CHAPTER: II

MAJOR GODS OF PRITHIVISTHANA

NATURALISTIC INTERPRETATIONS

AGNI

The most significant terrestrial deity is Agni, being of primary significance as the personification of the sacrificial fire, which is the centre of the ritual poetry of the Veda. As his name is also the regular designation of fire, the anthropomorphism of his physical appearance is only rudimentary, his bodily parts having a distinct reference to the aspect of terrestrial fire chiefly in the sacrificial aspect. He is butter-backed (RV.V.4.3), butter-faced (RV.III.1.18) and beautiful-tongued (RV.I.14.7). He is butter-haired (RV.VIII.49.2), flame-haired (RV.I.45.6) or tawny-haired (RV.III.2.13) and has a tawny beard (RV.V.7.7). He has sharp (RV.VIII.49.3) or burning jaws (RV.I.58.5), golden (RV.V.2.3) or shining teeth (RV.V.7.4) and iron grinders (RV.X.87.2). He is narrated once as footless and headless (RV.IV.1.11), but elsewhere he is said to possess a burning head (RV.VII.3.1) or three heads and seven rays (RV.I.146.1; II.5.3). He faces in all directions (RV.II.3.1). His tongue is often mentioned (RV.VIII.61.18). He is said to be three-tongued (RV.III.20.2) or seven, his steeds also being seven-tongued. Butter is Agni’s

1.RV (V.4.3):

viṣāṁ kaviṇi viśpātiṁ manusīṁāṁ suḥcinī pāvakaṁ ghṛtapṛṣṭhamagnim
ni hotaram viśvāvidam dadhidhve sa devesu vanate vāryāṁ
eye (RV.III.26.7), he is four-eyed (RV.I.31.13), thousand-eyed (RV.I.79.12) and thousand-horned (RV.VI.1.8). In his hands he provides many gifts for men. Similar to Indra he bears the epithet sahasra-muṣka (8.19.32). Often he is designated as an archer or is compared with an archer (RV.I.70.11), who sharpens his flame like a blade of iron (RV.VI.3.5).

He is often likened to different animals, in most situations doubtless with a view to highlighting his functions rather than denoting his personal form. He is frequently called a bull (RV.I.58.5). He is a strong bull with a mighty neck (RV.V.2.12). He is frequently alluded to when born as a calf (vatsa). He is likened to or straight-forwardly called a steed (RV.I.149.3; VI.12.6). The tail which he agitates like a horse (RV.II.4.4) is no doubt his flame. Sacrificers lead (RV.III.2.7), agitate and put him in dynamic motion like a horse (RV.VII.7.1). He is kindled like a horse that brings the Gods (RV.III.27.14).

Agni in addition is like a bird and is the eagle of the sky (RV.VII.15.4) and a divine bird (RV.I.164.52). In the habitat of water he resembles the aquatic bird ‘hamsa’ (RV.I.65.9). He is winged (RV.I.58.5; II.2.4), his course is a flight (RV.VI.3.7; 4.6) and he darts with rapid flight to the Gods (RV.X.6.4). He is once described as a raging serpent (RV.I.79.1).

Agni is often compared with inanimate objects. Similar to the sun he resembles gold (RV.II.2.4; VII.3.6). He resembles or is directly called a car (RV.III.11.5), as bringing riches (RV.I.58.3; III.15.5) or as being formidable in battle (RV.I.66.6). He is conceived of as a car guided by others, for he is conducted to the sacrifice like a laden car (RV.X.176.3). He is even compared to wealth (RV.I.58.6; 60.1) or to wealth acquired by inheritance (RV.I.73.1). Wood (RV.II.7.6) or ghee (RV.VII.3.1) is his food; liquid butter is his beverage (RV.II.7.6; X.69.2). He receives his nourishment by ghee poured
into his mouth (RV.III.21.1). He eats and chews the forests with sharp tooth (RV.I.143.5) or eats and darkness them with his tongue (RV.VI.60.10; X.79.2). He is all devouring (RV.VIII.44.26). He is nourished thrice in a day (RV.IV.12.1). Often he is considered as the mouth and the tongue through which the Gods eat the sacrifice (RV.II.1.13; 14) and his conflagrations are considered as spoons with which he besprinkles or honours the Gods (RV.I.76.5; X.6.4). Though the routine offerings to him are fuel or butter, he is frequently invited to drink the “Soma” juice (RV.I.14.10; 19.9; 21.1.3; II.36.4). In one hymn he is called Somagopā, ‘Guardian of Soma’ (RV.X.45.5, 12).

Agni’s luminescence is naturally much dwelt upon. He has brilliant luster (RV.II.10.2), brilliant-flamed (RV.VI.10.3), bright-flamed (RV.VII.15.10), clear-flamed and bright-coloured (RV.I.140.1; V.2.3). He has a golden form (RV.IV.3.1; X.20.9). He shines like the sun (RV.I.149.3). His luster is like the rays of the dawn and the sun and like the lightning of the rain-cloud (RV.X.91.4, 5). He shines even at night (RV.V.7.4). Like the sun with his rays he dispels the darkness (RV.VIII.43.32). He devastates darkness and views through the gloom of the night (RV.I.94.5; VII.9.2). Incandescent Agni opens the gate of darkness (RV.III.5.1). The earth enveloped in darkness and the sky becomes visible with the birth of Agni (RV.X.88.2). As he is kindled at dawn and is the only individual God who is described as ‘waking at dawn’, Usarbudh.

Driven by the wind he accelerates through the wood (RV.I.58.4,5), pervades the forests and shears the hairs of the earth (RV.I.65.8), shaving the earth as a barber a beard (RV.X.142.4).
Agni conflagrates upwards (RV.VI.15.2). Driven by the wind his flames shoot in the sky (RV.VIII.43.4). His smoke waves and his flame cannot be seized (RV.VIII.23.1). His red smoke go heavenwards (RV.VII.7.33; 16.3). He touches the ridge of heaven with his crest and mixes with the rays of the sun (RV.VII.2.1). He encompasses heaven with his tongue (RV.VIII.61.18) and reaches out to the flood of heaven, to the waters in the bright space above and below the sun (RV.III.22.3). The Agni of “Divodāsa” spread along mother earth towards the Gods and stood on the ridge of the sky (RV.VIII.92.2). ‘Smoke-bannered’ (dhumaketu) is a frequent epithet specifically connected with Agni. His flames are like the roaring waves of the sea (RV.I.44.12). His sound is like the Wind or the thunder of the Heaven (RV.V.25.8; VII.3.6). He roars like the thundering “Dyaus” (RV.X.45.4) or “Parjanya” (RV.VIII.91.5) or a lion (RV.III.2.11).

Agni is borne on a lightning car (RV.III.14.3), on a car that is luminous (RV.I.140.1), bright (RV.I.141.12), incandescent (RV.V.1.11), luminescent (X.1.5), golden (IV.1.8) or beautiful (RV. IV.2.4). For he is a charioteer (RV.I.25.3) of the sacrifice (RV.X.92.1) with his steeds he brings the Gods on his car (RV.III.6.9). He fetches Varuṇa to the offering, Indra from the sky, the Maruts from the air (RV.X.70.11).

The divergent accounts given of the births of Agni are not inconsistent, because they refers to different places of origin. His daily terrestrial birth by friction from the two “aranis” or “fire sticks” is often referred to (RV.III.29.2;23.2.3;VII.1.1;X.7.9). In this context they are his parents, the upper being the male and the lower the female (RV.III.29.3). They are his mothers, for he is said to have two mothers (RV.I.31.2). The two sticks produce him as a new-born infant, who is difficult to catch (RV.V.9.3-4). The living God takes birth from dry wood (RV.I.68.2). The newborn child after
taking birth devours the parents (RV.X.79.4). He is born of a unsuckling mother (RV.X.115.1). Men are said to have generated him by this friction (RV.I.60.3; IV.1.1; VII.1.1), the ten maidens that produce him (RV.I.95.2) being the ten fingers engaged in twirling the upright drill, which is the upper Arani. Agni is often called the ‘son of strength’ due to the powerful friction required to generate it. This explanation is supported by a passage of the Rig Veda which states that Agni rubbed with strength is produced by men on the surface of the earth. Being produced every morning for the sacrifice Agni appropriately receives the very frequent epithet, exclusively related to him, of ‘youngest’. His new births are opposed to his old (RV.III.1.20). Becoming aged he is reborn again as a youth (II.4.5).

In this sense he is eternal youth and does not age (RV.I.128.2), his new light being similar to his old (RV.VI.16.11). Like some other Gods, Agni is also spoken of as simply ‘Young’. Simultaneously he is old. No sacrificer is older than Agni (RV.V.3.5), for he conducted the first sacrifice, (RV.III.15.4). He shone forth after former dawns (RV.I.44.10), and the role played by Agni in the ancestral sacrifices is frequently referred to (RV.VIII.43.13). Therefore he is sometimes in the same passage paradoxically called both ‘ancient’ and “very young: (RV.X.4.1-2). More generally Agni is spoken of as born in wood (RV.VI.3.3; X.79.7), as the plant embryo (RV.II.1.14; III.1.13) or as distributed in plants (RV.X.1.2). Being called the ‘naval of the earth’, his

2. RV (X.79.4):

\[ \text{tadvamrtaṁ rodaȳ pr̄a vravimī jāyamāno mātarā garbho atti |} \\
\text{nāhāṁ devasya martyāśchiketāgnirāṅga vichetāḥ sa prachetāḥ ||} \\
\text{Sayana’s Commentary on RV (X.79.4):} \\
\text{he rodaȳ dyāvāṛthavoyā vām yuvāṁ tat ṛtāṁ satyāṁ pr̄a vravimī} \\
\text{yadaranībhāyāṁ jāyamānaḥ utpannaḥ garbhaḥ garbhaśthāniyo’ignīḥ mātarā araṇī atti bhakṣayati ||} \]
terrestrial form is indicated (RV.I.59.2). This concept appears, in the several passages in which it is present, to allude to the receptacle of the sacrificial Agni on the excavated altar or "Vedi". He is the descendent of the "dhanu" or cloud-island (RV.I.144.5; X.4.5) and to be the brilliant thunder residing in the bright space (RV.VI.6.2). In such passages the lightning form of Agni must have been implied. The procurement of fire by man is considered as a gift of the Gods as well as a production of "Matariśvān" and hence Agni's frequent epithet of 'guest(atithi) of men' may allude to the same notion (RV.V.1.9).

Agni as identified with sun, for the conception of the Sun as a form of Agni is an unquestioned Vedic belief. Aitareya brāhmaṇa remarks that the setting sun enters into Agni and is produced from him.

