In this chapter, characteristic traits of the prominent deities mentioned by the Sanskrit poetesses are briefly explained from mythological point of view. There are several deities like Indra, Varuṇa, Brahmā, Lakṣmī, Kubera, Agastya, Vaśiṣṭha etc. mentioned in these compositions studied by me.

Vedic mythology occupies a very important position in the study of the history of religions. The lower form of worship, however, occupies but a small space in Vedic religion. The deities of the Rgveda are glorified as human beings, inspired with human motives and passions, born like men, but immortal. The character of each Vedic god is made up of only a few essential traits combined with a number of other features common to all the gods, such as brilliance, power, beneficence and wisdom. These hymns are valuable because we see before us in them a mythology in the making. In these hymns there is a transformation of the natural phenomena into mythological figures in gods and goddesses such as Sūrya (Sun), Soma (Moon), Agni (Fire), Āpas (Water). We find that the hymns are not addressed to a Sun god or Moon god, but to the Sun itself, the Moon itself. Among such mythological figures whose original nature is already partly forgotten in the hymns and who are honoured more as mighty, lofty beings, distinguished through all kinds of miraculous deeds are Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, Aditi, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, the two Aśvins, Rudra and Parjanya.

According to Macdonell A. A. "In the older parts of the Rgveda individual gods are often invoked as the highest but this notion is not carried out to its logical conclusion. The fact that the Vedic poets frequently seem to be engrossed in the praise of the particular deity then happen to be invoking, that they exaggerate his attributes to the point of inconsistency, has given
rise to the much discussed theory which Max Müller originated and to which he has given the name of Henotheism or Kathenotheism. According to this theory, 'the belief in individual gods alternately regarded as the highest', the Vedic poets attribute to the god they happen to be addressing all the highest traits of divinity, treating him for the moment as if he were an absolutely independent and Supreme deity alone present to the mind.

Agni, a personification of the sacrificial fire, presents in its conception the household life of the Vedic Aryans and is second in importance only to Indra, whose conception presents their external life of struggle and conquest. His connection with domestic life is a special feature. He is the only Gṛhapati (master of the house), the Atithi (guest) and a Kinsman of men. He is the Dūta (messenger), par excellence, appointed by gods and men to be an oblation bearer.

As the central figure of the sacrifice, he is called variously Rtvija, Vipra, Purohita, Adhvaryu and Brāhmaṇa and is thus the divine counter part of the earthly priesthood.

Viśvavārā is the Vedic seer of Rgveda (V.28). She praises here Agni for marital happiness and prosperity. Viśvavārā, a lady of the family of Atri invokes Agni and proceeds to the sacred fire facing the east. She offers prayer to Agni, which spreads lustre and which shines in the presence of the Dawn:

\[
\text{समिद्र्दः अग्निदिवसे शोभितश्रेष्ठः प्रत्यतंदुःसमुर्विभु वि भाति ।}
\text{पदिः प्राची विश्ववारा नमोभि देवाँ ईश्वरा हविष्या धृतान्तः ॥ ऋग्वेद-५.२८.१॥}
\]

In the second Rk, generous nature of Agni, which makes a person wealthy is observed by Viśvavārā:

\[
\text{विश्व से पदे प्राचीय यमिन्य स्वातिर्धम्ये नि च पदे इत्य पुरः ॥ ऋग्वेद-५.२८.२॥}
\]

Viśvavārā in the third Rk, entreats Agni for marital happiness and invokes god Indra to curb and subdue the enemies:
In the last Rk, when the sacrifice is performed she offers prayer to Agni and urges other priests to select Agni with a purpose to offer oblation to Gods:

आ जुहोता दुस्स्यावश्यिं प्रयत्यध्वरे। बृणीध्वं हव्यवाहम्। ऋग्वेद-५.२८.६॥

Indra is the favourite national god of the Rgveda and has the largest number of hymns, nearly 250 i.e. about one-fourth of the total number of hymns of the Rgveda. His physical proportions and powers are almost cosmic. His arms bear the Vajra, his exclusive weapon. As a destroyer of demons he is naturally the favourite god of the battle invoked more often than any other god. An exclusive epithet of Indra is Maghavan (bountiful), because he is so generous to his worshippers.

