatūyatāmā bharā bhomanān // Ibid., 5.4.5

\(^{373}\) syonaśraṇitithma prīṇaḥ hoteva sadma vidhato vi tārt / Ibid., 1.73.1

\(^{374}\) Ibid., 2.4.1

\(^{375}\) Ibid., 2.1.13

\(^{376}\) havyavāḥ havyavarōhāna nāma devānāmagniḥ / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.67.1
Havyavāhana, that which conveys offerings to the gods; Kavyavāh, which conveys them to the Pitṛs or Manes; and Saharakṣas, that which receives those offered to the Rākṣasas.\(^8\) So, Agni is considered as Grhapat\(^9\), i.e. the Lord of the house and the Divine Priest of the sacrifice (yajñasya... purohitamagnim).\(^8\)

Gods are intimately related to the sacrifices. In a Ṛgvedic verse, the term devavyacastamah\(^8\), an adjective to yajña is interpreted by Sāyanācārya as – devavyacastamah devānāmāptatamah yajñah\(^9\) i.e. sacrifice most suitable for the gods.\(^1\) Gods are increased by the sacrifices\(^2\), which is clear from the term yajñavṛddhā,\(^3\) i.e. increased or exalted by sacrifices. The Maruts are called rtasya śardhā, as they derive strength from the sacrifices.\(^4\) It is stated that by the praises of others, the Maruts have nourished strength connected with the sacrifice,\(^5\) which is clear from the Sāyanācārya’s commentary also – marutaḥ... yāyam purā asmattāḥ pūrvaveva kṛtaiḥ stomairanyadīyaiḥ stotraḥ rtasya udakasya satyasya yajñasya vā sanbandhinah śardhān ātimāyāni balāṇi jinvalaḥ prīṇayatha\(^6\). Gods also acted as the Lord of the sacrifice. Agni is called the ruler of the sacrifice (rājantamadhvarāṇām).\(^7\) Rudra is called the Lord or protector of sacrifice as referred to in the Sāyanācārya’s commentary – medhapatim yajñapālakam\(^8\) Vāyu is called rtaspate, i.e. lord of rta or sacrifice as mentioned in the commentary of Sāyanācārya – rtaspate rtapate yajñānām pate\(^9\) It is stated that the term viṣnoh prabṛthā, the offering of Viṣṇu in a verse\(^10\) is reminiscent of the role of Viṣṇu as a sacrificer.\(^11\) In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, sacrifice is compared

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\(^{376}\) Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.67.1, p. 218

Also vide, trayo va agnayo havyavāhano devānām kavyavāhanah pitṛnām saharakṣā asurasām / T.S., 2.5.8 6

\(^{377}\) R.V., 2.1.2

\(^{378}\) Ibid., 5.11.2

\(^{379}\) Ibid., 5.22.2

\(^{380}\) Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 5.22.2

\(^{381}\) Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 3, on 5.22.2, p. 378

\(^{382}\) R.V., 1.38.15, 6.21.2

\(^{383}\) Ibid., 6.21.2

\(^{384}\) Ibid., 8.7.21

\(^{385}\) Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 5, on 8.7.21, p. 53

\(^{386}\) Sāyaṇa on R.V., 8.7.21

\(^{387}\) Ibid., 1.1.8

\(^{388}\) Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.43.4

\(^{389}\) Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.26.21

\(^{390}\) Ibid., 7.40.5

with Viṣṇu that pervades all. Like Viṣṇu, sacrifice is said to be the protector and preserver of the whole existence. Besides, the gods are believed to bless and grace the sacrifice. It is said that strong and the youthful Indra saved the worshipper from great transgression and visited the sacrifices with favour. Indra, the lord of men, aided by the gods, promotes the sacrifice in which oblation is offered to him. The Aśvins are also invoked to bring peace and blessing to sacrifice. Śāyanācārya states that the two havirdhānas or the vehicles on which the Soma and other offerings are placed, and which are supposed to represent Heaven and Earth, bless the sacrifice: 

\[ \text{yajñasya yāgasya sāmbhuvā sukhasampādake havirdhāne anāśi tadrūpe dyāvāprthivyau vā...} \]

The gods are also invisible celebrants of the sacrifice. For instance, it is stated that the divine doors, i.e. the doors of the chamber, in which the oblation is offered, are asked to open in order to sacrifice. Ordained by Manu as the priest, Agni takes seat at each rite. To Agni it is said—

\[ \text{vāṣiṣṭvā hi miyedhya vastrānyūrjāṁ patel/semam no adhvaram yaja/} \]

Apart from these, the gods are asked to mend the faults incurred during the celebration of liturgy:

\[ \text{yadvo vayam pramināma vratāṁ viduṣāṁ devā aviduṣṭarāsaḥ /agniṣṭadvīśvanā purṇī vidvānyehbirdevā rtubhiḥ kalpayati/} \]

In the Rgvedasanāhitā also, it is seen that all the major products of agriculture and cattle-breeding are used as sacrificial foodstuff in order to obtain certain benefits, prosperity, health etc. The offerings were thrown into the fire and the other sacrificial offerings were eaten by the officiants at the end. Milk in its different forms, and barley and rice used in the preparation of different cooked and baked dishes, such as, purodāsa, gavāśira,
yavāśira⁴⁰³, karambha⁴⁰⁴ etc., were offered. In a verse, the five elements of sacrifice, i.e. grain, Soma, the kine, the Puroḍāśa and the clarified butter are mentioned:

\[ pañcasamkhyaśāna dhānāsomaśapūroḍāśayākhyāni padāni paditṛṇi hotṛtvena devān prati gāntṛṇi havīṃṣi anvaroḥam anurohāmi \]

One of the most praised offerings in a Vedic sacrifice was Soma. At a sacrificial fire place, Soma was pounded, squeezed and filtered, and then offered to the gods, the sparkling Soma juice.⁴⁰⁶ In the process of the extraction of Soma juice, the priests and the sacrificer had to be freed themselves from taints of sin,⁴⁰⁷ and they are advised to follow the path of truth, austerity, and devotion.⁴⁰⁸ Soma juice is extolled to ennoble the worshippers in the Rgvedic verses:

\[ indram varthanto apūr̥taḥ kr̥ṇvanto viśvamāryam / āpaghnanto arāvīnāḥ / \]

Besides these, people also set apart their precious wealth including cattle, horse, rams, barren cow, etc.,⁴¹⁰ as sacrificial offerings in the Asvamedha sacrifice. In honour of Yama and Pitrās, a sacrifice was performed on the cremation ground.⁴¹¹ The cremation of the corpse was duly performed and the Pitṛmedha was instituted in the cremation ground. In the commentary of a Rgvedic verse, it is clearly stated by Śāyaṇācārya that the term devahūti stands for Pitṛmedha yajña, where the gods are duly invoked.⁴¹² The verse under context is to be recited during the Pitṛmedha sacrifice which is clear from Śāyaṇācārya’s commentary-paitṛmedhike karmaṇi amātyāḥ ‘ime jīvā vi mṛtaiḥ’ iti savyāvṛto vrajanti / sūtritam ca-‘ime jīvā vi mṛtairiti savyāvṛto vrajanti’ (Āśv. Gr., 4.4.9) itti.⁴¹³ In a Rgvedic verse,⁴¹⁴ it is stated that the dead body was an offering to the fire. Practise of animal killing in such sacrifices was prevalent. A cow was burnt with the dead body of a person.⁴¹⁵ The Milch-cow was called Aghnya, i.e. not to be

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⁴⁰³ Ibid.
⁴⁰⁴ dhanavantam karambhinamapupavantamukthinam / Ibid., 3.52.1
⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., 10 13.3
⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 9.64
⁴⁰⁷ Ibid., 1.134.6
⁴⁰⁸ vavarjusTnam anabhimatapañāṇi varjayantīnām / viśām rtvigajamanānarūpāṇām.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
⁴⁰⁹ rtavākena satyena śraddhāyā tapasā suta indrāyendo pari srava / Ibid., 9.113.2
⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 9.63.5
⁴¹¹ Ibid., 10.91.14
⁴¹² devahūtiḥ devānāmāhīvānaṁ yatra sa devahūtiḥ pitaṛmedhākhyo yajña.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.18.3
⁴¹³ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.18.2
⁴¹⁴ ava srja punaragne pitṛbhyo yasya āhutaścarati svadhābhīhi / āyurvasaṇa upa vetu śeṣah saṁ gacchatām tanvā jātavedah // Ibid., 10.16.5
⁴¹⁵ Ibid., 10.16.7
killed and so, she was excluded from the list of victims. It is believed that the sacrificial victim went to the gods. Human sacrifice has no direct reference in the Rgvedic age, though it is hinted in the Rgvedic verses. It is known that the seer Ajīgarta, was persuaded by king Hariscandra, to part with his second son Śunahṣepa, to be substituted for Rohita, the son of the king, as an offering to Varuṇa. When Śunahṣepa was about to be sacrificed, he appealed to the Gods by the advice of Viśvāmitra and ultimately liberated.