Owing to diverse births, Agni is referred to as having a triple character. Agni has three fold births (RV.I.95.3; IV.1.7). The Gods made him threefold (RV.X.88.10). He is three fold light (III.26.7), has three heads (RV.I.146.1), three tongues, three bodies, three stations (RV.III.20.2). The epithet 'triṣadhasṭha', denoting 'having three stations' is predominantly connected with Agni, and the only passage in which the word 'tripastya' denoting 'having three dwellings' (RV.VIII.39.8), is an attribute of Agni. The sequence of Agni's abodes are heaven, earth and waters (RV.VIII.44.16; X.2.7; 46.9). The terrestrial Agni occurs first, being born in houses, at the base of great heaven, in the womb of this atmosphere (RV.IV.1.11). Yāska in Nirukta (7.28) states that his predecessors 'Śākapūṇi' considered the three

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3. Yaska's Nirukta (7.28):

stomena hi dīvi devāsagnimājañanaśchakhaṁ bhūt ṛodasīprām ||
tamū akṛyavānśreṣṭhā bhuve kaṁ sa osadhitā pachati visvarūpāḥ ||
stomena hi yaṁ dīvi devā agnimajanayan śaktiṁ bhūtāh karmabhir dhāvāpathivyoḥ
ā pūrāṇaṁ | tamakuvaṁ śreṣṭhābhāvāya | prthivyāmantarikṣe divitī śākapūṇiḥ ||
fold existence of Agni referred to in (RV.X.88.10) as being in earth, air and heaven, and in Nirukta 12.19 Agni’s third manifestation, which is in heaven, is considered to be the Sun. This three dimensional nature of Agni so vividly recognized in the Rig Veda was probably the prototype not only of the posterior triad of Sun, wind, fire (RV.VIII.18.19), which is considered as distributed in the three worlds (RV.X.158.1; AV.IV.39.2), but also of the triad of Sun, Indra, fire which though not Rig Vedic is still ancient.

On the basis of the two-fold division of the Universe into heaven and earth, Agni in several passages is considered to have two births, being the only single God, spoken of as ‘Dvijaman’ (RV.I.140^2; 60.1^149.2; 149.2,3).

From a different standpoint, Agni is considered to have multiple births (RV.X.5.1). This multiplicity is chiefly attributed to the various fires kindled on terrestrial altars. For Agni is very frequently said to abide in every family, house or abode (RV.IV.6.8; 7.1, 3; RV.V.1.5,6.8). He is produced in many

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4. RV (1.140.2):  
abhī dvijamā dvābyāmaṇātrājyate saṃvatsare vārvāhe jagdhāmi punah |  
anyasāśa jihvāyā jenyo vṛṣā nya’nyena vanino mṛṣṭa vārṣaḥ ||

Sāyana’s Commentary on RV (1.140.2): 

dvijamā dvābyāmaṇātrājyate saṃvatsare vārvāhe jagdhāmi punah |  
anyasāśa jihvāyā jenyo vṛṣā nya’nyena vanino mṛṣṭa vārṣaḥ ||

5. RV (1.60.1):  
vahini yasasarṇi vahini yasasarṇi yadma yadvyāramsām sadyoarthaḥ |  
dvijamānaṁ rayimiva praśastam rātim bharadbhṛgave mātarisvā |

Sāyana’s Commentary on RV (1.60.1):  
vahini yasasarṇi vahini yasasarṇi yadma yadvyāramsām sadyoarthaḥ |  
dvijamānaṁ rayimiva praśastam rātim bharadbhṛgave mātarisvā |

6. RV (X.5.1):  
ekaḥ samudraḥ dharuṇo rayināmsmaddhṛdo bhūrījanmā vi chaṣte |  
sisktīyaḥdhānamoryupastaḥ utṣasya madhye niḥitaṁ padaṁ vēḥ ||

Sāyana’s Commentary on RV (X.5.1):  
ekaḥ samudraḥ yasmatdhanānyuddhākāni vā samudravantīḥ tūḍrāḥ rayīṁāṁ |  
dhanānaṁ dharuṇāṁ dharāyitā ekāḥ asahāyāḥ bhūrījanmā |  
vahuvīdhaoṅanāṁ nāṇāyaṁśvāhāvanyaṁśvāhāvāvina vahuvīdhaoṅanāṁ so’gniḥ asmat ||
places (RV.III.54.19) and has many forms of the body (RV.X.98.10). Scattered in several places, he is one and the same king (RV.III.55.4); though kindled in many places he is one.

Agni is intimately connected with human life than any other God. His attachment with men’s dwelling is affectionate. He is the only God with whom the epithet ‘gṛhapati’, ‘lord of the house’ is applied. He dwells in every abode (RV.VII.15.2), never leaving his home (RV.VIII.49.19). The attribute ‘domestic’ (damūnas) is usually linked to him (RV.I.60.4). This household deity probably represents an old order of ideas; for in the later elaborate ritual of the three sacrificial fires, the one from which the other two (the ‘āhavaniya’ or eastern and the ‘dakṣina’ or southern) were taken, is designated as the ‘gāṛhapatya’ or that which belongs to ‘gṛhapati’.

He is in addition constantly considered a ‘guest’ (atithi) in human abodes. He is a guest in every house (RV.X.91.2), the first guest of settlers (RV.V.8.2). For he is an immortal (a term frequently applied to Agni than to any other God), who has started taking his abode among mortals (RV. VIII.60.1). He has been established or settled among human habitations (RV III.5.3; IV.6.2). It is the domestic Agni who caused mortals to settle (RV III.1.17). He is a leader (RV III.2.5) and a protector of settlers (RV I.96.4) and the epithet ‘viśpati’, ‘lord of settlers’ is mainly associated with him.

Hence Agni has been designated as the closest kinsman of men (RV. VII.15.1; VIII.49.10), or simply as a Kinsman (RV. I.26.3) or a friend (RV. I.75.4). He is very commonly narrated as a father (RV. VI.15), sometimes also as a brother (RV.VIII.43.16; X.7.3) and even as a son (RV.II.1.9) or mother (RV.VI.15) of his worshippers. Such terms seem to point to an ancient order of things, when Agni was less sacrificial and as the core of domestic life, created an affectionate relationship such as is not easily observed in the
worship of other Gods. The steady presence of Agni in the house would naturally link him more nearly than any other God with the worshipper.

He is characteristically called a messenger due to the fact that he is familiar with the paths and conveys the sacrifice (RV.I.72.7) and goes on the paths leading both to the Gods (RV.X.98.11) and to earth (RV.VIII.7.2). Agni has been appointed by the Gods (RV.V.8.6) and by men (RV.X.46.10) to be an oblation-messenger (havya-vah or vāhana).

In consequence of his prime function in the Veda of officiating at the sacrifice, Agni is celebrated as the divine counterpart of the earthly priesthood. He is therefore generically specified as the ‘Priest’ (ṛtvij, vipra) or specifically as the domestic priest (purohita) and constantly, more frequently in fact than by any other name, the ‘offerer’ (hotṛ) or chief priest, who has dual qualities as a poet and spokesman in one. He is a hotṛ appointed by men (RV.VIII.49.1; X.7.5) and by Gods (RV.VI.16.1).

He is the most adorable, the most eminent of Hotṛs (RV.X.2.1; 91.8). He is also termed an adhvaryu (RV.III.5.4) and (like Brhaspati, Soma and Indra) a Brahman or worshipping priest (RV.IV.9.4). Agni’s priesthood is the most salient feature of his character. He is in fact the great priest just as Indra is the great warrior. Agni is a seer (ṛṣi) as well as a priest (RV.IX.66.20). He is kindled as an eminent seer (RV.III.21.3); he is the most gracious seer (RV.VI.14.2); he is the first seer Angiras (RV.I.31.1). He is the divine one (asura) among the sages (RV.III.3.4). He is “all-knowing” (Viśvavid) and the epithets “possessed of all knowledge” (viśvedas), “Sage” (Kavi) and “possessing the intelligence of a sage” (kavikratu) are predominantly attributed to him.
He exclusively bears the epithet “jātavedas” which occurs upwards of 120 times in the Rig Veda and is there (RV.VI.15.13) explained as meaning “he who knows all generations” (viśvā veda janimā). He is conversant with the divine ordinances and the generations’ men (RV.I.70.1, 3). He is omniscient and views all creatures (RV.III.55.10; X.187.4) and perceives the invocations addressed to him (RV.VIII.43.23). Agni is also a producer of wisdom (RV.VIII.91.8). Wisdom and prayers originate from him (RV.IV.11.3). He is an inspirer (RV.X.46.5), an inventor of brilliant speech (RV.II.9.4), the first inventor of prayer (RV.VI.6.1). He is also full of eloquence and a melodious singer (jaritr).

Agni is a divine (asura) monarch (samrāj), strong as Indra (RV.VII.6.1). His greatness surpasses that of mighty heaven (RV.I.59.5). He is greater than heaven and earth (RV.III.6.2; X.88.14), than all the worlds, which he occupied when he took birth (RV.III.3.10).

He is superior to all the other Gods in greatness (RV.I.68.2). All the Gods are afraid and pay homage to him when he resides in darkness (RV.VI.9.7). He is celebrated and worshiped by Varuṇa, Mitra, the Maruts and all the Gods (RV.III.9.8; 14.4; X.69.9).

7. RV (VI.15.13):
agnirhota gṛhapatiḥ sa rāje viśvā veda janimā jātavedāḥ 1
devānāmuta yo martyānāṁ yajisthāḥ sa pra yajatāṁrātāvā iew
APAḥ

The water, Apaḥ is lauded in four hymns of the RV (VII.47; 49; X.9;30), as well as in a few scattered verses. Apaḥ is also invoked in many detached verses along with other deities. Apaḥ is goddess who bestows boons and comes to the sacrifice and follows the path of the gods (RV.VII.47.3).

In the Rig Veda VII.47 the Goddess Apaḥ meaning water is invoked by the seer Vasistha in the Tristup Metre. Waters, the Goddess of heaven which Indra drinks, which comes out of the earth, which is as good as Soma juice, which is pure, free from sin, which is sweet like juice of Soma – we, worshippers too will drink. We, worshippers, solicit you today waters that pure, faultless, rain shedding, sweet-essence of the earth which devout have first consecrated as the beverage of Indra. RV.VII.47.1

Water is the first creation. RV.X.82.1 states that Viśvakarman first engendered the waters and then heaven and earth floating on the waters. In the Nasadiya sukta (RV.X.129.3), the water has been regarded as the first principle:

‘Darkness there was, at first concealed in darkness, this all was indiscriminated chaos which was nothing but water. All that existed then was void and formless; by the great power of warmth was born that unit’ (RV. X. 129.3)-Griffith.