Thus we observe that God Indra is a bounteous Deity towards his worshippers. Through his generosity God Indra has increased Himself amongst His devotees. At the time of crisis he helps both men and women and therefore he is invoked and addressed with confidence and affection by Apālā. We find a friendly bond of affinity between the God and the devotee in these Rgvedic hymns.

Apālā is the seer of Rgveda (VIII.91). She is the daughter of the famous sage Atri. In her hymns she addresses Indra, the most powerful deity to shower his love on her. For this she began to propitiate Indra who was very fond of Soma. Even though she was learned, she was ignored by her husband because of her skin disease.

The Rks addressed by her to Indra reflects her mental state and misery experienced by her in her life, which inspired her to compose such hymns:

कुविच्छकृः कुवितः करतः कुवित्तो वस्यसत्कर्तः।
कुवित्तो पतिदिव्यो यती रिन्द्रेण संगमामिह॥ ऋग्वेद-४.९१.४॥
According to Sāyana she here asks for physical strength (कुविच्छ कत), growth of the family (कुवितक कत) and worldly gain (कुवितो वस्त्यसक्षरत). In the next two hymns she invokes Indra for the growth of her father’s baldhead, his infertile land and her female organ:

इमानि त्रीणि विद्यया तानीद्रि वि रोहय।
शिरस्तत्स्योर्वरा मादिंद म उपोदरे॥ऋग्भेद-८.९९.५॥

अससी च या न वर्षरा दिमा तन्व मम।
अथो ततस्य यच्छिर: सर्वा ता रोमसा कृषि॥ऋग्भेद-८.९९.६॥

Impressed by her prayers and intelligence, Indra through his generosity blessed her with sun like lustrous skin complexion and made her strong:

खे रथस्य ख्यानसः खे युगस्य शत्रकतो।
अपालागिन्त्र विष्णु। लवकृणो: सूर्यतत्वम॥ऋग्भेद-८.९९.७॥

Aśvins, the twin deities, are morning deities, their connection with light being well established. They are divine physicians with several legends of miraculous cures to their credit.

Ghośā is the seer of Rgveda (X.39-40). Her hymns are addressed to Aśvins.

She was the daughter of Kaksivan and was a Brahmavādinī. As she was suffering from a disease she could not be given in marriage, so she stayed at her father’s place where she became old and was cured of her disease by the favour of the Aśvins.

According to V. G. Rahrurkar “The same fact is corroborated in the hymn (X.39.3) and by Sāyana. The Brhaddevatā (VIII.42-49) adds further details and says that Ghośā became 60 years old, when she still lived in her father’s house and that she became the seer of the hymn (X.39.40).

Ghośā invokes Aśvins to give her wealth and requests them to help her and grant favour on her:
In the ninth and tenth Rk, she asks God Aśvins for a husband and a son, so that she would obtain marital happiness:

In the eighth Rk, too she refers to her great personality, as giving form to all the created worlds beyond the heaven, beyond this earth.

It is thus a philosophical Sūkta, which mentions the experience of realisation of Brahmaciduṣṭi.
The examples of Apālā, Viśvavārā and Ghoṣā prove that the learned and prominent ladies like them were more concerned with family life, conjugal happiness and domestic well being than anything else. These learned ladies were not only aware of the greatness and capabilities of the personages invoked by them but also they were knowing different people saved and helped by these divinities.

These hymns show that the fearless, spirited bold ladies like Viśvavārā, Apālā and Ghoṣā were never depressed in the most critical calamities in their life. In the most miserable condition they came out of the difficult crisis with victory and achievement of the desired objects.

Indra, the mighty National God in the Vedic age is invoked in the 250 numbers of hymns in the Rgveda. In the text studied by me, Indra is glorified in several verses in the compositions Madhurāvijayam, Raghunātha-Abhyudaya and Khāṇḍa kāvyā Vaidyanātha-prāśāda-prāṣasti:  

Gangādevi has depicted the prosperity and celebrated capital city of Vijaynagar of King Bukka in the first two cantos. There she has referred to the riches of Indra and his prosperous city called Amarāvatī.