The Vedic ritual had a general appeal. A note-worthy aspect of Rgvedic sacrifice is that the yajamāna invokes and offers oblations to the deities not only for his own benefit, but also for the wellbeing of all. In a verse the worshipper seeks blessings of Savitṛ for the intellectual glory of all men with the words – dhiyo yo nah praco dayāt. Another prayer for all living being is – taccakṣurdevahitam śukramuccarat / paśyema śaradah śatam jīvema śaradah śatam.

The sacrificer, his wife and the priests were indispensable in a sacrifice. All religious rites were performed by the husband and the wife together. Moreover, the priests were indispensable and occupied a place of great honour in the sacrifices. The names of some of the sacrificial priests, which are included in the group of sixteen, required in a Soma sacrifice, are found in a Rgvedic verse, viz. Hotr, Potr, Neṣṭr, Agnit or Āgniḍhra, Praśāstṛ, i.e. Maitrāvaruṇa, Adhvaryu and Brahmā. In his translation to the relevant verse of the Rgveda, R.T.H. Griffith states: The Hotar or Herald invokes the gods, the Potar, Purifier, or Cleanser, is the assistant of the Brahman or praying priest who remedies any defect in the ritual, the Neṣṭar or Leader leads forward the wife of the sacrificer, the Āgniḍh or Kindler lights the sacrificial fire, the Praśāstrar or Director is the assistant of the sacrificer.
Hotar, and the Adhvaryu or ministeering priest is the decon who measures the ground, builds the altar, and makes all the preparations necessary for the sacrifice. A Rgvedic verse mentions the designations of six of the sixteen priests, viz. Hotṛ, Adhvaryu, Agnimindha, i.e. Agnit, Grāvagrābha, i.e. Grāvastū, Śaṁstā, i.e. Praśāstr, Suvipra, i.e.Brahmā. A hymn of the Rgveda speaks distinctly about some of the participating priest in a Soma sacrifice, viz. Hotṛ or invoker, Potṛ or fire-kindler, Brāhmaṇa or Brāhmaṇaāccharaṁ and Praśāstr or director, the first assistant of the Hotṛ, i.e. Maitrāvaruṇa. Udgātā as the singer of sāmans and Brāhmaṇaāccharas is addressed as Brahmaputra, who recites the sastras, are mentioned in another passage of the Rgveda. The four principal priests and their functions are referred to in another verse of this Veda, viz. Hotṛ repeats the r̥cas or verses, Udgātā sings the holy sāmans, Brahmr̥ has the knowledge of all and Adhvaryu prescribes the rules of sacrifice. Another Rgvedic verse refers to the term sapta hotṛ[436], which is interpreted in the commentary of Śāyaṇācārya as – sapta hotṛ hotṛpraśāstribrāhmaṇāccharasyādikān...

The priests occupy a very important position in the ritual and serve as the only mediators between the people and their deities. Priests believed that the gods would reveal themselves to his longing vision if duly praised. They propitiate the gods with prayers and offerings and the gods in return fulfil their wishes. Such priests received liberal payment called daksinā as their professional charges. Daksinā or sacrificial gift plays a very significant role in the religious life of the sacrifice or the priest who performs a sacrifice. On the part of the sacrificer, daksinā bestows spiritual fulfilment and for the priest material security.

Gonda remarks that – ‘According to the ritualists the daksinā is the very keystone of the

426 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit. on 2.1.2, p. 130
427 hotādhvaryurāvāya agнимindho grāvagrābha uta śaṁstā suvipraḥ / R.V., 1.162.5
428 pibendra svāhā prahutaṁ vaśaṭṭhaṁ hotrādā somaṁ prathamo ya iśīge / Ibid., 2.36.1
429 āṣadyā barbirharaṭasya sūnavaḥ potṛdā somaṁ pibatā divo naraḥ / Ibid., 2.36.2
430 prati vihi prasthitāṁ somayā madhu pibāgniḍhṛttāva bhāgasya trpnuhi / Ibid., 2.36.4
431 brāhmaṇaṁ brāhmaṇāccharamsino yāgat trpat trpyan tvam ā piba... /Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.36.5
432 acchā rājaṁa nama etavyāṁ prāṣāstrāṁ pibatāṁ somayā madhu / Ibid., 2.36.6
433 udgātava sāma yathodgātā sāma gāyati... /Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.43.2
434 brahmaputraṁ yathā brāhmaṇāccharamsi... /Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
435 r̥cāṁ tvāṁ poṣāṁstāṁ pupusvaṁ gāyatraṁ tvo gāyati sakvarṣu / brahmā tvā vaṇāvi jātvadyāṁ yajṛṣasya mārṇāṁ vi mimita u tvāḥ // Ibid., 10.71.11
436 aṣṭāṇaṁ sapta hotṛbhirhaviṁśate / Ibid., 3.10.4
437 samiṁśāna aṣate hotāraḥ saptaajāmayaṁ /Ibid., 9.10.7
438 Also vide, Ibid., 10.35.10
439 Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.61.1
440 Ibid., 5.30.1
sacrifice without which the oblations are not complete. It is in a mystical way, placed on the credit side of the donor's account. Even those who give liberally to the priests are praised. Those who abstain from the sacrifice, are cursed. A hymn of the tenth manḍala is in the praise of gift or dānastuti. Those who give away daksīṇā, attain eternal life and heaven. The term istāpūrta is closely related to dāna, which means the accumulative spiritual merit of a man due to his performance of sacrifices and charitable acts. In a Rgvedic verse it is stated that the merits attained due to voluntary good works like dāna, etc., and prescribed sacrifices is stored up in heaven which is to be enjoyed by the spirits of the pious who have performed them as pointed out by Sāyanācārya—pitaḥtatastvam parame utkṛṣte vyoman vyomani svargākhye sthāne...gacchasva / istāpūrtena śrautasmārtadānaphalena sam gacchasvā

The sacrifice has its own everlasting effect, which has been illustrated in the Rgvedasamhitā, through the story of Devāpi and Santanu. In the sacrifice performed by Santanu, the priest Devāpi acquires a magic prayer to create rain and released the rain waters. And after twelve years of severe drought, Santanu's kingdom was blessed with life saving rains.

In the Rgvedic period, one of the objectives of performing a sacrifice was to attain prosperity for all, i.e. the present human beings and their future generation: navena nūtanena āpasā prāptena tvaddattena putreṇa karma yāgadānādirūpam rdhyām vardhayāma i.e. 'May we improve the act by a new offspring (given by thee)'

**Prayer**

Hymns or mantras formed an important part in the ritualistic life of the Āryans, from birth to the last breath. Sacrificial offerings were accompanied with prayer. It is stated that a sacrifice without prayer does not even please the gods like Indra. The epithet devatatta, i.e. god-given is applied to the human prayer. The term devattam brahma in the present

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439 Vide, Chakravarty, Uma., *The Social and Familial Relationships from the Rgveda to the Vedāṅgas*, p. 13
440 R.V., 5.42.9
441 Ibid., 10.107
442 Ibid., 10.107.8
443 Ibid., 10.107.2
444 Śāyāna, Ibid., 10.14.8
445 Ibid., 10.98
446 Śāyāna, Ibid., 1.31.8
447 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.31.8, p. 95
448 R.V., 10.105.8
449 pra vah śārdhāya dhṛṣyaye tveṣadyumnaṁśya śaṁśīṁe / devattam brahma gāyata // Ibid., 1.37.4
context, means the praise or prayer which recommends the oblation, obtained from the favour of instruction of the gods. In another verse, the term *devattam brahma* is interpreted as *devattam devapraśādalabdham brahma stotram*, which means the praise inspired by the gods.