In the Hiraṇyagarbha-sukta (RV.X.121.7,8), it is stated that the mighty waters contained the universal germ producing Agni, then sprang God’s one spirit into being. He surveyed the waters around him containing productive

8. RV.VII.47.1 :
   āpo yani vah prathamanī devayanta indrapañah gumir maṇkravatelaḥ |
   tan vah āchumīrī ṣuchimaripramadaya ghṛtapraṣamā ṣadhumantāṁ vanema ||

9. RV.X.121.7 :
   āpo ha yadvatitrīśvamāyaṇ āgarbhami dadhānā janaṇaḥīragniṇī |
   tato devānāṁ samavartataśuraḥ kasmāi devaya haviṣā vidhema ||
force. He is the one god among all gods. Agni is often described as dwelling in the waters. He is said to have entered into them (RV.VIII.49.4). As mothers they produce Agni (RV.X.91.6), one of whose forms is called ‘Son of Waters’. The waters are mothers (RV.X.17, 10; I.23.16), who are the wives of the world, equal in age and origin (RV.X.30,10). They are bestowed to give their auspicious fluid like loving mothers (RV.X.9.2). They are most motherly, the producers of all that is fixed and moves (RV.VI.50.7). They are the mothers of all beings (RV.I.23.10).

The waters cleanse and purify. These goddesses bear away defilement. They are even invoked to cleanse from moral guilt, the sins of violence, curing and lying (RV.I.23.22; X.9.8). They are remedial (RV.VI.50.7), bestowing remedies and long life, for all remedies, immortality and healing are contained in them (RV.X.9.5,7; I.23.19-21). They dispose of boons and wealth and bestow excellent strength and immortality (RV.X.9.5; 30.12). Their blessing and aid is often implored (RV.VII.47.4; 49.1-4) and they are invited to seat themselves along with the Son of waters on the sacrificial grass at the offering of the Soma-priest (RV.X.30.14, 15).

The waters are several times associated with honey. As mothers they mix their milk with honey (RV.I.23.16). The wave of the waters is rich in honey; dripping with ghee it became the drink of Indra, whom it exhilarated (RV.VII.47.1, 2). Apam napat is besought to give waters rich in honey, by which Indra grew to heroic strength (RV.X.30.4). The waters are invoked to pour the wave, rich in honey and gladdening the gods, for Indra who released them from confinement; the wave which intoxicates, the draught of Indra, which is produced in the sky (RV.X.30.7-9). These passages appear to show that sometimes at least the celestial waters were regarded as containing or
identical with the heavenly Soma, the beverage of Indra. In other passages the waters used in preparing the terrestrial Soma seem to be meant.

Indra armed with the bolt dug out a channel for them (RV.VII.47.4; 49.1), and they never infringe his ordinances (RV.VII.47.3). They are also said to be under the commands of Savitṛ. They are celestial, as well as flowing in channels and have the sea for their goal (RV.VII.49.2). It is implied that they abide where the gods are and the seat of Mitra and Varuna is (RV.X.30.1). They are beside the sun and the sun is with them (RV.I.23.17). King Varuna moves in their midst, looking down on the truth and falsehood of men (RV.VII.49.3). In such passages at least, the rain-waters much be meant. But the Naighantuka (5.3) enumerates the waters among the terrestrial deities only.

The divine waters, the purifiers of many gratifying men with food pursue the paths of the God. They impede not the sacred rights of Indra. The rains, the cosmic waters whom the sun vaporized by his rays fall on this earth as rains. Indra has thus opened this path to bestow upon us wealth and also ever cherish us with blessings. This is the geographical phenomenon which causes rains to the earth from the clouds pierced by the thunderbolt of Indra (RV.VII.47.4)¹⁰

The waters which proceed from the heaven purifying all things whom Indra sent forth by the thunder stroke protect this earth like the Goddess. May the waters of the sky flow on this earth that have sprung up spontaneously and these waters go to the ocean. Those divine waters may protect me on this

¹⁰. RV.VII.47.4 :

yāh sūryo raśmibhirātatāna yābhya indre araddgātumūrmini
te sindhavo varivo dhūtānā no yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sadā nah
earth. The king of those waters is Varuṇa who passes in the middle sphere, who discriminates truth and falsehood of mankind. Those sweet and pure showers of waters may protect me on this earth.

In those divine waters the king varuṇa, Soma and other Gods delight to receive the sacrificial food. In these waters the God Agni Vaiśvānara has entered. Such divine waters protect me on this earth (RV.VII.49.4). 

In the Sukta IX of the Maṇḍala X refers to happiness, enjoyment and delightful living of the worshippers, the blessings of Āpāḥ-goddess bring our progeny for our happiness in the family. The divine waters invigorates us. These waters are for our health and safety. Their light our medicines; they are benefactors of the universe. These waters are granters of habitation of man. So water-goddess grants us all happiness, food and abode, disease dispelling medicine, health and vigour, progeny and purity of life.

Waters are the sources of our happiness. She should allow us to partake in this world of her most auspicious juice like affectionate mothers (RV.X.9.1). 

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11. RV.VII.49.4:

yāsu rājā varuṇo yāsu somo viśve devā yāsūrjaṁ madanti |
vaśvānaro yāsvagnīḥ pravistastā āpo devirīha māmavantu ||

12. RV.X.9.1:

āpo hi-sthā mayobhuvasta na ārdhve dadhātana |
mahe ranāya chakṣase ||

Śāyana’s Commentary on RV.X.9.1:

hi yasmāt kāraṇāt āpah yā yūyam mayobhuvah sukhasya bhāvayitryah sya bhavatha tāh 
tādṛṣṭo yūyam 'nah asmān ुrje annāya dadhātana dhattaḥ annaprāptiyogyānasmān kuruta| 
annamasmabhyaṁ dattetyarthah | mahe mahete ranāya ramanīyaṁ chakṣase 
darśanāya samyagijñānāya cha dhatta | asmān samyagijñānāṁ prati yogyān kurutietyarthah||
We shall quickly go to her for removing our sin by which she gladdens us. We go to the goddess in those houses where she invigorates us by drinks. The waters in our abodes fill up with delights. In the houses where the goddess waters stay give us food and drinks as well as we can take regular ablution (RV.X.9.3)\(^{13}\).

The worshippers propitiate the goddess waters so that she may flow around us and she may confer health and safety to us (RV.X.9.4)\(^{14}\). The goddess waters are the sovereigns of the treasures that she grants to man. The worshippers also solicit medicine to remove infirmities (RV.X.9.5).

Soma and Agni, the benefactor of the universe also dwell in waters. The waters are invoked to bring perfection for the good body. Waters take away all sins, all my wrong deeds, untruth, slurs thrown to holy man and so one(RV.X.9.6).

When the worshippers enter into waters for a bath they meet Agni in the waters who make them full of vigour. In the khila or supplementary verse it is also said that the sage invoked for the protection; the divine waters of excellent wisdom discharging their functions flowing by day and flowing by night.

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13. RV.X.9.3:
\[
\text{tasmā arani gamāma vo yasya kṣayāya jinvathā}
\]
\[
\text{āpo janayathā cha naḥ ||}
\]

14. RV.X.9.4:
\[
\text{sāṁ no devīrābhīṣṭaya āpo bhavantu pīaye}
\]
\[
\text{sāṁ yorabhīṣravantu naḥ ||}
\]
In the maṇḍala X sukta 30, waters are invoked by the sage Kavaṣa-Ailuṣa. In the sacrifice where Soma-juice is pressed and poured, the worshippers pray to Soma to approach the celestial water like the celerity of mind. For, to prepare food for Mitra and Varuṇa in the sacrifice requires waters. The priests also proceed to the water for preparing libation, like red-hawk descending from the clouds. Priests go to the waters, to reservoir to worship the grand-son of the water with oblation. They may give consecrated waters and sweet flavoured Soma. Apāṁ-napāt is said to be the grand son of water. He who shines without fuel in the midst of waters, he whom the pious worships at sacrifices, the grand-son of waters give us those sweet water by which Indra is elevated to heroism (RV.X.30.4).

The waters are like elegant, young and damsels which Soma sports and delights. Such waters should be sprinkled over the plants. The priests should give Indra the sweet-flavoured and God exhilarating mixture who has liberated waters from the enveloped clouds (RV.X.30.7).

The waters are invoked to send forth rivers, the sweet flavoured beverage to Indra. The beverage which is mixed with butter adorable at sacrifice. The priests should send rivers to the sacrifice where Indra waits to take the waves of beverage. These waters are generated in the firmament spreading through the three worlds flowing amidst the vessels of sacrifices.

The risi praise the waters falling in many showers flowing to mix with the Soma. Waters rule over the riches, they support good fortune, pious rites and immortality. The river Sarasvati bestows all these opulence on him who praises waters. These waters coming to the sacrifice give us butter, water, Soma juice etc.

This opulent and life sustaining waters have come to the sacrifice, friendly priests make them sit down on the green grass. The waters have come
to the sacred grass wishing to satisfy the Gods, have sat down at the sacrifice; they also bring Soma for Indra (RV.X.30.15).

**PRITHIVI**

Prithivi is considered in the Vedas as a terrestrial God or ‘Prithivisthāna devatā’ which emerges from its name. In the vast realm of Rig Veda we find only one sukta comprising of three verses only. It is in the fifth mandala of the Rig Veda where the seer Atreya Bhouma describes the naturalistic features of the Goddess thus—

Prithivi sustains the fracture or opening of the clouds and mahnā jinosi bhūmim, Prithivi delight the earth with great or abundant rain (RV.V.84.1)

Wanderer in various ways Prithivi’s worshippers hymn Prithivi with sacred songs; Prithivi who bright-hued, tosses the swollen (cloud) like a neighing horse (RV.V.84.2)

You who, with solid earth sustain by your strength the forest lords, when the showers of your cloud fall from the shining sky (RV.V.84.3)

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15. RV.V.84.1:

valitthā parvatānāṁ khidraṁ vibharṣi prthivi |
pra yā bhūmui pravatvati mahnā jinosi mahini ||

16. RV.V.84.2:

stomasastvā vicharini prati stobhantyakpubhiḥ |
pra yā vājarāṁ na heśantarī perumasyayarjuni ||

17. RV.V.84.3:

drdhā chidyā vanaspatinksmaya dardharsyojasā |
yatte abhrasya vidyuto divo varsanti vrstayah ||

Sayana’s commentary on RV.V.84.3:

he prthivi yā tvarī dṛḍhā chīt | dṛḍhāṣa kṣmayā bhūmyā |
saha vanaspatīn vrksān ojasaṁ valena dardharṣi dhārayasi |
The meaning of ‘Prithivi’ is a broad one and the poet of the Rig Veda (RV.II.15.2) alludes to the etymology when he says that Indra upheld the earth (‘Prithivi’) and spread it out (‘paprathat’). The TS (Taittiriya Samhita) and TB (Taittiriya Brähmana) in narrating of the origin of the earth, explicitly derived the name of Prthivi from the root, ‘prath’,- ‘to firm’, because she is firmly steeped.