As described by poetess Gaṅgādevī in the above verses the prosperity of Kubera and Indra, looked insignificant by the side of the prosperity of king Bukka. Also the city Vijaynagar is compared with the city Amarāvatī. Moreover, king Bukka ruled over the city like Indra, ruling
over Amarāvatī. King Kampana too is compared with Indra. Just as Indra was attended by the celestial nymphs, king Kampana was also surrounded by the ladies of his palace.

Likewise, in the composition Raghunātha-Abhyudaya Poetess Rāmabhadrāmbā has beautifully described the city of Tanjore in cantos I & II. She observes that all the Gods including Indra were fond of residing in this city and were performing sacrificial rituals therein:

In the cantos V and VIII the poetess has portrayed the personality of the king Raghunātha comparing him with mighty God Indra:

In cantos VII & VIII king Raghunātha is rightly likened with God Indra due to his impressive personality and great valour:

In the Khaṇḍakāvyya Vaidyanātha-prāśāda-praśāsti Devakumārikā has compared kings like Saṅgrāmsimha and Amarsimha who were as powerful and wealthy as the divine God Indra:

अशोभता सेंगुठामुखेंद्र मतच्छेदीत मदोत्कटेन
ऋग्नु पूर्णे देव पुरीपिन्दो लोकाभिरामा नटवन्द्रायम्
||प्र.प्र. २.५||
In the *Rgveda* the sages have frequently praised the extraordinary wealth belonging to God Indra. Moreover, in the *Rgveda* the gigantic (majestic) personality of Indra is nicely described by these sages:

> राजेव हि जनिभि: क्षेयेवादव चुफिरथि विदुष्कवि: सन्।
> पिशा मिरो मधवन् गोभिरश्च स्त्वायत: शिरोहि राये अस्मान्॥ ऋग्भेद न०.९८.२॥

> शर्त हि सिरिबृहतः विदुष्कवि: सन्।
> वहकां मधवस्य गोभिरश्च स्त्वायत: शिरोहि राये अस्मान्॥ ऋग्भेद न०.२५.२॥

> तवप विश्वस मधवस्य असि शुचो य ई भवत्यायः।
> तत्वादिः विश्व: पुरुस्तरं पार्थिबो उवस्युरां शिष्येत:॥ ऋग्भेद न०.३२.२७॥

He fights against and conquers the enemies with his thunderbolt (*vajra*) and is in general a symbol of generous heroism. He is a god of warriors. He is energetic and violent in action. He is invoked by people to protect them to give them victory on the battlefield to help them in their fight against their enemies.²

Bahadur Radha Kant Dev quotes in *Śabdakalpadruma* (vol. I), description of city Amarāvatī:

> रामचन्द्रनी मनोजालीन कर्तां स्मृयमिशितुः।
> नयनानन्दसन्धायाद्य कुरुनबद्धः नन्दसन्धायाद्य ॥ सक्तपुराण-१०॥

> गणका नाम विवाहते चिन्तामिथबिषाखर:।
> यद्य जनाति सर्वंशा चिन्तामिथिविषेषत:॥ सक्तपुराण-१०॥

> सुपकर्ण न सन्त्यजर सर्वमिथचक्षण:।
> दुर्गास मर्यादानेन कामशुद्धिसोऽविषेषः ॥ सक्तपुराण-१०॥

> ततौन पारिजात: श्रीरामं मोहवशी तिवह।
> नन्दनं बनरलवा रलं नन्दाकिनी झापा ॥ सक्तपुराण-१०॥

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¹ Other verses found in the *Rgveda* are: 7. (27.3; 19.5; 21.6; 31.7)
² Velankar H. D. — page 18, 26
Kubera, the God of riches is mentioned by Poetess Gaṅgādevi and Poetess Rāmabhadrāmbā. City of Madhura is compared with Alakā, the wealthy city of Kubera. Besides, the prosperity of the city Tanjore is reflected in the verse (Raghunātha-Abhyudaya-2.57):