The Rgvedic Aryans prayed for definite concrete objects satisfying practical necessities of life and ensuring material security and prosperity for the worshippers. The prayers were made only with an expectation to get reward in the form of Horses and kine, rain, food and bodily welfare, prolonging of life, relief from poverty and attainment of wealth, preservation from dangers, welfare of the field, for begetting their offspring, for forgiveness, for future life including immortality and the world beyond, etc. Thus, the worshippers or householders desired not only immortality but also all pleasures of the earth.

The Rgvedic prayer is full of devotion and love. V. Raghavan observes in his work "The Indian Heritage" -- "The Rgvedic hymns constitute not only the profoundest expression of the feeling of devotion to a personal Deity, but the wealth of devotional mood and attitude here, as well as their literary expression, for outshines anything in the best examples of later devotional poetry... It is seen that there are many prayers which are of the typically Bhakti type containing sentiments and ideas associated with Bhakti or devotion. For instance, a mantra of the Rgvedasamhitā can be cited, which gives emphasis on repeated recital of the name of the deity Indra:

\[ \text{trātāramindramavītāramindram have have suhavam šūramindram } \]
\[ \text{hvayāmi śakram puruḥūtāmindram svasti no maghavā dhātvindrah} !\]

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450 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op. cit., vol. 1, on 1.37.4, p. 125
451 Sayana on R.V., 8.32.27
452 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op. cit., vol. 5, on 8.32.27, p. 168
453 R.V., 1.29.1, 1.83.1
454 Ibid., 5.63.1, 2, 3
455 Ibid., 1.187.1-3, 1.189.6
456 Ibid., 1.89.9
457 Ibid., 1.53.4
458 Ibid., 1.112.24
459 Ibid., 1.9.8
460 Ibid., 10.15.11
461 Ibid., 1.24.14, 15
462 Ibid., 1.128.6, 1.154.5
463 Vide, Bose, A.C., op. cit., p. 234, notes.
464 R.V., 6.47.11
i.e. 'Indra the Rescuer, Indra the Helper, Hero who listens at each invocation, Śakra I call, Indra invoked of many, May Indra Maghavan prosper and bless us.'465

The most affectionate relationship between the god and the worshipper is compared with the relationship of the father to the son.466 In another place, god is addressed as a father, a brother and a friend: \( \text{utra vāṭa pitaśi na uta bhrātota naḥ sakhaḥ sa no jīvātave kṛdhi} \)467 An instance of the devotional idea that expressed through the Rgvedic passage is that the worshipper thinks himself as an infant at the breast of the mother.468

In the ideology of Bhakti, God also seeks men in return to their prayer, which is evident in the Rgveda also. God is spoken of as the most beloved469 and darling guest of all mankind.470 Agni is the cherisher of the gods as if he is Aditi, their mother, or Aditi may mean the earth, their stay or support, but the guest of all men.471

In another place, all the members of a family are called upon to worship the deity or sing songs of praise as—'Sing you all, and sing aloud Priyamedhas, sing your songs. Let children, too, sing. Sing to him who is like a strong city.'472 Deity is also called the lover of song.473 There are instances of musical prayer in the Rgvedasamhitā. It is seen that a hundred or a thousand singers laud the god Indra who loves the song and their praise delights him. Such prayers and laudations reach Indra and strengthen him:

\[
\text{na yam himsanti dhītayo na vānirindram naksantīdabhi vardhayantiḥ/}
\]
\[
yadi stotāraḥ śatam yatsahasram gṛṇanti girvānasam śam tadasmati //474
\]

Bhakti cult gives emphasis on the idea of Divine unity. In the Rgvedasamhitā also people believed in the unity of the God-head. It is said that all the names of the Gods like Indra and others are said to be worthy of obeisance, worthy of adoration and of sacrifice.475 One of the special aspects of the Rgvedic poetry is that it seeks divine protection from the deities as well as gives emphasis on the efforts of man. God Indra is prayed for

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465 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.47.11, p. 312
466 R.V., 1.1.9
467 Ibid., 10.186.2
468 Ibid., 1.164.49
469 preṣṭhanī vo atithin śuṣe mitramiva priyam / Ibid., 8.84.1
470 viśoviśa vo atithiṁ viśayantah purupriyam / Ibid., 8.74.1
471 Ibid., 4.1.20
472 arecata prarcata priyamedhāso arecata /
        arecantu putrakā uta puram na dhṛṣṇyaarcata // Ibid., 8.69.8
473 pari tvā girvāṇo gira imā bhavantu viśvataḥ / Ibid., 1.10.12
474 Ibid., 6.34.3
475 Ibid., 10.63.2
protection in the battlefield\textsuperscript{476} and for physical and intellectual strength and divine protection.\textsuperscript{477} A Rgvedic verse directly proclaims divine goodness: \textit{viśvamtaadhadram yadavanti devā\textsuperscript{478}}, i.e. All that the Gods regard with love is good, giving prosperity to our children.

The deity lying in the hearts of the worshippers inspire them to follow up noble actions and awake noble thoughts in their minds, which ultimately bring them close to the deity. The \textit{Rgvedasamhītā} is full of prayers of the worshippers to overcome all the difficulties of life and made the life happy one with the grace of the divine being.

\textbf{Temples and Idol Worship}

Every religion had laid great emphasis on the sacredness of certain localities or places which are called tīrthas or holy shrines. References to such places are not specifically alluded to in the Rgvedic verses. But the \textit{Rgvedasamhītā} frequently mentions the term \textit{tīrtha} in various senses. In the tenth \textit{maṇḍala} of this \textit{Veda}, the term \textit{tīrtha} appears to mean a holy place\textsuperscript{479}, as interpreted by Śāyaṇācārya – \textit{tīrthe na/ yathā gaṅgādīfīrthe...\textsuperscript{480}} But Griffith gives the meaning of the term as a ‘ford’.\textsuperscript{481} In another verse, the term \textit{tīrtha} is related to the river Suvāstu\textsuperscript{482}. In the present context, Suvāstu means a river and \textit{tuγvαn} means a \textit{tīrtha} as the interpretation given by Śāyaṇācārya – \textit{suvāstvāḥ suṣṭhу nivāśāyāṇadyāḥ adhitugvani tīrthedhi...\textsuperscript{483}} Yāska in his \textit{Nirukta} also explains that Suvāstu in this verse is the name of a river and \textit{tuγvαn} is \textit{tīrtha} which is either a ford of river or a holy spot: \textit{suvāsturnadī / tuγvaya tīrtham bhavati\textsuperscript{484}} In other places, the term \textit{tīrtha} means ford in a river or ocean’s shore\textsuperscript{485}, or the bank of river\textsuperscript{486} as interpreted by Śāyaṇācārya – \textit{sindhūnāṁ samudrāṇām tīrthe avataraṇapraḍeśe...\textsuperscript{487}} However, in several places, it has the meaning of a road or way\textsuperscript{488}, and the field of battle or way to battle field.\textsuperscript{489}