The Prithvi being generally celebrated conjointly with Dyaus, is lauded alone. When mentioned with Dyaus, Prithivi frequently receives the epithet of ‘mother’, not only of terrestrial creatures but of the gods also. In a funeral hymn of the Rig Veda the earth is narrated to be a gentle mother accepting her dead son into her bosom, conserving him from dissolution. The imagery is but meager, the traits of the goddess being primarily those of the physical earth. According to the Rig Veda, she extols in heights, suffers the load of the mountains and is the benefactor of the forests in the ground-(‘kṣma’). She enriches the soil, for she scatters rain and the heavenly showers, which descend from the lightnings’ of her cloud. She is magnanimous-(‘mahī’), firm (‘dṛḍha’) and dazzling - (‘arjuni’).

The second verse of this hymn, the reputed Prayer of the Earth, is of the most beautiful hymns of the Veda. The earth is here called not Prithivi but ‘bhūmi’. This hymn denotes the universal mother, despair of every sort of

18. RV.II.15.2:

avarteṣ dyāmastaḥbhāyadvṛhantuṁrodasī aprṇadantarikṣarī
daḥrayat prthivinī paprathachacha somasyā-tā mada āndraschakāra ||

Sāyana’s Commentary on RV.II.15.2:

vṛhantuṁ mahat antarikṣarirodasī dyāvāprthivyoyoi cha aprṇat svatejasā pūritavān | kineha sah
indraḥ prthivinī vistirnāṁ bhūmīṁ dhārayat adhārayat | tathā paprathachacha eriṁṁ
bhūmimaprathyayaṁ |
God. It presents a noticeable cosmogenic and the anthropological order. The origin of the earth came first. When she was enclosed in a fluid state in the bosom of the primeval waters, the seers are already seeking it’s discern her by means of sacrifice.

A visual description of Prithvi is presented thus. The earth is constituted of hills and plains, of snow-clad peaks, of deserts, oceans and rivers, of lakes and streams, trees and plants, rocks and stones. The seasons appear routinely and bring to her their own transitions of climate. An account of her fragrance which is described distinctly is also included therein which emanates from plants, water, the lotus, animals, human beings or even from the Gods.

Earth is the abode of people. It is upon her that the genesis of humans took place. It is upon her that they make merry and find their cheerfulness. It is she who differentiates Men’s tongues into different languages. It is upon her many paths that men and women pass to and fro and it is her highways that men use for their wagons and chariots.

The earth is taken care of by the Gods, she is the source of Agni, Universal Fire and the site where men offer rituals and sacrifices. It is upon her bosom that men build their altars and design their tabernacles and shelters. It is in whose adoration priests chant their hymns. The earth points beyond herself by means of the cultic acts of Gods and Men.

The wonderful exposition of the Goddess Prithivi achieved excellence in the Prithivi Sukta of Atharvaveda 12.1. The very first verse of the sukta states that whatever we are or what ever we will be is determined by the Goddess Prithivi. Our earthly life starts with the austerities of Brahmacharja and by initiation to the sacrifices which results to Rta and Satya. The third verse says that the earth is girdled by the oceans and man cultivates the land
for Anna. The sage Atharva propounds his Prithivi Sukta in Sounaka Samhitā in the light of the sage Atri. The world stands fixed on its feet with its greatness and truth, initiation in sacrifice and rituals, penance and thought of the great-these are the causes of fixity of the earth on its soil (AV.12.1.1)\textsuperscript{19}. It contains ocean and Sindhu (Seven-seas), the reservoirs of waters by which the ploughmen produce food, on which we thrive with respiration. This land gives us the first right of drinking waters. This earth is the resort of golden heritage of our ancestors. Our ancestors have performed all their duties from birth to death, the gods turned the directions of Asuras from this place to another place, the place which is the resort of birds–let that earth sends her vigour within us (AV.12.1.8).\textsuperscript{20}

The earth which rears up universal beings, which is the source of light, which establishes everything, which has golden breast, which carries the god Vaisvanara in her – let her give fire in us. Her ocean is the waters of wisdom. The sages whom they follow secretly, the earth which has a hearth of nectar, wide canopy of the sky is covered by truth – that earth may establish us with vigour, strength and in great state. Let the mountains give us happiness. Black, red and tawny earth which takes the universal form, which is protected by Indra and which is eternal-on that soil let the sage be established with unconquerable, unhurt and undying state of health. The sage Atharvan superimposes motherhood on this earth whom he deems as his mother. He also says that he is the son of his mother.

\textsuperscript{19} AV.12.1.1:

\begin{verbatim}
satyaṁ vr̥taṁ ugraṁ dīkṣā tapo brahma yajñāḥ prthiviṁ dhārayanti |
sā no bhutasya bhavyasya patnya uruṁ lokaṁ prthiṁ vahāṁ kṣotu //
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{20} AV.12.1.8:

\begin{verbatim}
yārṇaṁ dhi salilāṁ agra āśīrd yāṁ māyābhīṁ anvaacharāṁ manīśināṁ |
yasyāḥ hṛdayāṁ paramē vamāṁsatyanāvratāṁ amṛtaṁ prthivyāḥ |
sā no bhumis tviśi valaṁ rāṣṭre dadhātūtame //
\end{verbatim}
The god of rains called Parjanya is his father (AV12.1.12)\textsuperscript{21}. Let this earth satisfy us. The earth is the place of sacrifice where Viśvakarma places fire on the altars (AV.12.1.13)\textsuperscript{22}. The fire of sacrifice may be increased the mortals are born in you and move in you. The earth bears two-footed and four-footed being. The earth is the resort of great strength that is why you have become great, your force is great, the great Indra protects with care.

The earth wears dresses of fire but her lap is green. The earth endures all sorrows and sufferings resembling fire but for her son she is cool and calm. These two characteristics have been visualized by the sage Atharvan.

The earth sends honey in us; she makes all people flowing with milk. The essence of the earth lays in the male members, love in the females, luster in the boys which also prevails in horse and heroes, which also shines in the Vergins, oh! Earth, you make us fried (jārita), so that nobody may become jealous. This earth turns into stones and pebbles have become dusts. The sun embraces this earth with the golden chest. The sun makes the earth ‘Hiranyavakṣā’, i.e. lady of golden chest by his golden rays (AV.12.1.26)\textsuperscript{23}.

This earth which is embodiment of pardon, the earth which is enlarged by the meditation of the great god, you, carries process and growth and sharer of food and flow of light. Let us sit before you oh! Earth, you pure water may spring over our body, the sediments of which may be poured on our wastes. Oh! Earth by purification I make my self purified for our upward goal.

\textsuperscript{21.} AV.12.1.12: \vspace{10pt}

dōtā bhūmiḥ putro aham prthivyāḥ |
parjanyāḥ pitā sa u naḥ pitārtu ||

\textsuperscript{22.} AV.12.1.13: \vspace{10pt}
yasyāṁ vedīṁ parighṛntanti bhūmyāṁ yasyāṁ yajñāṁ tanvate viśvakarmānāṁ |
yasyāṁ miyante svaravāṁ prthivyāṁ urdhā sūkra āhūtyāṁ purastāt |
sā no bhumir vardhayad vardhamānyā ||

\textsuperscript{23.} AV.12.1.26: \vspace{10pt}
sīlā bhumir āśmā pāṁśuḥ sa bhūmiḥ śaṁdhrāḥ dhrā ā |
tasmāi hiranyavakṣāse prthivyāḥ akaramī namah ||
To the north, south, east and west we may happily move. The earth is the world of our shelter from which we may not drop down. You do not push us from back, from the front, from the height to the low, you be always giver of peace to us. We may go ahead without interruption. The summer, the rains, the autumn etc have encircled you and you’re all the years. We live in these seasons; the night and day may give us milk of the flow of rays.

This earth is the domain of dancing of the mortals. Here they fight, beat the drums during wars. That earth should remove our opponent. I should become the sovereign on this earth. This earth has become the womb of worldly seeds, where men are of different workmanship—that earth becomes beautified by Prajāpati.

The earth gives us emeralds and gold, the giver of dazzling light. She carries many races and religion and she may give us thousands of flows of fire. The earth over which vice and virtues move we will conquer these paths making them free of foes and dacoits. Make us glad which is full of “God Shiva”.

We make our bed during our life on the green grass of the earth and we sleep down on earth making it our death bed.

This earth is the virgin of light on this soil who is the goddess of the sun. The earth is covered by truth; it extends its hearth to the great sky. This sky becomes full of nectar which passes through the rays of the sun’s munificence of light of the sun. This light burns in the sky for long sacrifices, which the seven-star sages give back to the earth. The tall trees of the earth act as consecrated wood. The queen of snakes flow in the current of Soma-juice and man taking the juice of Soma become

“aṅito’hato aksataḥ, āśāmāśāni viśāsahīḥ”

The earth protected by Indra’s power make her all powerful.
The God Soma is one of the prominent deities of the Veda. In total 114 hymns of the ninth manadala of Rig Veda in addition to six in the other treatises are devoted to his praise. He is also celebrated in four or five other hymns and conceived as a dual divinity with Indra, Agni, Pūṣan and Rudra in half a dozen more. The verses on Soma number more than 1,200. The name of Soma, in its simple form and in compounds occurs hundreds of times in the Rig Veda. Evaluated on the standard of frequency, Soma comes third in order of significance among the Vedic Gods. Soma happens to be an enigmatic deity. In the Rig Veda the ninth mandala comprises incantations sung over the tangible Soma while it is pressed by the stones, flows through the wooden strainer into the wooden vats in which it is ultimately offered on a litter of grass to the Gods as a beverage sometimes in fire (RV.I.94.14; V.5.1; VIII.43.11 etc) or sipped and drunk by the holy priests. Soma in creeper form is crushed for procuring its juice for its useful role in the ritual. The portion of the Soma plant which is compressed is designated as ‘aṁśu’, i.e. ‘shoot or stalk’ (RV.IX.67.28). The shoots swelling give milk like Cows with their udders (RV.VIII.9.19). The juice is identified by the name Soma which implies the plant as well and commonly by ‘rasa’—fluid. In a particular hymn (RV.I.187) the juice is known as ‘pitu’, - ‘the beverage’ and is often styled as ‘mada’—‘intoxicating draught’. However to the poets of wisdom Soma is not something to be used as a beverage. The clue to its deeper meaning is indicated by the common epithet for Soma, ‘Vanapati’, ‘the lord of Vana’. Kena Upanishad (4.6) harnesses the use of ‘Vana’—in the sense of delight. Being the most important of herbs Soma is considered to be born as the lord
of the plants (RV.IX.114.2)²⁴, which are also considered to have Soma as their king. King Soma when pressed is amṛta. Figuratively the Soma juice is called as ‘piyusa’ (III.48.2), milk (IX.107.12), the wave of the stalk (IX.96.8) or the juice of honey (V.43.4).