Kubera is also glorified by the celebrated poet Kālidāsa in his Meghadūtam, Kumārasambhavam:

There is a reference to sage Agastya in the Mahākāvyya Madhurāvijayam. As depicted by poetess Gaṅgādevi king Kampana is said to have received the lustrous sword by the great sage Agastya to kill the Yavana ruler:

अथ कालवर्णेः पाण्डववंशयान्तः गतविविधबायाः कुमारसम्भवेः।
मुनेः श्रवणेः भवते प्रेषितवात् महाभाजयाः॥ मधुराविजयम्-७.२५॥

अथायतवर्णेः पाण्डववंशयान्तः गतविविधवायाः कुमारसम्भवेः।
मुनेः श्रवणेः भवते प्रेषितवात् महाभाजयाः॥ मधुराविजयम्-०.२५॥

अथायतवर्णेः पाण्डववंशयान्तः गतविविधवायाः कुमारसम्भवेः।
मुनेः श्रवणेः भवते प्रेषितवात् महाभाजयाः॥ मधुराविजयम्-०.२५॥
Here it is said that just as Agastya gave the weapon to Rāma to kill Rāvana, so this king Kampana was given the weapon by his father king Bukka to kill the wicked Yavana.

In the *Mahākāvyya Raghunāthābhudaya*, sage Agastya is mentioned as *Kumbhajanmā*, being born in pitcher:

अवशिष्यर्मणि यदापनाचिं शूकवान्वदिरदद्भकुम्भजन्माः।
पराधा जलयज्ञाभागधारामुखतो मुखति किं तदम्भु धूयः॥रघुनाथाभयुदयम्-२.२९॥

Story regarding the birth of sage Agastya is found in the text of *Rāmāyaṇa* and *Matsyapurāṇa*:

In the following two verses the prosperity of city Vijaynagar is described. As depicted by the poetess, Goddess Lakṣmī never remembered Lord Viṣṇu, who was in *Yoganidrā*. In the other verse king Bukka as a father

\[\text{References:} \]
\[1 \text{Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa} — \text{Oriental Institute, Vadodara, 1992, page 288}\]
explains his son Kampana that he should act in such a way that the goddess of prosperity does not go away for a moment also:

\[ \text{क्षीष्ठ राजमनी जागरूक मंदे यम्} \]
\[ \text{योगनिर्देश विवेक कदाचिदिव नामसमत ऋषिविजयम् 1.26} \]
\[ \text{तदेव मात्मन्यवधार्य शैयं तत्स्था विषेः भवतापि धीमता} \]
\[ \text{यथेष्टमे कान्तिकला भवदुर्गुणिलभेत लक्ष्मी स्थिरतामनारतम्} \]
\[ \text{रथुराविजयम् 3.37} \]

While in the *Raghunātha-Abhyudaya*, it is said that king Raghunātha struggled hard to attain Royal glory and wealth:

\[ \text{अथ साष्ठीदितिमादुर्योक्तिः विवेच्यो शोभनविशं विशाः पति} \]
\[ \text{सक्तपदादस दशनराथर्वातिमानन्तमेहत रामात समाहित} \]
\[ \text{रथुनाधित्यम् 4.1} \]

In *Ṛgveda* Lakṣmī is said to be *Padmasthitā, Padmavatī, Padmamālinī*.

Lakṣmī or Śrī is the Goddess of fortune, prosperity and beauty regarded as the wife of Viṣṇu. She is said to have sprung from the ocean along with the other precious jewels when it was churned for nectar by the Gods and demons.