\textsuperscript{476} Ibid., 10.103.4
\textsuperscript{477} Ibid., 6.47.10
\textsuperscript{478} Ibid., 2.23.19
\textsuperscript{479} adḥāyā dhiṭīrāsagramaṁśatīrthe na dasmamupa yantyūnāḥ / Ibid., 10.31.3
\textsuperscript{480} Śāyaṇā, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{481} Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.31.3, p. 552
\textsuperscript{482} uta me prāyayorvayiyoh svuṣṭvāḥ adhi tugvani / R.V., 8.19.37
\textsuperscript{483} Śāyaṇā, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{484} Nir., 4.15
\textsuperscript{485} aritrani vāṁ divasprthu tīrthe sindhūnāṁ rathah / R.V., 1.46.8
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid., 8.47.11
\textsuperscript{487} Śāyaṇā, Ibid., 1.46.8
\textsuperscript{488} udvāṛśāno rādhase tuviṣmāṅkaranna indraḥ sūṭrthābhayaṁ ca / Ibid., 4.29.3
\textsuperscript{489} tīrthe nācchā tāṭrśāṇamokoko dīrgha na sidhramā kṛṣṇotyadhvā / Ibid., 1.173.11
\textsuperscript{tīrthe na yuddhamārga.../ Śāyaṇā, Ibid., 1.169.6}
If is extremely doubtful whether there was image worship in the Rgvedic period. In the Rgvedic age, gods like Agni, Indra, Sūrya and other deities are worshipped as the manifestation of the different phenomena of nature. Such deities are spoken of as possessed of human attributes. For instance, Indra is described as possessed of tuvigrīva, i.e. a strong neck, subāhu, i.e. stout arms, harīsmāṣāru, i.e. yellow beard and harikesāh, i.e. yellow hair. In another place, Indra is prayed to taste the pleasant Soma drink with his tongue. After drinking Soma, Indra is asked to go home as he has a joyful home and a gracious consort named Indrāṇī. God Rudra is also worshipped with human attributes like babhrū, i.e. having brown colour, suśipra, i.e. fair cheeked or having fine nose. From such poetical descriptions of the Vedic deities, it cannot be said that there were image worship in the Vedic period. Prof. Max Müller also remarks in this context—'The religion of the Veda knows of no idols. The worship of idols in India is a secondary formation, a later degradation of the more primitive worship of ideal gods.' But on the basis of the appellations used for the gods in the Rgveda, some scholars refer that the Indians did not merely in imagination assign human forms to their gods, but also represented them in a sensible manner... In this context, mention may be made of the description of Rudra where a painted image of the god is described: sthirebhiraṅgaihpururūpa ugropabhruh sukrebhipiśehiranyaih, i.e. 'With firm limbs, multiform, the strong, the tawny adorns himself with bright gold decorations.' Similarly, Varuṇa is described as wearing golden mail, and Savitṛ is said to put on a golden-coloured mail, as interpreted by Śāyana. Moreover, in another place of the Rgvedasamhitā, there is a scene of bargaining perhaps over the image of Indra: ka imam daśabhirmamendram kṛṣṇi dhenubhihyādā vṛtraṇi jaṅghanadathainam me punardadat //, i.e. 'Who for ten milch-cows will purchase this Indra from me and might give him (Indra) back to me after he has killed the Vṛtras?'

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490 Ibid., 8.17.8
491 harīsmāṣārurharikeśā āyasasturaspeye yo haripā avardhata / Ibid., 10.96.8
492 Ibid., 8.17.5
493 apāṭh somamastamindra pra yāhi kalyāṇītṛyāyā suranaṁ grhe te / Ibid., 3.53.6
494 babhruh bhartā sarvasya babhrvārṇo vā / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.33.5
495 suśipraḥ / śpre hanū nāśike vā/ Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
496 Vide, Muir, J., Original Sanskrit Texts, vol. 5, part. 5, p. 453
497 Vide, Ibid., pp. 453,454
498 R V, 2.33.9
499 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 2.33.9, p. 152
500 hiranyayam suvarṇamayam drāpiṇi kavacaṁ...dhārayan varuṇaḥ.../ Śāyaṇa on R.V., 1.25.13
501 ...devaḥ piśācarī drāpiṇi hiranyayam kavacaṁ prati muñcate / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 4.53.2
502 Ibid., 4.24.10
But referring to these verses, P.V. Kane remarks that it is... possible... that these are hyperbolic or boastful statements of the great devotion of the worshipper to Indra and that there is no reference to an image of Indra. So, it is probable that stone or wood images of the gods were not fashioned or worshipped along with sacrifice.

**Popular Beliefs and Magical Practices**

The *Rgvedasamhitā* reveals many beliefs and magical practices prevalent in the then Indian society. The Rgvedic people believed in ghosts, spirits, demons, goblins and demigods. Sometimes such demons were believed to obstruct the flow of rivers and rainfall. They also believed in the existence of malevolent spirits causing the evils. A Rgvedic verse reflects the belief that the place of cremation is haunted by *piśācas* and other evil-spirits which are asked to go far away from the place, i.e. *śmaśāne pūrvam shitī he piśācādayahuḥ atah asmāt pramṛjyamāṇadahanasthānāt apeta apagacchatal idam sthānam parityajya māṁbhāvena dūrataram desāṁ gacchatetarthaḥ.*

An interesting superstitious practise was to make the *paridhi*, i.e. a stone rampart around the people on the funeral spot for the protection of the living from premature death and to reach a hundred autumns. The departed spirit was believed to pass to a plant.

Bad dreams were considered as the source of worry. In a Rgvedic hymn the spirit of evil-dream is addressed. The *Duhsvapna* or the ill-omened bad dreams were supposed to affect not only people but also cattle. Among the ominous dreams, mention may be made of making of garland or gold ornaments in a dream. The Rgvedic verses 8.47.14,15 are prescribed in *Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra* to be recited after an unpleasant dream. On the other hand, eating of honey, etc., perceived in a dream, produce happiness as in an awaking state, i.e. *svapne draṣṭaṁ madhushojaṇādīkām jāgradavasthānubhutavat*.

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503 Kane, P.V., op.cit., vol. 2, part.2, p. 707  
504 R.V., 2.12.3  
505 Sayana, Ibid., 10.14.9  
506 anayā jīvarakṣārthani pāṣāṇaṁ paridhīrūpeṇa sthāpayanti / jīvebhah jīvadbhyah putrapratārdibhyastānī rakṣāṇārthaveṇāṁ paridhirḥ mṛtyoḥ paridhānābhūtaṁ pāṣāṇaṁ dadhāmi ruddhāmi /...kīnica purūṭiḥ bahvaścaṇā bahugamanāḥ śataṁ śaradalā etatsamkhyaṃ kāśmān jīvantu.../Sayana, Ibid., 10.18.4  
507 Ibid., 10.16.3  
508 Ibid., 10.164  
509 Ibid., 8.47.14  
510 Ibid., 8.47.15  
511 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 5, on 8.47.14, p. 233  
Also vide, 'yacca goṣu' ityādīśūktaviśeṣasya duḥsvapnam dṛṣṭvādyamupatiṣṭheta / tathā ca 'svapnamamanojñāṁ dṛṣṭvā' ityupakramya yacca goṣu duṣṣvapnyamiti pañcāhīrādyāṣṭaṁ upatiṣṭheta (Āśv.Gr., 3.6.6)/ Sayana on R.V., 8.47.13
In the Rgvedic verses, prayer is found to save the worshipper from unpleasant dreams. Trita Āptya was a deity dwelling in remote distance, and consequently evil was sought to be transferred to him. Griffith also states that to Trita Āptya it was customary to wish away and consign any threatened calamity or unpleasantness. So, the Rgvedic people had their willingness to transfer together, all the evil-dreams to Āptya. It is wished that the sounding stone might drive away all the evil-dreams, i.e. grāvā abhiṣavapāśānaḥ vadan abhiṣavavelāyāṁ śabdām kurvan...duḥsvapnyāṁ duḥsvapnaprabhavamādiyaminaśtaṁ cāpa sedhatu Sūrya, the remover of darkness with the light, is asked to remove from the worshipper all evil-dreams together with famine, sickness and worthless sacrifice. God Savitr is also invoked to drive away the evil-dreams.