The common imagery applied to soma is ‘indu’, the ‘bright drop’. The root ‘Su’—‘to press’ (IX.62.4)²⁵ denotes the extraction of juice in narrative form; but frequently by ‘duh’—‘to milk’ (III.36.6,7). The juice is intoxicating (I.125.3; VI.17.11;20.6) and ‘honied’ madhumat (IX.97.14). As flowing from the press, Soma is compared with the wave of a stream (IX.80.5) and directly called a wave (IX.64.11) or a wave of honey (RV.III.47.1). With reference to the juice collected in the Vat, Soma is referred to as a sea (arnava, X.115.3) and often as an ocean (samudra, V.47.3; IX.64.8). The heavenly Soma is also designated as a well (Utsa) which is in the highest location of the cows (V.45.8), which is placed in the cows and guided with ten reins i.e. fingers (VI.44.24) or a well of honey in the highest step of Vishnu (I.154.5).

The colour of the plant and juice as well as of the God is narrated as brown (babhru) or ruddy (aruna) but most frequently as tawny (hari). Soma is narrated as purified with the hands (RV.IX.86.34), by the ten fingers

²⁴. (RV X.114.2):

rṣe mantrakṛtāṁ stomaiḥ kāśyapodvardhayangirah |
somaṁ namasya rājānarii yo vajñe virudhāṁ patirindrayendo pari srava ||

Sāyāṇa’s Commentary on RV.X.114.2:

rājānāṁ sarvesāṁ svamānāṁ tāṁ somaṁ namasya pūjaya |
yāḥ somaḥ virudhāṁ vanspatināṁ patiḥ pātakaḥ jaṅje jātaḥ taṁ namasya ||

²⁵. (RV.IX.62.4):

ravyaṁśurmadāyāpsu dakṣo giristhāḥ |
syena na yoniṁśadat ||

Sāyāṇa’s commentary on RV.IX.62.4:

giristhāḥ parvate jātaḥ aṁśuḥ somaḥ madāya madārthaṁ asāvi abhisutah |
apsu vasatvariṣu dakṣaḥ pravrddhascha bhavati ||
(RV.IX.8.4; 15.8) or figuratively by the ten maidens who are sisters (RV.IX.1.7;6.5) or by the daughters of Vivasvat (RV.IX.14.5). Soma is the lord of the wine of delight, the beverage of immortality. Like Agni he is found in the plants, the growths of the earth and in the waters.

The Soma-wine used in the external sacrifice is the symbol of this wine of delight. It is pressed out by the pressing-stone which has a close symbolic connection with the thunderbolt, the formed electric force of Indra who called Ad/ri. The pressing of Soma with the help of stones was the usual method in the period of the Rig Veda. The pressed drops are poured upon (RV.IX.63.10) and pass over the strainer of sheep’s wool (RV.IX.69.9). For it purifies Soma, so that he proceeds cleansed to the feast of the Gods (RV.IX.78.1). Soma is simply described as flowing in a river of delight to the Seat of the Gods, to the abode of immortality. The more general term ‘mrj’, ‘to cleanse’ is not only used to indicate purification of Soma with the strainer, but also to the addition of water and milk (RV.IX.86.11; 91.2). The purified (unmixed) soma juice is often called Suddha, pure, but much oftener sukra, or suci, ‘bright’ (RV.VIII.2.10; IX.33.2; I.5.5; 30.2). This unmixed Soma is offered

26. (RV.VIII.2.10):
   ime te indra somastivra asme sutasah |
   sukra asitam yachante |

27. (RV.IX.33.2):
   abhi dronani vabhrava sukra rtasya dharyay |
   vajam gomantamaksaran |

Sayanā’s commentary on RV.IX.33.2:
   vabhrava vabhuvaram sukrah diptah kena prakārenai rtasya amrtyasya dharyaya dhārakāreṇa kimcena vajam annaṁ gomantam vahugoyuktaṁ a ksaran kṣaranti |

28. RV. I.5.5:
   sutapāvne sutā jme suchayo yanti viyaye |
   somāso dadhyāśraḥ |

29. RV. I.30.2:
   śatam vā yah suchināṁ sahasram vā samāśrām |
   eju nimnam na riyate |
almost exclusively to Vāyu and Indra, the epithet śucipā ‘drinking clear (Soma)’ being distinctive of Vāyu, but is admixed with milk for Mitra-Varuṇa and with honey for the Asvins.

Soma is identified in the Rig Veda as having three classes of admixed (tryāśīr: V.27.5), with milk (gavāśīr), sour milk (dadhyāśīr) and barley (yavāśīr). The admixed is figuratively called a garment (vastra, Vasas, atka) or a shining robe (nirnij) (RV.IX.14.5), Soma is described in the Rig Veda as pressed three times in the day.

The abode (sadhaṣṭha) of Soma is referred to frequently and once, however, mention is made of three, which he occupies when purified (RV.IX.103.2), the epithet ‘triṣadhaṣṭha’, ‘having three abodes’, being also applied to him (RV.VIII.83.5). These three abodes may already designate the three tubes used at the Soma sacrifice. The epithet ‘triprṣṭha’ ‘three-backed’ is peculiar to Soma. Being dedicated to the juice at least once (RV.VII.37.1) it probably refers to the three admixtures.

Based on the mixture of water with the juice, the link of Soma with the waters is presented in the most varied ways. Streams flow for him (RV.IX.31.3). The waters flow his ordinance (RV.IX.82.5). He is the lord and king of streams (RV.IX.15.5; 86.33; 89.2), lord of spouses (RV.IX.86.3), an oceanic king and God (RV.IX.107.16). As leader of waters Soma rules over rain (RV.IX.74.3). He creates waters and compels both heaven and earth to precipitation (RV.IX.96.3).

30. RV.IX.14.5:
naptihiryo vivasvatah sūbhro na māmre jyuva
nāh kṛṇvāno na nirnijam |
Sayana’s commentary on RV.IX.14.5:
yathā pravṛddhośvo mṛjyate svaparichāra kāśṭha dyaṁ sa eva jyuva
miśranaśilaṁ somah nirnijāṁ | ‘nirnijk’ iti rupanām ||
The Soma drops themselves are several times compared with rain (RV.IX.41.3; 89.1; 106.9) and Soma is considered to flow clearly with a stream of honey like the rain-charged cloud (RV.IX.2.9). The SB (11.5.4.5)\textsuperscript{31} pin points amrita with the waters. The celestial Soma descending to earth was interpreted as only mixed with rain and not confounded with it. Soma is the drop which becomes enlarged in the waters (RV.IX.85.10; 89.2). Hence he is the embryo of the waters (RV.IX.97.41) and the waters are straight forwardly called his mother (RV.IX. 61.4).

The sound emerging from the Soma juice during the course of its purification as it rushes into the vats (bowls) is often referred to and is compared with that of rain (RV.IX.41.3). However the language is generally hyperbolical. Thus the sweet drop is said to pass over the filter like the din of combatants (RV.IX.69.2).

The noise is constantly designated by various verbs implying to roar or bellow (krand, nad, mā, ru, vāś:IX.91.3;95.4). A roaring Soma is compared with or specifically called a bull, ‘as a bull bellows in the wood’ (RV.IX.7.3). He is a heavenly bull as well as of the earth and the streams (RV.VI.44.21). Soma being so frequently called a bull (uksan,vṛsan,vṛṣabha’) is sharp-horned (tigmaśṛṅga), an epithet especially applied to the moon in YV which in five of its six occurrences in the Rig Veda is associated with a word meaning bull.

Soma is swift (RV.I.4.7) and as an illustration of the speeds with which the pressed juice flows is frequently compared with or designated a steed.

\textsuperscript{31} English translation of Satapatha Brahmana (11.5.4.5):

thou art a Brahmakarin', he says and thus commits him to the Brahman: - 'sip water!'— water, doubtless, means ambrosia: 'sip ambrosia' is thus what he tells him;-'do thy work!'—work, doubtless, means vigour: 'exert vigour is thus what he tells him;-'put on fuel!'—'enkindle thy mind with fire, with holy luster!' is what he thereby tells him;-'donot sleep!'-'donot die' is what he thereby says to him;-'sip water!'—water means ambrosia: 'sip ambrosia is what he thus tells him. He thus encloses him on both sides with ambrosia (the drink of immortality), and thus the Brahmakarin suffers no harm of any kind, nor does he who knows this.
On account of the Yellowish colouration of the juice, the physical quality of Soma dwelt mainly on by the poets is his brilliance. He fills heaven and earth with rays like the sun (RV.IX.41.5). On taking birth as a bright son, he caused his parents to shine (RV.IX.9.3). Sun’s daughter purifies him (RV.IX.1.6). Thus it is said of him that he combats the darkness (RV.IX.9.7), words it off with light (RV.IX.86.22) or creates dazzling lights, dispelling the darkness (RV.IX.66.24; 100.8; 108.12).

Soma is considered as a divine drink which bestows immortal life; hence it is mythologically designated amrita, the draught of immortality. It is an immortal stimulant (I.84.4) which the Gods love (RV.IX.85.2) and of which when pressed by man and mixed with milk, all the Gods drink (RV.IX.109.15), for they accelerate to exhilaration (RV.VIII.2.18) and consequently become exhilarated (RV.VIII.58.11). Soma is immortal (RV.1.43.9; VIII.48.12; IX.3.1) and the Gods drank him for immortality (RV.IX.106.8). He is the benefactor of immortality on the Gods (RV.I.91.6; IX.108.3) and on men (RV.I.91.1; VIII.48.3). He places his worshipper in the everlasting and imperishable world where there is eternal illumination and glory and makes him immortal where king Vaivasvata lives (RV.IX.113.7,8).

32. RV.1.84.4 :

imamindra sutam piva jyesthamamartyam madaṁ |
sukrasya tva bhyaksarandhara ṛtasya sadane ||
Sāyana’s commentary on RV.1.84.4:
he indra sutam abhisutam imani somani piva | kidr̥maṁ | jyestharfi atisayena prashaṇi madam | somapāṇajanyo mado madāntaravamārako na bhavatityarthah |

33. RV.IX.85.2 :

asmantsamarye pavamāna chodaya daksō devānāmasi hi priyo madaḥ |
jahi sattrūrabhyā bhandanāyataḥ pivendrā somamava no mṛdho jahi ||
Sāyana’s commentary on RV.IX.85.2:
he pavamāna soma asmān samarye saṅgrāme chodaya prrāyaya | daksāh hi asi samarthāh khalu bhavasi devānāṁ madhye | yadvā | devānāṁ priṇānaya daksōsī | yadvā | daksāstvāṁ devānām priyāḥ priyakaro madaḥ mādayitāśi hi |
Thus Soma is endowed with medicinal powers also. It is medicine for a
sick man (RV.VIII.61.17). Hence the God Soma cures whatever is sick,
making the blind to see and the lame to walk (RV.VIII.68.2; X.25.11). He is
the guardian of men’s bodies and occupies their every limb (RV.VIII.48.9);
enhancing their life in this world (RV.I.91.6; VIII.48.4,7; IX.4.6; 91.6).