In *Śrīṣukta* also we find:

\[ \text{हिरण्यवर्णा हरिणी सुर्वनरुजस्विनाम्} \]
\[ \text{चन्द्रा हिरण्याः लक्ष्मी जातवेदो म आ वह} \]
\[ \text{श्रीसूरकम्} \]
\[ \text{पद्यानने पराचुर पदार्थ पदसंवेदने} \]
\[ \text{तन्ने भजनि पदार्थ चेन सोख्य लक्ष्म्यहम्} \]
\[ \text{श्रीसूरकम् 18} \]
\[ \text{विषुपुली क्षमा देवी माधवी माधवक्रियाम्} \]
\[ \text{लक्ष्मीं प्रियसंखीं भूमि नामायच्छुतसवल्लभाम्} \]
\[ \text{श्रीसूरकम् 25} \]
\[ \text{कौश्लधामणरिवध्य उपन्योगमृतसंध्वन} \]
\[ \text{मरीचिविवक्ष: श्रीमारायणवर्णोगत} \]
\[ \text{महाभारत-आदिपर्व 16.35} \]
\[ \text{श्री: सुरा चैव सोमध मुनयवध धनंजय} \]
\[ \text{यतो देववस्तो जमुरादित्यपथमाधित्य:} \]
\[ \text{महाभारत-आदिपर्व 16.36} \]
\[ \text{तत्तथाविरूद्ध साष्ठीर रमा भगवत्परा} \]
\[ \text{रघुनन्दी दिशा: कान्त्या विद्वृत सौदामनी यथा} \]
\[ \text{भाषा. 8.6.6} \]
In the *Vaidyanātha-prāśada-praśasti* of Devakumārikā, Ṛbhus are referred in the context of donation in the following verse:

\[
\text{तर्येषानुमतोहदत नूपो दानानि कानि च ।}
\]

Besides the higher gods of the Veda there are a number of mythical beings not regarded as having the divine nature fully and originally. The most important of these are the Ṛbhus. They are celebrated in eleven hymns in the *Ṛgveda* and are mentioned by name even a hundred times.¹

Like the higher Gods, they are invoked to give prosperity and wealth:

\[
\text{त आ तक्षणन्वथो रघि नः स्वस्तः स्वपसः सुहस्तः ।}
\]

In the fourth chapter of *Khaṇḍakāvyā Vaidyanātha-prāśada-praśasti*, poetess Devakumārikā, in some five verses, gives the mythological reference of the origin of Cauhāna Dynasty by the grace of Vaśiṣṭha:

\[
\text{रामसिंहन्नी चाहुवन्यश्योद्वन ।}
\]

On seeing the Muni digging the earth with the wooden piece, Indra, by his *Vajra*, made the way:

\[
\text{कांह गृहीत्वच खननामुच्छैं बिलेविच निष्प्रथराजः ।}
\]

Then Vaśiṣṭha Muni requested Himalaya to fill the *Garta* and Himalaya performed his duty. Thereafter, clever Muni Vaśiṣṭha performed *Yajña* to

¹ Macdonell A. A. — page 131
obtain Vira in order to protect the earth:

हिमालय याचितवान् मुनीन्त्रसवद्रत्तपूर्वः स तत्मेकमेव ।
दतेन तेनान्त्वैवर्णं गर्तृपूर्ति विधायाहितकृत्य आसीति ॥४.४.६॥

And suddenly from the fire there came out horrible person who became popular as ‘Cauhana’:

तस्मादकस्मादथ वहिन्दुपात । कुतातन्तुण्डादिव चण्डपूर्वः ।
दोष्णम विश्रमचतुरोवरीणः ख्यातोद्रह तस्माद भुवि चाहुवाणः ॥४.७॥

Conclusion:

We find numerous hymns addressed to the natural forces personified as the deities in the Vedic text. The sages have invoked the deities like Indra, Varuṇa, Aśvins, Sūrya, Viṣṇu, Rudra etc. Likewise the female sages Viśvavārā, Apālā, Ghośā, etc. have offered prayers to the prominent divinities like Agni, Indra, Aśvins in the Rgveda.

Through these hymns, we mainly get to know about the mythological traits of these deities. In the poetry of the Rśikās, however, we also find some glimpses of the contemporary social life, family structure and difficulties generally faced by the lady in those days.

Similar features are also found in the compositions of the ladies belonging to the medieval period. Although these ladies have glorified the gods like Indra, Viṣṇu, Brahmā, Kubera, Rbhus, etc., they have expressed their ardent devotion through ornate poetry. These texts also contain a great deal of Historical, Mythological and Philosophical data.