Krtyā is the goddess practising magic or Magic personified or fiend, whose form is blue and red as referred to in the Śāyanācārya’s commentary as- kṛtyā abhicārābhīmānīṁ devatā nilalohitam bhavati / nilam ca lohitam ca tasyā rūpam bhavatītyarthah. Krtyā was believed to cause obstacles to the union of husband and wife. Similarly Nirṛti is the divinity of the Rākṣasa race. The most powerful and indestructible Nirṛti causes various mischiefs including death and destruction. Śāyanācārya also states – nirṛtīḥ rakṣoṣājītidevatā mo śu vadhīt sarvathā vadhāṁ mā kāṛṣṭī! According to Ludwig, the Nirṛtis by their regular appearance bring men nearer to death. Kapota, i.e. a pigeon is said to be the messenger of Nirṛti, i.e. nirṛtyāḥ pāpadevātyāḥ dūtāḥ anucarah kapotah and is believed to harm men and cattle.

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512 Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.47.16
513 Ibid., 8.47.14-17
514 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 5, on 8.47.13, p. 232
515 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 8.47.13, p. 435
516 evā duṣṣvapnyāṁ sarvamāḍpye samāṣayasyanahosā va útayah sūtayho va útayah / R.V., 8.47.17
517 Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.36.4
518 Ibid., 10.37.4
519 Ibid., 5.82.4
520 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.85.28, p. 283
521 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.85.28, p. 595
522 Śāyaṇa on R.V., 10.85.28
523 Ibid., 10.85.28
524 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.38.6, p. 128
525 Śāyaṇa on R.V., 1.38.6
527 Śāyaṇa on R.V., 10.165.1
528 Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
It is regarded as an ill-omened bird, the presence of which is said to be unlucky.\textsuperscript{529} \textit{Paksinī heti} was supposed to be an evil spirit. It is a bird who brings in death, i.e. \textit{paksīṇī paksopeta hetih hananahetuh kapotah...}\textsuperscript{530} According to Griffith, it means the ill-omened bird.\textsuperscript{531} Wilson renders it as the winged weapon of mischief.\textsuperscript{532} In the \textit{Āśvalāyana Grhya Sūtra}, it is stated that if such a bird enters one's house, the gods should be invoked through the R̄gvedic hymn\textsuperscript{533}, for averting misfortune that may befall the householder as well as his cattle.\textsuperscript{534} A verse of the relevant R̄gvedic hymn\textsuperscript{535}, mentions the evil effects of the call of an owl and offers a prayer to death. The muttering of the R̄gvedic hymn\textsuperscript{536} is prescribed for the sake of averting ominous birds and thieves.\textsuperscript{537}

People appear to have fear of certain birds which were supposed to portend evils. But Kapinjala was the bird of happy omen. Its cry to the south of the house was regarded auspicious.\textsuperscript{538} The screeching of the owl was considered to be ominous.\textsuperscript{539} A R̄gvedic verse mentions evil spirits who take the form of dogs.\textsuperscript{540} Another verse refers to the evil spirits in the form of an owl, or of an owlet, of a dog, or of a duck, of a hawk, or of a vulture.\textsuperscript{541}

Rakṣasvin appears to denote wicked man whose thought is evil, i.e. of the demon kind.\textsuperscript{542} They are the enemies of the worshippers, who are defended by the evil spirits, i.e. \textit{rakṣasvinah rakṣoyuktān riṣataḥ hīṃsakān śatrūn...}\textsuperscript{543} Wilson holds that the Rakṣasvinah, are attended by Rākṣasas.\textsuperscript{544}

Yatudhāna is the appellation of some evil spirits. The Yatudhānas are the Rākṣasas as explained by Sāyana-\textit{cārīra – yatudhānān rākṣasān} /\textsuperscript{545} which are seen flying on those

\textsuperscript{529} Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.165.1, p. 492
\textsuperscript{530} Sāyana on R.V., 10.165.2
\textsuperscript{531} Also vide, Ibid., 10.165.3
\textsuperscript{532} Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.165.2, p. 646
\textsuperscript{533} Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.165.2, p. 493
\textsuperscript{534} R.V., 10.165
\textsuperscript{535} Aśv. Gr., 3.7.7
\textsuperscript{536} yasya dūtaḥ prahita eṣa etattasmai yamāya namo astu mṛtyaye // R.V., 10.165.4
\textsuperscript{537} Ibid., 2.42,43
\textsuperscript{538} Vide, Bhat, M. S., (ed.) \textit{Vedic Tantrism}, p. 108
\textsuperscript{539} he kapiṇjala twariṃ sumaṝgalo bhadravāḍī ca saṃ grhāṇāṃ daksinatiḥ daksinasyāmi diśi ava kranda śabdāṁ kuru/ daksinatiḥ śabdāyamānaḥ śakunto maṅgalasūcako hi // Sāyana on R.V., 2.42,3
\textsuperscript{530} Ibid., 10.165.4
\textsuperscript{540} Ibid, 7.104.20
\textsuperscript{541} Ibid., 7.104.22
\textsuperscript{542} Ibid., 7.94.12
\textsuperscript{543} Sāyana, Ibid., 1.12.5
\textsuperscript{544} Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.12.5, p. 35
\textsuperscript{545} Sāyana on R.V., 10.87.2
paths in air’s mid-region. Griffith states that the Yatudhāna probably was rather the goblin or sorcerer while the Rākṣasa was the violent and voracious ogre. There is a special class of evil spirits called the Mūradevās. Mūradevās are those who make killing their sport as referred to in the Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary—mūradevāḥ māraṇakṛiḍā rākṣasāh...

It is stated that mūradevāḥ is a species of demons or goblins. Moreover, Kravādās are the murderous flesh-eating Rākṣasas. Kimīdins is a kind of Rākṣasas or treacherous and malevolent spirits.

The people of the Rgvedic age were very much anxious of poison, entering into the human body and affecting it. They believed that the bird Kapiṇjala removes the effect of poison, for which she is called visahātri, i.e. śakuntikā / śakuntalā śakunah tasya stri / tāṁ kapiṇjalīmāhūḥ / sakā sā te tava viṣam jaghāṣa bhaṅkitavati / sā visahāṭrīti prasiddhā. Similarly, the Sun being considered as especially instrumental in counteracting the operation of poison. Ādiyā is said to be the destroyer of poison as referred to in the Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary—ādiyāḥ viṣadakāśināmādanasālaḥ viṣadṛṣṭaḥ viṣavam dṛṣṭāmyena tādṛṣṭaḥ adṛṣṭaḥ adṛṣṭāṁ niḥviṣaviśeṣaṇāṁ hantā. The recitation of the ninety-nine rivers was believed to counteract the effects of poison. Twenty-one female peacocks and the seven sisters which probably referred to the seven chief rivers including the Ganges were believed to destroy the effects of poison, as female peacocks were the great enemies of snakes. Nakula, i.e. the mongooses, were supposed to remove the effects of poison. It is stated that the muttering of a Rgvedic hymn counteracts the poison of serpents, worms, spiders, hyenas and scorpions.
Disease and distress, affecting the body, led the Rgvedic people to suppose the existence of malevolent spirits causing the evil. Agni is prayed to drive away the evil spirits who in the form of sickness assails the embryo and as the disease *durmāman* assails the womb. Priests were believed to be able to heal diseases with the help of mantras. On reciting a Rgvedic hymn, certain rites were performed, when a man became seriously ill. Certain rivers were believed to heal the disease called 'Sipada.' Wilson states that the malady called 'Sipada, perhaps is the Vedic form of Ślipada, the Cochin leg.' A particular belief was that certain diseases could be transferred to some creatures and objects. People believed that the disease Hariman, i.e. Jaundice is stated to be transferred to the birds like Śuka, i.e. parrot, Sārikā, i.e. a kind of bird and to the Haritāla tree. Sāyanācārya interprets the term *hāridrava as haritāladruma.* But Wilson holds that Haritāla most usually means yellow orpiment; *Hāridrava,* a yellow vegetable powder. Some verses of the *Rgveda* confer long life, when sprinkled over a person.