Soma when imbibed stimulates the voice (RV.VI.47.3; IX.84.4; 95.5;
97.32), which he impels as the rower his boat (RV.IX.95.2). This is the
unquestionable reason why Soma is referred to as ‘lord of speech, (Vacaspati)
(RV.IX.26.4; 101.5) or leader of speech, ‘Vaco’ agriya or agree (RV.IX.7.3;
62.25.6; 86.12; 106.10). He is also said to raise his voice from heaven
(RV.IX.68.8).

In the Brahmans Vac, ‘speech’ is described as the price paid by the
Gods for soma. Soma is also considered as a lord of thought and as a father,
leader or generator of hymns. He is a leader of poets, a seer among priests
(RV.IX.96.6). He has the mind of seers, is a creator of seers (RV.IX.96.18)
and a protector of prayer (RV.VI.52.3). He is the soul of sacrifice
(RV.IX.2.10;6.8), a priest (brahma) among the Gods (RV.IX.96.6). He is a
wise seer (RV.VIII.68.1). He is acquainted with the races of the Gods
(RV.IX.81.2; 95.2; 97.7; 108.3). Soma with intelligent surveys the creatures
(RV.IX.71.9). Hence he is many-eyed (RV.IX.26.5) and thousand eyed
(IX.60.1).

The prime utility of Soma’s intoxicating power is its stimulating effect
on Indra in his conflict with the hostile powers of the air. That Soma
strengthen Indra for the fight with Vṛtra is stated in innumerable passages of
the Rig Veda (RV.VIII.81.17). Intoxicated with Soma, Indra slays all foes
(RV.IX.1.10) and no one can resist him in battle when he has drunk it
(RV.VI.47.1).
Soma is the soul of Indra (RV.IX.85.3); the most auspicious friend of Indra (RV.X.25.9), whose vigour he stimulates (RV.IX.76.2) and whom he assists in slaying Vṛtra (RV.IX.61.22). With acquaintance of Soma Indra made the waters to flow for man and slew the dragon (IV.28.1). Hence Soma sometimes is even called the bolt (vajra) of Indra (RV.IX.72.7;77.1;111.3). Soma, Indra’s juice, becomes a thousand winning bolt (RV.IX.47.3). It is the intoxicating draught which destroys a hundred forts (RV.IX.48.2) and is a vṛtra-slaying intoxicating stalk (RV.VI.17.11). Thus the God Soma is considered to be ‘like Indra a slayer of Vṛtras and a fort-destroyer’ and comes to receive half a dozen times the epithet Vṛtrahan, Vṛtra-slaying which primarily belongs to Indra.

Being a warrior, Soma possesses weapons (RV.IX.96.16) which are terrible and sharp (RV.IX.61.30; 90.3). He is described as armed with a thousand-pointed shaft (RV.IX.83.5;86.40) and his bow is swift (RV.IX.90.3).

34. (RV.IX.61.22):

śa pavasva ya āvithendraṁ vṛtrāya hantave |
vavrīvāṁśāṁ mahirapah ||

Sayana’s commentary on RV.IX.61.22:

he soma yaḥ tvam mahāṁ mahaṁ apah mahāntyudakāni vavrīvāṁśāṁ nirundhānam vṛtrāya
vṛtrāṁ hantave hantum indraṁ āvitha arakṣaḥ saḥ tvam pavasvasa dhārayā kṣara | somam pitvā
maṭtaḥ sannindro mahāntyudakāni nirundhānaṁ vṛtrāṁ jaghāne-tyarthah |

35. (RV.IX.48.2):

śaṁvṛkṣadhrṣṣumukthyaṁ mahāmahivrataṁ maḍaṁ |
śatāṁ puro ruruksaninī ||

Sayana’s commentary on RV.IX.48.2:

he soma saṁvṛkṣadhṛṣṣumukthyaṁ | saṁvṛkṣaḥ saṁchhinnāṁ dhrṣanvavo dhārsanāṁ sātravo yenāsoi
saṁvṛkṣadhṛṣṣuḥ | tam ukthyaṁ ukthārhaṁ " praśasyaṁ mahāmahivrataṁ
mahāniyavahukarmānam maḍaṁ madakaraṁ sātaṁ vahūṁ purah sātṛṇaṁ purāṇi ruruksaninī
vināśayantāṁ tvāṁ dhanāṅnīmaha iti saṁvandhaḥ ||
Soma is naturalistically sometimes familiarly linked with Indra’s immediate and near accomplishes, the Maruts. Like Indra, Soma is attended by the Maruts (RV.VI.47.5) or the troop of the Maruts. The winds are said to be gladdening to Soma (RV.IX.31.3) and Vāyu is his guardian (RV.X.85.5). Soma forms a pair with Agni, Pūṣan and Rudra respectively. A few times Soma is mystically identified with Varuṇa (RV.IX.77.5;95.4).

Soma rides in the same chariot as Indra (RV.IX.87.9; 96.2; 103.5). He is a charioteer to the car-fighter Indra (AV.VIII.8.23). He drives in a car (RV.IX.3.5) which is heavenly (RV.IX.111.3). He has light (RV.IX.86.45) or a filter for his car (RV.IX.83.5). He is the most versatile among charioteers (RV.IX.66.26). He has well-winged mares of his own (RV.IX.86.37) and a team like Vayu (RV.IX.88.3).

Once in the Rig Veda (RV.X.34.1) the soma plant has been described as maujavata, which according to later statements would mean ‘produced on Mount Mūjavat’. On several occasions Soma has been narrated as mountain dwelling (giristhā) or growing in the mountains (parvatāvṛdh: IX.46.1). Mountains are also called ‘Soma-backed’ (AV.III.21.10), a term which, perhaps by sacrificial symbolism is applied to the pressing stones (adrayah) in Rig Veda VIII.52.2.

All these terms point to the Soma plant being on terrestrial mountains. Though Soma is a terrestrial plant, it is also celestial (RV.X.116.3); in fact its true origin and abode are believed to be in heaven.

36. RV IX.96.2:

```
samsaya harini harayo mṛjantyaśvahayairanśītum namobhiḥ|
ā tisthati rathamindrasya sakha vidvān enā sumatini yātyachchha ||
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37. RV IX.103.5:

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pāri daivirānu svadhā indrena yāhi sarathani|
pūnāno vāghadvāghadbhiramartyāh ||
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Sāyaṇa’s commentary on RV.IX.103.5:

```
he soma tvāni indrena sarathaṁ samānāṁ rathamāruhya daivīṁ devānāṁ
samvandhini svadhāḥ valāni anu devasenaḥ pari yāhi parigachchha |
```
Hence it is said that the birth of the plant is on high, being in heaven it has been received by earth (RV.IX.61.10). Being the most significant of herbs Soma is considered to have taken birth as the lord of plants (RV.IX.114.2)\(^{38}\) which are also considered to have Soma as their King, (RV.IX.97.18,9).

The epithet Vanaspati ‘lord of the woods’ (RV.I.91.6;IX.12.7) is attributed to Soma and is said to be the progenitor of all plants (RV.I.91.22). Despite being lord of plants, Soma resembles other leading Gods, called a king. He is also a king of rivers (RV.IX.89.2), a king of the whole earth (RV.IX.97.58), a king or father of the Gods (RV.IX.86.10; 87.2;109.4), a king of Gods and mortals (RV.IX.97.24), and a king of Brāhmans. He is of course often called a God but in one passage he is described as ‘a God pressed for the Gods’ (RV.IX.3.6,7).

In the post Vedic literature Soma is a regular name of the moon. A large number of the scholars agree that even in a few of the latest hymns of the Rigveda (in the first and tenth mandala) Soma is already identified with the moon. Most of them, however, hold the view that Soma as a God is celebrated in the Vedic hymns only as a personification of the beverage, relating to his identification with the moon as merely a secondary mythological growth. The Soma nature of the moon being referred to as a secret known to Brāhmans only.

\(^{38}\) RV.IX.114.2:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{rṣe mantrakṛṭāṁ stomaih kaśyapovardhavyangirah |} \\
\text{somaṁ namasya rājānāṁ yo jajñē virudhāṁ patirindrayindo pari srava ||}
\end{align*}
\]

**Sayana’s commentary on RV.IX.114.2:**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yāḥ somaḥ virudhāṁ vanaspatināṁ patiḥ pālakaḥ jajñē jātaḥ tāṁ namasya |}
\end{align*}
\]
The process by which the celestial Soma gradually coalesced with the moon is not difficult to understand. Soma on the one viewpoint is continually thought of as celestial and dazzling, sometimes as dispelling darkness and swelling in the waters; and on the other viewpoint is very often called a 'drop', Indu. Thus Soma in the bowls is described in one passage to appear like the moon in waters (RV.VIII.71.8) and in another passage Soma has been narrated as the drop (drapsa) which goes to the ocean, looking with the eye of a vulture (RV.X.123.8) is generally admitted to allude to the moon.

In his Vedic Mythology, Hillebrandt defends this identification for a number of other passages in the Rig Veda, and asserts that in the whole of the ninth book Soma is the moon and nowhere the ordinary plant; in fact the ninth book is a book with hymns to the moon. Soma denotes both in the earlier and later parts of the whole Rig Veda, only the Soma plant or juice on the one hand and as a deity only the moon on the other. According to him the moon is a receptacle of Soma or amrta and is the God whom the worshipper implies when he presses the draught, which is a part of the lunar ambrosia. According to the seers of the Rig Veda, the god Soma is a personification of the terrestrial plant and juice.
SPIRITUAL INTERPRETATIONS

AGNI

Agni, the most celebrated deity of the Vedic pantheon has got attention of the scholars in many aspects. The naturalistic interpretations of the attribute of light and his thermal qualities are knowledge or ‘Prajñā’ and the embodiment of life. Physical Agni is perceivable to the senses but its divine manifestations are not perceivable by the senses. Some naturalistic features of Agni essentially leads to its spiritual connotations, without which the concept of the divinity of Agni is incomplete. Agni, the God of light and heat is the symbolic expression of ‘jñāna’ and the power embodied in the essence of life, ‘prāṇa’. The flame of Agni never goes downwards which means that the spiritual desire, knowledge per excellence is also ever rising which goes upwards.

Agni is ‘prāṇa’. So long life is there, this heat is also there. This heat is ‘tapas’. This ‘tapas’ is the root cause of ‘prajñā’. This ‘prajñāna’ leads to the realization of ‘ānanda’.

Agni is the divine Power which resides in every human being and is the divine power of will united with wisdom, denoted by the epithet of ‘Kratu’. In the Veda Agni is essentially knowledge. Agni is the mental force, will power needed for all action. It is Agni who makes the Divine knowledge of the Supreme sun accessible to human beings. Agni has several forms depending on his functions.

39. Praśnpanisat: 4:2 :prāṇāṅguyya evāsmin pure jāgrati ;

Praśnpaniṣat: 4:6 :atraiṣa devah svapne mahimānāṁ anubhavati.....sa yaṁ tejasābhībhūto bhavatyā atraiṣa devah svapnān na paśyatyā athatadai tasmiṁchharira etat sukhaṁ bhavati ;

59
Primarily, Agni is the divine will who is eager to take birth in every person to lead him to the higher realm. This is the spiritual function. Agni is also the cosmic fire which maintains the universe.

He is also the fire in the individual living being, ‘jathara Agni’, who co-ordinates all the forces of digestion and makes life possible. The epithet, ‘knower of all existences’ jātavedas is used exclusively for Agni, in many situations, clearly indicating the inadequacy of translating as mere physical fire. Agni has the word of truth (Rig Veda 1.59.7) which has the power of fulfilment. In Rig Veda 1.31.6, it is found Agni as one who takes the devotee away from the cooked path and leads the person to the divine place that has to be known, ‘Vidhātā’. Agni establishes the mortal man in high immortality for daily inspiration ‘amṛtatva uttama martyam dadhasi divedive’. It is clear that Agni is establishing immortality in man on this earth, not after the physical death of man. The same Rik says that Agni creates for the devotee both happiness and pleasures (Rig Veda 1.31.7).

The epithet of ‘śuchi’ and ‘tapa’ is very closely associated with Agni. Both the roots refer to the inner light. It is stated in the Ṛg-Samhitā V.24.4 that Agni is ‘śoṣhiṣṭha’ and ‘tapiṣṭha’. This power of brightness extends to ‘chidagni’ and dispels all the darkness of ignorance. When Agni or Fire is in innate form we don’t perceive its existence but on excitation or in contact with other forms of light energy it finds expression and removes all ignorance and brightens the physical world from a metaphysical dimension. Simultaneously, man by following heavenly inspiration becomes able to achieve goodness like the Gods. As long as man has life he is warm blooded.

40. RV (V.24.4):

\[ tvar\ ū \text{ā} \text{śoṣhiṣṭha} \text{ dīdivah} \text{ sumnāya nūnānīmahesakhibhyah} \]
and this energy is the energy of life fire or Pranagni. With the growth of consciousness this life energy grows or increases; therefore the main Kernel of wisdom is meditation and it enlightens human civilization and takes him to his most favoured destination. Men have no ability when in sound sleep; however the life fire or Pranagni is present; as a result of this life fire men find ultimate bliss and infinite happiness can be witnessed. Hence on this earth it is immortal fire and in the darkness of ignorance is the source of light. This is the physical dimension of celestial light. This wisdom of light inmate in us is known as Chidagni or Intellectual light. One who is a pole star takes birth is reclined and being immortal grows in parallel with the body. Without giving much stress to cosmic dimension of light, stress should be given to the physical light as the bearer of non-idolatry form. This non-idolatry form is the expression of it as its light. It is a cluster of light, in the zenith it is pole star, on earth it is earth immortal light. Every where it is great light, it is transcendent self illuminous light. It is its physical manifestation. At twilight as the darkness in the morning sky is pierced by the sun's illuminating light in the same manner energy is manifested as Agni. At first as green nature, then as blood red and at the end energy is consummated by life fires awakening to the rays of life-fire.

The Vedic seer Kutsa in his hymn(RV.I.94) uses the words associated with physical ritual like fire, but quickly adds phrases like “perfect our thoughts” etc to emphasize the fact that he is using the physical ritual only as a symbol of the spiritual transformations occurring in his inner worlds.

41. RV(I.94.1):

\[
\text{imam stomamarhate j̄ṭavedase rathamiva sanī mahemā maniśayā}
\]
\[
\text{bhadrā hi nāḥ pramatirasya saṁsadyagne sakhye mā riśāmā vayaṁ tava}
\]

61
The same tradition exists for heavenly and earthly dimension of light and in this way it has aroused the curiosity of light. In this fire we can observe the light's religious strength; the definition of fire as light is “Purity and meditation”. Among the Gods fire is supreme and transcendental in form. This lighting capacity of fire as it makes fuel full of fire energy similarly intellectual fire also removes all the mysticism of darkness and makes pure, alleviates bliss and spreads peace. That is why the other name of fire is “Pābaka or Purifier”. From the solar spectrum we get the macroscopic light as a definition of fire is “swar-vid” or “swah” means of high magnitude and in the Vedanta and Upanishadic language “this fire is composed to celibacy and consciousness”; this inferior deity becomes superior and enlightens higher consciousness. This self realization is the celestial or higher light.

From the youth of light originated the elixir or immortal concept of life. The heavenly fire of the Gods is present in dormant condition in man and at the end is present as physical fire and with its thermal energy it finds expression; and by the power of “Jātaveda” enkindles the shaivik perfection to the infinite heavenward omniscient destination. The body gets charred and the fire of the funeral pyres become extinguished; however the fire of consciousness does not become extinguished. It spreads into the earthly consciousness of immortal fire.

This last stage is the extinction of that immortal fire, which has three existences or is of tri-dimension of which one is the three mornings. In this earth, in heaven and in the universe it is of infinite existence; it is immortal and non-idolatry. On earth fire is immortal consciousness; and by acquiring it, it finds its expression.
The first identity of fire is that it is educated; he knows the address of roads and knows about heavenly births. Agni’s prime role is as a messenger between men and the Gods. In the Vedas this is his much acceptable definition. He is our domestic lord and at times when he arrives from the side, unnoticed Agni is our most favoured Guest. Our nearest deity is Agni and the farthest is the Sun. In between the Agni consciousness and earthly consciousness his ascending flames are the ever alert messenger, Agni. This is why this fire is the courier of extra-terrestrial heavenly world and the physical earth. To coin a single word it is omniscient; again to define the fire of wisdom is it is Jātaveda; is that form which knows about the transmigration of the fire of life from the perceivable Universe to the heavenly destination. The other wisdom of fire is the parity of it with its work; that has made him the ideal in the heavenly journey; the consequence of which is equality, happiness and consciousness and by the wisdom of that light is ever vigilant and courier of oblation. The ever vigilant form of light vis-à-vis fire is that it is a poet; this earth is its immortal, nonliving epic. Niruktakār Yāska has tried to define a poet as one whose view-point goes very far away. In the epic of fire or in poetic religion there is not only wisdom and prayer but similarity also. That is why the specific definition of fire is poetic worship or ‘Havan’. What is our ultimate destination that fructifies in its wisdom view of fire; the internal painstaking experiences the hint we get of heavenly wealth; that is why we get the inspiration of “Uttarāyan”. In the Vedānta-language it is truthful, full of life and full of happiness. More than quality the works of Vedic deities find more expression because quality takes shelter of friendship and work on religious strength. The main work of fire is its courier function. In between man and God it is the unifier. As a courier fire has two works as a receiver and transmitter.
Between heaven and earth Agni’s role as a messenger of the virtue of truth as the extensive visioned ‘kavi’ and being omniscient about the births of men and the Gods. Every God is the benefactor of Jewels vis-à-vis wealth but Agni is the superior, most benefactor—“Ratnadātama’. Here “Ratna” or wealth denotes infinite consciousness light and in the language of the Upaniṣads it is the kernel of wisdom.