During the Rgvedic age, people believed in the existence of forest deities and the spirits of trees and plants. At that period, people believed in the efficacy of medicinal plants and creepers by which one destroys a rival wife and secures her husband.

**Eschatology**

Eschatology is concerned with the destiny of the human being after death and immortality of the soul. It has relation to the conception of heaven and hell. In the *Rgvedasamhitā,* five hymns of the tenth *mandala* contain materials of the funeral rites and the conception of future life. At that period, cremation was the usual method of disposing of the dead. God Agni was believed to convey the corpse to the other world, the fathers

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561 R.V., 10.162
562 Ibid., 10.162.1
563 Ibid., 10.161, 163
564 Ibid., 10.137
565 Ibid., 7.50.4
566 Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 4, on 7.50.4, p. 335
567 R.V., 1.50.12
568 *hāridraveṣu haritāladreṣu...* / Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
569 Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.50.12, p. 161
570 R.V., 1.23 16-24
571 Vide, Bhat, M. S.,(ed.) op. cit., p. 97
572 R.V., 10.146
573 Ibid., 10.97
574 Ibid., 10.145
575 Ibid., 10.14-18
576 *ya agnidadhā ya anagnidadhā madhye divah svadhaya mādayante /
tebhiḥ svarālasunītīmedām yathāvāsām tanvām kalpayasva //* Ibid., 10.15.14
and the gods. During the process of cremation, Agni and Soma were besought to heal any injury that bird, beast, ant or serpent might have inflicted on the body. The way to the heavenly world was supposed to be a distant path on which Pūṣan protects the dead. The Rgvedasamhitā refers to the path that leads to devaloka or pitrloka. Agni is asked to make the devayāna path clear and easy to access and carry the oblations there. According to Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary, the term devayāna means here the path leading man to godward, e.g. devayānān devān prati yajamanusya gacchante tān pathah mārgāṁ... He is the knower of that path who is invoked to place Aulāna (Śantanu, as a descendant of Ula) among the gods in heaven. The Asvins are invited to come to the sacrifice from far away by the paths called devayāna, i.e. the path on which gods have travelled. In another verse addressed to Dawn, Vasishtha says that he has seen the devayāna path, which were innocuous paths made ready by the Vasus as interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya—devayānāḥ devaprāpakāḥ pānthāḥ pānthānāḥ...amardhantāḥ ahimsantāḥ vasubhiḥ tejobhiḥ...samskritāḥ The path that pursued by Death is different from the path in which gods used to travel. Agni is the knower of that path which is called pītryāṇa, i.e. the way that leads to the home of the Manes or Ancestral Spirits. The Pitrs whom the Āryan householder invoked at the śrāddha rite were believed to dwell in different lokas. Oblations to that pitrs goes by the way called pītryāṇa as it said—pītryāṇampitāro yena mārgena gacchanti tam pānthāṁ havirvahanamārgam... The most popular belief which the people cherished with regard to future life, was that the soul goes to any of the different lokas after death. Fire or grave were believed to destroy the body only but not the spirit of the dead. The spirit of the deceased was believed to go to the realm of eternal light and meet with the fathers in the highest heaven. Uniting with a glorious body, he

577 Ibid., 10.16.1.2, 10.17.3
578 yatte kṛṣṇah śakuna śātutoda pīṭhāḥ sarpa uta va śvāpādah / agniṣṭadvisvādagarāṁ kṛṣṇaḥ somaś ca yo brāhmaṇā śāviveśa // Ibid., 10.16.6
579 Ibid., 10.17.5
580 sugānpathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ devayānān vahā havyāni sumanasyamānāḥ / Ibid., 10.51.5
581 Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
582 vidvān patha rtusā devayānānapāulānam divi deveṣu dhehi / Ibid., 10.98.11
583 eha yātāṁ pathibhirdevayānānairdrāvīme vāṁ nīdhayō madhunāṁ / Ibid., 3.58.5
Also vide, Ibid., 7.38.8
584 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 7.76.2
585 param mṛtyo anu parehī panthāṁ yaste sva itaro devayānāt / Ibid., 10.18.1
586 panthāmanu pravividvānpyānāṁ dyumadagne samidhāno vi bhāhi / Ibid., 10.2.7
587 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.2.7, p. 530
588 Sāyaṇa on R.V., 10.2.7
589 Ibid., 9.113.7
590 Ibid., 10.14.8, 10.154.4
was believed to obtain a resting place from Yama and to enter upon a life of bliss.\textsuperscript{591} The \textit{Ṛgvedasamhitā} frequently mentions about \textit{svarga} or heaven, which is said to be of three in number: \textit{tisro dyāvah savitur dvā upasthā ekā yamasya bhuvane virāṣat} /\textsuperscript{592}, i.e. there are three heavens, two of them known as \textit{dyuloka} and \textit{bhūloka} are in the lap of Savitṛ and the third one is \textit{antariksuloka} -the Yama’s realm in which the mortals depart. The \textit{Ṛgvedasamhitā} mentions the joy of heaven called \textit{svarga}\textsuperscript{593}, which was full of eternal light, joys and merriments, in which fulfilment of all desires is possible.\textsuperscript{594} As the word \textit{nāka} (i.e. heaven) is interpreted by Śaṅkara as \textit{na vidyate akarh duhkham tatsādhanam pāpam veti nāko dyulokah}/\textsuperscript{595}, i.e. a Heaven is that place which is free from sorrows and sufferings. Heaven is sometimes even identified with the highest step of Viṣṇu.\textsuperscript{596} It can be said that there is the highest regions of light or the highest heaven.\textsuperscript{597} The heaven is the world of the pious one.\textsuperscript{598} In Heaven they are united with their fore-fathers and with their merit, due to sacrifices and charitable acts, as interpreted by Śaṅkara—\textit{pitāh tatastvam parame utkṛṣṭe vyoman vyomani svargākhye sthāne svabhūtāṁ pitṛbhiḥ saha sam gacchasva liṣṭāpūrtena śrautasmārtadānaphalena sam gacchasva}\textsuperscript{599} Those, who practise painful religious observances or those, who perform sacrifices, reach Heaven: \textit{ye janaḥ tapasā kṛcchracāndrayāṃ,santrāmānānī ṣvadhāsa ca yatra trīṣṭeṣa tatra mamāṃśtam kṛdhāndrayendo pari srava /Ibid., 9.113.10, Also vide, ibid.,9.113.11} Those heroes, who fight with their enemies and cast away their lives in battle, also reach Heaven.\textsuperscript{600} Those, who give liberal gifts in sacrifice, and please the gods with oblations, are sure to attain the bliss of heaven and immortality.\textsuperscript{602} On the other hand, who

\textsuperscript{591} apeta vītā vi ca sarpatāto'smā etam pitaro lokamakran / ahobhiradbhirakshubhirvyaśa yamo dadāyavasāñnamasmi // Ibid., 10.14.9
\textsuperscript{592} Ibid., I.35.6
Also vide, Ibid., 8.41.9, 9.113.9
\textsuperscript{593} ...svarga u tvamapi mādāyāṣe / Ibid., 10.95.18
\textsuperscript{594} yatra kāmā nikāmāścā yatra bradvnasaya viṣṭapam / svadhā ca yatra tṛpiṣṭeṣa tatra mamāṃśtam kṛdhāndrayendo pari srava /Ibid., 9.113.10, Also vide, ibid.,9.113.11
\textsuperscript{595} Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.125.5
\textsuperscript{596} tadasya priyamabhi pātho aṣyāṁ naro yatra devavyavo madanti / uurukramasya sa hi bandhuritthā viṣṇoh pade parame madhva utsaḥ // Ibid., 1.154.5
\textsuperscript{597} Ibid., 10.14.8
\textsuperscript{598} Ibid., 10.17.4
\textsuperscript{599} Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.14.8
\textsuperscript{600} Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.154.2
\textsuperscript{601} Ibid., 10.154.3
\textsuperscript{602} nākasya prṣṭhe adhi tiṣṭhatī śrito yaḥ pṛṇatī sa ha devesu gacchati / Ibid., 1.125.5
Also vide, Ibid., 5.63.2, 10.107.2, 10.154.3
do not perform sacrifices, impious and observes ordinances other than those of Indra is thrown down from Heaven. The life is free from imperfections and bodily frailties there. The Rgvedic verses describe Heaven or the region where Yama presides. He is the deity who presides over the invisible world of the dead. In one passage, he is identified with mrtyu or death, whose task is to gather the departed men together. He is said to have showed the souls of his successors, the way to the home of the departed or the former ancestors of mankind. The departed spirit, after the cremation of the body became associated with Yama. In a Rgvedic verse, prayer is made to release one from the fetters of Yama which he fastens promptly on the feet of the sinners. In the Rgvedasamhitā, evidence of belief in some kind of hell is not wanting, which is indicated by the term naraka. Those who are evil, false and untrue are said to have attained a deep place. In a Rgvedic verse, bottomless darkness is mentioned in connection with evil deeds. Indra is implored to send down into darkness, or hung the heads downwards of the enemies of the people, which probably indicates a hell. In another verse, the seer prays that whatever enemy desires to harm him, may be hurled below the three earths, or displaced from the three earths, as referred to in the commentary of Śāyanācārya—

The tortures given in the hell is not alluded to in the Rgvedasamhitā.

603 anyavratamamānuṣayājīvānāma-devayam / 
   ava svāḥ sakāh dudhuvitā parvataḥ suṃhāya dasyūm parvataḥ // Ibid., 8.70.11

604 Ibid., 10.14.8
605 Ibid., 9.113.8,9
606 divi dyuloke sthitāṃ yamanī...// Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.64.3
607 yasa dūtaḥ prahita eṣa etattasmai yamaya namo astu mṛtyave // Ibid., 10.165.4
608 pareyīvāṃśam pravato mahīrānu bahubhyāḥ panthāmanupaspaṇām / 
   vaivasvatānī saṁgamanānī jānānāṁ yamāṁ rājānāṁ haviśā duvasya // Ibid., 10.14.1
609 Ibid., 10.14.1,2
610 Ibid., 10.14.1
611 yamasya paścibhāt pādabandhanāṇṇigaṇāmuñcantu/ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.97.16
612 pāpīṇa eva puruṣāṃ svargamārgagābhadhena narakāṃ prāpayati / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.14.1
613 abhirātrao na yoṣaṇo vyantaḥ patiripo na janayo durevāḥ / 
   pāpāśaḥ santo anṛtā asatyaḥ idaṃ padamajana-tā gabhiram // Ibid., 4.5.5
614 indrāsno mūrtaḥ yāvate prābhavaḥ tamaṁ prājñam // Ibid., 7.104.3
615 ni na indra mṛdho jahi nīcā yacca prātyatah / 
   yo asmā abhidāsatyadharāṃ gamayā tamaḥ // Ibid., 10.152.4
616 Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 7.104.11
Transmigration, *Karma* and Rebirth

In the *Rgvedasamhita*, there is no clear idea of transmigration, *karma* and rebirth. But the birth, waning and death of the Moon, and its re-birth give the idea of birth, death and rebirth of the human soul.\(^{616}\) Moreover, the idea of death and rebirth is expressed in some of the *Rgvedic* verses.\(^{617}\) It is clear from another *Rgvedic* verse that the Vedic *Āryans* believed that the immortal soul is in conjunction with the mortal body, went to the higher or lower spheres.\(^{618}\) The seer Vāmadeva praising himself in the form of Indra exclaims—

*aham manur abhavam sūryāscāham kakṣīvā rṣirasmi vipraḥ| aham kutsamārjuneyam
nyṛiṇe 'ham kavirūṣanā paśyatā mā //*\(^{619}\) i.e. 'I was aforetime Manu, I was Sūrya: I am the sage Kakṣīvān, holy singer. Kutsa, the son of Ārjuna I master. I am the sapient Uśanā behold me.'\(^{620}\) It may be referred to as an instance of doctrine of the transmigration of souls. The famous *Asya Vāmasya sūkta* tells about the transmigration of the soul. It refers, to the doctrine of two birds\(^{621}\), the individual soul and the universal soul or the supreme self.

A *Rgvedic* verse which contains the germs of the theory of rebirth and *karma* holds that according to one's *karma* or merit one's body after death goes to heaven to enjoy the bliss for the pious acts, or he returns to the earth as a mortal being, or goes to the waters as its aquatic animal, or becomes a plant.\(^{622}\) Similarly, evil deeds lead the person to suffering in dark hell.\(^{623}\) In a verse, it is stated that all wicked and sinful person, all men who are false in thought and speech give birth to this deep abyss of hell:

*pāpāsat santo anṛtā asatyā idam padamājanatā gabhūram //*\(^{624}\)

Performance of sacrifice led the sacrificer to heaven or he attained reputation which is difficult to surpass and non performance of it led men to the lower regions.\(^{625}\) It can be

\(^{616}\) pūrvipaṃ carato māyayaitau sīsū kṛiṇantau pari yāto adhvaram /
viśvāṃpyo bhuvanāṁbhāṣaṣṭa rtūrayo vidadhajjayate punah // Ibid., 10.85.18
Also vide, candramā vai jāyate punah /T.B., 3.9.5.4

\(^{617}\) apaśyaṃ gopāmanipadyamānamā ca parā ca pathibhiṣcarantam /
sa sadhrīcchā sa viṣūcīrvasāna a varīvarti bhuvanesvantaḥ // R.V., 1.164.31
Also vide, Ibid., 1.164.32

\(^{618}\) apaśī prāṇi svadhyāya gṛbbhito'martyo martyena sayoniḥ /
tā śāstvānta viṣūcinā viyantā nyāprayā cikyurna ni cikyuranyam // Ibid., 1.164.38

\(^{619}\) Ibid., 4.26.1

\(^{620}\) Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 4.26.1, p. 218

\(^{621}\) R.V., 1.164.20

\(^{622}\) sūryāṃ caksuragacchatu vātāmāṃtā dyāmi ca gaccha pṛthvītrī ca dharmanā /
apo vā gaccha yadī tatra te hitamoṣadhitva prati tiṣṭhā śaṭraivaḥ // Ibid., 10.16.3
Also vide, Ibid., 10.59.5,6,7, 10.60.10

\(^{623}\) pra yā jīgāti khargaleva naktamapra drūhā tanvamā guhāmanā /
vavṛā anantā ava sī padiṣṭa grāvāno ghanantu rākṣasa upabdaiva // Ibid., 7.104.17

\(^{624}\) Ibid., 4.5.5

\(^{625}\) Ibid., 10.44.6,7
said that whether the flames devour the body or not, the spirit, freed from all desires and moves through the air toward new life and passes by Yama’s watchful dogs.

**Philosophic Revelations of the R̄ṣedic seers**

The germs of philosophical speculations are seen scattered in the *R̄ṣvedasamhitā*. The philosophical hymns of the *R̄ṣvedasamhitā* contain the questions concerning the beginning and origin of all things and the most primitive beginnings of natural philosophy, and theories of creation. The Vedic seers also search for the hidden traces of the invisible, unseen gods for their origin and deeds. The R̄ṣedic hymns speculate on the process of creation or origin of the universe. The idea that the whole world is one being, the Puruṣa, who has pervaded the world, is contained in the *Puruṣa sūkta* of the tenth mandala. The *Puruṣa sūkta* gives the idea of self-sacrifice by Puruṣa and the formation of the whole creation from the body of the person or man (puruṣa), born in the beginning. From the navel, head, feet and ears of the Puruṣa came out respectively the firmament, the heaven, the earth and the other quarters of space. It is also said that the Moon, the Sun, the gods Indra and Agni, and Vāyu sprang respectively from the Puruṣa’s mind, eyes, mouth and breath, while his mouth became the Brāhmaṇa, his arms became Kṣatriya, the thighs became the Vaiśya and the Śūdra born from his feet. The hymn is pantheistic in nature and declares that Puruṣa is all that is, that has been and that shall be.