The generation of fire is done by ‘Ādhāna’. In the RK-saṁhitā III.23 42.43 29 44 a detailed discussion is found. Chhāndogya Upaniṣat states that this Ādhana is the generation of “Prāṇa’ and it is a ‘Viryavat Karma’. The churning of the two Arānis actually refers to a spiritual churning. This generation of Fire is done by the fuel (indhāna), therefore it is ‘Agnisamdhiḍhana’. The ‘Manusyayajña’ which originates from ‘Devayajña’ is the root cause of the Universe .The Brāhmaṇa literature refers to this ‘Samidha’ as ‘Prāṇa’. Agni is generated in Uttaravedi as Īlaspada. This Īlā is ‘Rta’. Rta is Īlam which is a mental activity. The divine force which resides as ‘Prāṇa’ in the physical body that is generated by the ‘Ādhāna’.

42. RV (III.23.3):
   daśa kṣipah pūrvya śīmaḥjyanmsujatam mātrṣu priyam |
   āgnirn stuhi daivavātaṁ devasravo yo janānāmasadvāṣi ||
Sayana’s commentary on RV.III.23.3:
   he devasravah matsu matribbutaranyoh sujatam sustutpannam ata eva priyam kamaniyam
daivavatam devavatena mathitamenam agnim stuhi |

43. RV (III.23.2):
   ahamanṣṭāṃ bhārata revadagnim devaśravā devavātaḥ sudakṣaṇi ||
Sayana’s commentary on RV.III.23.2:
   ahamanṣṭāṃ agnistoma dikarmaprāṇyathamuludatām |
mathanena tvaśatīdītīvāntāvityarthāḥ |

44.RV.III.29.1 :
   astidamadhjamanthamaṃ prajananam kṛṣṭam |
etāṁ viṣṇatimā bhavāgniṁ manthāṁ pūrvathā ||
In the Vedic seer Kashyapa’s hymn RV.I.99 Agni is called a knower of the births or knower of the worlds because he knows entirely the fire worlds, the worlds in which respectively matter, life-energy, mind, truth and beatitude are the essential emerges. They are respectively ‘bhur’, ‘bhuvar’, ‘svar’, ‘mahas’ and jñana or ‘mayas’. This is also the classification of worlds in the Taittireya Upaniṣad. Even the Vedas speak of seven worlds there is no conflict here. As Agni power of luminescence as it ignites fuel and, makes it full of Agni similarly “Chidagni” dispels all impurity “agha” or “malinya” and purifies it. Hence Agni is sacrosanctly holy.

According to the sage Angirasa who had several vision Agni is “Apa Naḥ Śośuchad Agharn”. He purifies us by igniting all impurity. His actual words are:

“Remove all our impurities oh! Agni, burn up for the object of prāṇāgni, by combusting all our impurity’.

Agni is conditioned with wisdom or “Prajñā”, in the skies it overflows and manifests itself with luminescence. Hence Agni has a chief identity as a personality great learning ‘Vidvān’, he is omniscience. In a nut shell he is ‘Viśvavedāḥ’ or omniscient encompassing all wisdom. To explain the omniscience of Agni the most popular definition is ‘Jātaveda’; denoting one who knows about the heavens, the earth and hell, then that forms the definition of Jātaveda. The Aitareya-brāhmaṇa has clearly opined ‘Jātaveda is life, because what is born he knows about it. Jātaveda is further narrated as one conscious and knowing about heavenly earth.
As Agni is ever consciousness from the viewpoint of spiritualism Agni is said to be self conscious and ever purifier. In the Vedic literature Agni is designated a ‘Kavi’ as he is the supreme God and this earth is his immortal epic. According to Yāśka the term “Kavi” connotes one whose vision is extensive. Another definition of Agni is as “Gopaḥ” or ‘protector’. Everyday at dawn, new life commences with the rising sun; at that point Agni becomes our‘Gopa’ or the keeper of light. Before the creation of the universe it was plunged in darkness and Agni dispelled this darkness. From darkness light emerged by the verbosity of wisdom.

Spiritually the God Agni is not far away, he is very close to us. He is inborn us in the form of Agni, in relation to this earth as polar immortal light confidentially of the mind and every circle of the mind attracts us to Agni. One who is inside us is ‘Amratya’ as life-form silently growing. In this earthly form we establishes Agni in the sacrificial altar ‘Yajñavedi’ as our domestic Lord.

Hence Agni’s physical birth is as willing and ascending flames, heavenly birth is as extreme consciousness, like that its third birth is as earthly life harbinger and as the celestial spaces great life form. In the earthly shadow has a three dimensional ascending flame – as heavenly sun, in the celestial spaces as used or ‘Vāyu’ and on terrestrially as Agni. Hence he is three dimensional and at the care of the universe.
The Goddess Apah exists on earth, in the mid region and in heaven. Without this goddess earth, air and heaven become dry and hence the existence of life and light without it become meaningless. The flow of life and light in three regions actually starts from the goddess Apah, who sends waters for our peace and vigour. The seed of life is sown on the soil which grows higher and higher touching heaven the realm of peace and solemnity. The goddess Apah mixes up with Shiva and she becomes the source of inspiration to all when the flow of waters fall on this earth incessantly. The god of rain is called Parjanya, this god brings fertility to the world where the goddess Sarasvatī flows with waters of life towards the path of wisdom. The waters are called the ocean where the life, wisdom mixed with rains go the ocean where Varuna is the sovereign. In the philosophical angle of vision Apah is the flow of knowledge which assumes the form of river Sarasvatī on earth. In the ocean waters are accumulated where life throbs in waves. Sages drink waters of the rain as drink like Soma. The internal light burns on the surface of the ocean which invigorates our hearts. The waters move in the mid region like vapours forming the clouds and that cloud is blown up by the thunderbolt of Indra. Thus the waters on the earth as rivers, as clouds in the mid region, as the unity of Shiva and Shakti in heaven have been variously invoked by the sages. The waters are givers of delight, prowess, distributors of juice and lead us to the great god (Brahman) for a new birth (RV.X.9.1-3).

45. RV.X.9.1-3:

\[
\text{Spo hi śthā mayobhuvās tā na urje dadhātana} \\
\text{mahe ranāyā chakṣase yō vah śivatamo rasah} \\
tasya bhājyate tā naḥ uṣātīr iva matarāḥ \\
tatmā arām gamāma vō yasyā kṣayāya jinavatha āpa janayathā
\]
This pure water washes all our sins and when kings perform Rājasuya sacrifice with waters of seventeen rivers for ascending the throne, the waters purify them with divine blessings for their protection. \( \text{RV.VII.49.2} \) Not only in kings’ coronation and Rājasuya sacrifices but also in our every day worship we use these pure waters to get divine enjoyment and blessings on us.

**PRITHIVĪ**

Although a very small hymn comprising of three verses have been dedicated to the Goddess Prithivī, it offers ample score to realize the spiritual vastness of the Goddess Prithivī. Here we find the Goddess as Mrinmoyee, Pranamoyee and Chinmoyee in the three verses respectively. The first verse delineates the celestial aspects of the Goddess. The mountains, the streams overwhelms us with the vastness of this earth. The first rain as if enters in every particles of the earth. It joins the Dyuloka with the Bhuloka when Dyavaprthivī joined together, the goddess attains divine fertility to enrich the human beings. Here Prithivī is Mrinmoyee. \( \text{RV.V.84.1} \)

The second verse describes the goddess Prithivī as Prāṇamoyee. There she holds the reins of the thunderbolt.

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46. **RV.VII. 49. 2 :**

\[
yā āpo divyā uta vā sra-vanti khanitrimā uta vā yāh svayamāḥ samudrārtha yāh suchayaḥ pāvakaśa ta āpo devī iha mām avantu ||
\]

47. **Sayana’s commentary on RV.V.84.1 :**

\[
dvirupā prthivī chaśa pratyakṣa devatapi cha | madhyasthāna devatokta śātra samvodhya varnyate he prthivi prathanavati madhyasthānadevate | tvam itthā itthām amutra antarikṣe vā vatr satyam parvatānāṁ meghanāṁ vā khidram khedanāṁ bhedanāṁ vibharsi dhārayasi ; he mahiṁ mahati he pratvati prakarṣavati pravananāda vā vā tvam bhumiṁ pratyakṣam prthivim mahā mahattvena mahātadakena vā pra jinoṣi prakarṣaṇa priṇayasi ||
\]
It is the Mādhyamika Vāc which ascends to the Brahmaghoṣa. Here the Goddess is not the tender-Prithivi; she is rather as gorgeous as explosion of thunderbolt (RV.V.84.2)\(^{48}\). The spiritual perspective is the thunderbolt symbolizes the soaring desire is extinguished by the coming-down rains. When both descends the earth, the earth as appears in the third verse of the Sukta the Mrinmoyee Prithivi accepts both with equal importance. Here appears the earth as the progenitor and protector of the human race.

The goddess earth has three stages of her existence —

1. on earth
2. in mid region and
3. in the heaven.

She pervades over the three worlds and every where she is worshipped as a Goddess on the earth, as the Sun or Aditi in the mid region and Universal consciousness in heaven. She pleases the worlds. She stands like an affectionate mother fulfilling our eternal desire. She is therefore, appears to be Goddess Lakṣmī riding on the elephant (Gajalakṣmī Kamalā). Her worldly life is like a daughter who rears up goats, horses of our houses (Rig Veda IX.86.44)\(^{49}\).

In the first stage of the Prithivi sukta we visualize the divine appearance of the earth. The great earth bears high mountains, ever flowing springs, and wavy waters of the ocean where the waters falling from the heaven just as the flow of life coming down to earth in form of spring.

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\( ^{48} \) Sāyana’s Commentary on RV.V.84.2:

he vicharini vividham charanashile prthivi devi tvā tvāṁ stomāsah stotāraḥ aktubhiḥ
gamanśīlaṁ stotraṁ prati stobhanti abhiṣṭuvanti | kimcha vā tvari heṣantāṁ śād ayantaṁ
vājaṁ ja aśvamiya udvrtam perum pūrakāni meghāṁ pra avasi prākśipāsi he arjuni
sbhravarṇe gamanśile vā|

\( ^{49} \) RV.IX.86.44:

andhā roṣati | ahirna jūṁāmati sarpati tvachamatiyo
na kṛilannasaradvṛṣi hariḥ ||
The light of the heaven when touches the earth, the earth becomes the full of light, effulgence of light. In the mid region the clouds echo with the thunderstorm. It seems to be the worship of prayers of the earth. The chariot of the king Indra moves in the mid region showering black clouds with lightning flashes in it. The world throbs with the life-breathe and the rivers rolled down to the ocean with the rhyme of its movement. In the heaven the fire burns through lightning and we pray to mother earth to save our soul.

This is the Universal appearances of the earth. This earth of the sage Atri is full of grandeur in heaven moving to and fro in the mid region and stands fixed on the mud. She exhibits her divine countenance by showering her blessings as rains on us. This sukta may be called the seed of the growth of the world.

**SOMA**

The spiritual interpretation of God Soma has got its excellence in Rig Veda IX.9.4. The sukta is dedicated to the God Pavamāna Soma which states effused by the fingers gladdens the seven-guileless rivers who have magnified him one and undecaying. Here the seer Asita-Kasyapa states the seven fold stages of meditation which results in the ascendance to the highest light.

"The Soma sacrifice is one of the most important Vedic sacrifices which leads to immortality. The intoxicating power of Soma leads to a world beyond this world (Lokottara) and this Lokottara upliftment is the ultimate realization of the Yogins. Thus we find that Valarāma is ever intoxicated with Vāruṇi. In the Vedas Indra is Soma-pātamah (Rig Veda I.8.7\(^50\), VI.42.2). The Vedic ritual

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50. **RV.I.8.7**

\( \text{yah kuksih somapätamah samudraiva pinvate} \ |
\( \text{urvirāpo na kākudah} \ |
\)

Sāyana's commentary on **RV.I.8.7**:

\( \text{yah kuksih asyendrasyodarapradesah somapätamah} \ |
\( \text{atīśayena somasya pātā sa kuksi samudraiva pinvate vardhate} | \)

70
Pañcharātra is a Somayāga where we get the symbolic representation of Tantric-Mahāsakti-Rādhā which has been elaborated extremely in the Śrīmad Bhāgavat. The similar exposition is also found in SB 13.6.1.

The spiritual aspect of God Soma is ‘Jyoti’ and there he attained the status of Moon–god. The expression of Jyoti has got three stages. The individual is Agni. The Universal Jyoti is Sūrya and beyond this Universal Jyoti is Soma.

Therefore, Soma is Jyoti per excellence. In the spiritual interpretations this Soma is Suṣumṇā (A.U.1.12; B.U.4.2.3; K.U. 4.19). The suṣumṇā is the gladiator for amrita. In Nighantu the meaning has been given as happiness (3.6) and therefore Soma is happiness per excellence.

The three epithets most commonly used in the Vedas are – Andha, Soma and Indu. The terrestrial Soma is Andha. Andha is Pavamāna Soma which is obstructed as described in the Purāṇas and the ritualistic schools also belief that Soma should not descend below the naval point (Rig Ved IX.10.8)51. This obstructed Soma is to be purified by the mistake devices and after that the purified Soma is uplifted to the status of Indu which has got its place in the forehead of Siva.

Now the verse mentioned above is referring the seven stages of meditation and that seven stages are the seven Vyāhṛtis and carried by the seven Vyāhṛtis Soma reaches the naval point of Dyulokah and ultimately to Sun to the ultimate Jyoti.

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51 RV.IX.10.8:

nabha nabhim na ā dade chaksuschitsurye sachā |
kaverapatyamā duhe ||

Sayana’s commentary on RV.IX.10.8:

nabhim yajñasya nabhībhūtaṁ somaṁ naḥ asmākaṁ
nabha nabhōi aham ā dade |