The R̄ṣedic Hiranyagarbha sūkta describes the universe as created by Prajāpati, the creator and sustainer of the universe. In this sūkta, Prajāpati is extolled as the creator of the heaven and earth, of the waters and of all living beings. Sāyaṅacārya also explains the term prajāpati as the protector of the creatures. About Hiranyagarbha the seer says – *hiranyagarbhaḥ samavartatāgre bhūtasya jātah patireka āsīt / sa dādhaṛa prthivīm dyāmutesmāṃ kasmāi devāya haviṣā vidihaṃ/*, i.e. ‘In the beginning rose Hiranyagarbha, born Only Lord of all created beings. He fixed and upheld this earth and heaven...’ From the relevant verse, it can be said that in the beginning there arose Hiranyagarbha, who was the sole Lord of all creation. He even established the earth and the sky.

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626 Ibid., 10.15.14
627 Ibid., 10.14.10,11
628 Ibid., 10.90.
629 Ibid., 10.90.14
630 Ibid., 10.90.13
631 Ibid., 10.90.12
632 puruṣa evedam sarvan yadbhūtan yacca bhavyam / utāṃtavasyeśāno yadannenaśrohati // Ibid., 10.90.2
633 prajāpatiḥ prajānāṁ prakāśavrṣṭyaśinā pālayitā / Sāyaṅa, Ibid., 4.53.2
634 Ibid., 10.121.1
According to *Näsadiya sūkta*635, there was neither non-entity, nor entity. There was no atmosphere and the sky. Only darkness existed. This world was undistinguishable water.636 The waters were covered in darkness and space, heat produced the one primordial substance, then arose desire which was the first seed of mind.637 Here it is stated that the seers having meditated in their hearts have discovered the connection of the existent with the non-existent by their wisdom from which the gods came. This *sūkta* indicates that nothing existed in the beginning except that one, who breathed windless by his own power. It manifested itself. At the end of this hymn, the seer admits that it is impossible to say whether God created this universe or it is a result of evolution.638 On the philosophical aspect of this hymn, it is stated that in its noble simplicity, in the loftiness of its philosophic vision, it is possibly the most admirable bit of philosophy of olden times... No translation can ever do justice to the beauty of the original.639 Another hymn speaks of the waters as the prime cause.640 In the *Vāk sūkta*, Vāk is represented as the Supreme power and the foundation of all activities.641 She is looked upon as accompanying and supporting all the gods in the opening mantra of this *sūkta*. Vāk declares herself as giving birth to heaven on the summit of the world.642 On account of her magnanimity, she blows forth like the wind and grasps all beings beyond heaven and earth.643

The Rgvedic verses644 mention about *asat*, which may be compared to *avyakta brahma* or *nirguna brahma*. About the relationship between *sat* and *asat*, it is said that at the beginning *sat* comes from *asat*. After that, originates the earth, the regions etc.

Dakṣa comes from Aditi or Aditi comes from Dakṣa. Then come the gods, who live in the

635 Ibid., 10.129
636 nāsadasāṃno sadāsāt tadānāṃ nāśдраjo no vyomā paro yat / kimāvar̄ivah kuṇa kasya āryamanabhaḥ kimāśidgahanānī gābhiram // Ibid., 10.129.1
Also vide, Ibid., 10.129.3
637 Ibid., 10.129.3,4
Also vide, Ibid., 10.82.6
638 iyaṁ vīrṣṭīryata ābhāhūta yadi vā dadhe yadi vā na / yo asyādhyaksāḥ parame vyoṃatvā ārīga veda yadi vā na veda // Ibid., 10.129.7
Vide, Sukthankar, V.S., *Ghate’s Lectures on Rigveda*, p. 161
639 Ibid., 10.125
640 R.V., 10.82
641 Ibid., 10.125
Also vide., ambhṛnasya mahārṣerduhitā vāināmnī brahmaviduṣī svātmānamastaut / saiccitsukhātmakah sarvagataḥ paramātma devatā / tena hyeṣaśā tadātmyamunabhavanī sarvajagadrukena sarvasyādhiṣṭhānatenā cāhāmeva sarvamā bhavāmīti svātmānam stautī / Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
642 Ibid., 10.125.7
643 Ibid., 10.125.8
644 brahmanaspatire tē saṁ karmāraivādhaṃ / devānāṁ pūrvye yugetasatāḥ sadajāyata // Ibid., 10.72.2
Also vide, Ibid., 10.129.1
water and the eight sons of Aditi come. The Taittirīya Upanīṣad also describes the relation between sat and asat as – asadvā idamagra āsīt. tato vai sadajāyata Like this from asat or Non-existence, the whole creation develops. Such indicate the philosophical set up of mind of the Vedic seers.

Upaniṣadic philosophy has its roots in the Rgvedic mantras. In a Rgvedic verse, the relation between Jīva and Brahma is described as – dvā suparṇā sayujā sakhāyā samānām bṛkṣam pari svasvajāte / tayoranyah pippalān svādvattyanaśnannayo abhi cākaśīti According to Sāyaṇācārya, the two birds are the vital and the Supreme Spirit, dwelling in one body. The vital spirit enjoys the fruit or rewards of actions while the supreme spirit is merely a passive spectator. This verse is also quoted in the later Vedic literature.

There are references to the universe in the Rgvedic verses. Viṣṇu is stated to have measured or made the terrestrial regions for Manu as the abode, with three steps. Indra is praised for having made Heaven and Earth. Soma has formed the wide expanse of the earth and the high dome of the sky. It is stated that Soma has created six vast conditions, which are heaven, earth, day, night, water and plants. Viṣṇu is seen upholding the heaven and earth and Bṛhaspati propped up by his strength the ends of the earth. In a Rgvedic verse, the creation is ascribed to Soma and Pūṣan. About the Heaven and Earth, it is stated that from the heaven to the earth is a distance which no bird can fly. The presence of the whole of the air above the earth is clearly stated. Even the earth and the sky were,
sometimes, conceived as circular like the wheels at the two ends of the axle, representing the intervening space.\textsuperscript{659} There are few references of planets. A Rgvedic verse\textsuperscript{660} speaks of Soma on the lap of the Nakṣatras probably meaning the lunar mansions. The \textit{Rgveda} distinctly mentions about Aghanā, i.e. Maghā and Arjunī, i.e. Pūrvaphālgunu.\textsuperscript{661}

From the aforesaid discussion, it can be deduced that Rgvedic religion began from offering prayers to various gods and goddesses for their favour and bliss. They were looked upon as regulating the occurrences in nature. At that time, prayers were believed not only to relieve various kinds of sufferings, but also to work out diverse other kinds of miracles. The Vedic Āryans worshipped the gods and goddesses to establish their society, to protect themselves and to attain the things which are not in their hands. When man can do a thing he does it himself, but when he is unable, he prays to some mighty, beneficent being to get it done for him. Similar case happened with the Vedic Āryans, which gave rise to worship of the gods and goddesses. Nature worship in some shape or form was the earliest aspect of religion and the religion of the Vedic Āryans drew inspiration from nature. Sacrifice played an important role in the Rgvedic religion. The intention behind the sacrifice is to attain divine grace of the deities by offering oblations. Offerings and prayer were the part of that religion. It can be said that the seers of the Vedic age offer oblations to the deities, through the god Fire, hoping in response, rewards in the form of cattle, sons, long life, peace and prosperity and also for spiritual and mundane well-being.

\textsuperscript{659} Ibid., 10.89.4
\textsuperscript{660} prasiddhānāmeva nakṣatrāṇāmupastha upasthāne dyuloke soma āhitaḥ // Sāyana, Ibid., 10.85.2
\textsuperscript{661} aghanā / maghāsvityarthāḥ / maghānakṣatreṣu...arjunyoḥ / phalgunyorityrthaḥ / tuyornakṣatrayoḥ... / Sāyana, Ibid., 10.85.13