CHAPTER II
CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RGVEDIC FEMALE DEITIES AS REFLECTED IN SÂYANA’S RGVEDIC COMMENTARY.

UŚĀ

The Vedic pantheon of gods is by all means predominantly patriarchal in nature. In the midst of the mighty gods like Indra, Agni, Vāyu, Sūrya etc. lauded in the hymns of Rgveda, Uśā occupies a place which is not quite so unimportant. As a matter of fact, she shines forth with all splendour and glory as a harbinger of light and life unto mankind. The hymns dedicated to Uśā depict the Vedic Aryan’s deep sense of attachment to life on earth as well as their sense of profound respect towards the deities whom they look upon as enlivening the earth with their lustre. The Vedic seers were out and out worshippers of light and the very word deva denoting a god testifies this fact. These seers of the Vedas have associated the gods with daytime and the demons with the night. Uśā as we know, is the deity of daybreak. In the Rgveda, she is called the very first light: ‘prathama vibhānām’ (X.55.4). She is a devī in the truest sense of the term. For, she is an embodiment of light by dint of which she dispels darkness, therby

1. Cf ‘devo dānādvā dipanādvā dyotonādvā dyusthāno bhavatītīvā’, Nirukta, 7.15
2. Cf. TB., 2.2.9.9
illuminating the world. She is also a giver of bounties to one and all. Hence, she is called *dāśvati* (I.48.1). As a matter of fact Uṣā is hailed as a model of divine benevolence. Over and above this she is called the 'daughter of heaven'. She is born in heaven. By way of illustration one may refer to *Rgveda* I.48.1 in which Uṣā has been invoked as follows:

"saha vāmena na uṣo vyuccha duhitar divah / saha dyumena brhata vibhāvari rāyā devi dāśvati // " [O Uṣā the daughter of heaven with (your) wealth dispel (darkness) for our sake. O shining goddess (You) being the bestower of gifts (dispel darkness) with great glory and wealth.]

Yet another reason behind the Rgvedic poet's fondness for Uṣā, seems to be the fact that she opens the path for the sun every morning: 'āraik panthām yātave sūryāya ' (I.113.16). The sun in the *Rgveda* has been hailed as the 'soul' of all living beings. Uṣā too has been called the *Asu* or *Jīva* of man in the same vein. Both the deities have also been hailed as 'śreṣṭhaṁ jyotiśāṁ jyotiḥ'. It may be mentioned here that in Vedic concept where there is light, there is life and where there is life, there exists every goodness. While light and life have become almost

3. Cf. *RV*, VI.50.8
4. Cf. *Ibid*, I 48.1,8,9 ; I.49.2 ; 1.92.5,7 ; I. 113.7 etc.
5. *Ibid*, VII. 75.1
7. Cf. I.113.16
8. *Ibid*, I.113.1; X.170.3
synonymous in the Vedas, darkness has become their antithesis. Uṣā in her capacity as a goddess of light therefore, has been entreated to dispel darkness of every kind, be it the darkness of the night, of poverty, of bad dreams, of deceitfulness or of enmity. She in her capacity as a dispeller of darkness has been compared to a valorous archer who drives away enemies with his arrows: ‘apejate śuro asteva śatrun bādhati tamaḥ’ (VI.64.3C). It may be mentioned in this connection that the very name uṣā according to Yāska stands for ‘one who dispels (darkness)’. Commenting on Yāska’s view Durga observes as follows: ‘ucchīvivāse vivāsayati hīyam tamāṃsi’. Yāska’s derivation of the word seems to have for its basis Rgvedic passages like ‘atāriṣma tamaspāramasya uṣā ucchanti vayunā kṛnoti’ (l.92.6ab). The word ucchanti read in this passage is explained by Sayāna as ‘naisam tamo varjyanāṁ’. It may also be worthwhile to quote here Skandasvāmin’s interpretation of the abovementioned Rgvedic passage. He says — ‘atāriṣma nissamśayam prāptā vāyam tamasāḥ pāramasya / kim kāraṇamucyate yasmāduṣā iyam sāmpratamucchanti tamāṃsi vivāsayantī vayunā prajñānāni prāṇīṇāṁ kṛnoti karoti’.

9. Cf. Ibid, l.48.1,8,9 ; IV.52.6 ; VII.75.1 ; VIII.47.18 etc.
10. uṣā kasmāt ? ucchatiti sathyāḥ, Nirukta, 2.6.
11. The word uṣā is derived from Vucchi with the Auṇādika suffix asi (Unādisūtra 673)
As it has been pointed out by Winternitz, Uṣā is one of those divinities whose original nature is not forgotten throughout the *Rgveda*. Another factor which makes her an important deity is that the description of Uṣā in the *Rgveda* furnishes us with a vivid example of Vedic 'mythology in the making'. The importance of Uṣā in Vedic mythology has been taken note of by Hillebrandt who says — 'The hymns addressed to Uṣas offer us a methodologically important insight into the mode of observation of nature in ancient India and lead us into the workshops where myths take their shape. We shall see the process in which what was undoubtedly a natural phenomenon is transformed into a divine personification'. While referring to the various images of Uṣā as the sister of the night and the moon, the beloved of the sun or even his daughter or mother Hillebrandt further observes as follows: 'the lessons which these images and thoughts impart to us are invaluable for the understanding of other gods whose concept dates back to older times and is in the process of disappearing under the thick fog of mythological fantasy which enveloeps it more and more'.

It should be noted that Hillebrandt by following the views of Ludwig and Krichenbaur, has expressed the opinion that Uṣā

primarily stands not for the dawn of every day but for the first
dawn of every new year. Keith has refuted this view on the
ground that there is no supportive evidence in the Rgveda to this
effect. Another view held by Hillebrandt is that the dawns de­
scribed in the Rgvedic hymns belong to some land outside India
where the Vedic people had their 'earlier home' and where un­
like India the dawns last longer. His view is based on the imagery
of Uşā as releasing the cattle (gāvaḥ). Hillebrandt has quoted
the passages viz., (a) ‘vyūvrasya tamaso dvārocchantiravran
śucayaḥ pāvakāḥ’ (IV.51.2cd) and (b) ‘gāvo no vajram vyuṣā
āvaityāvastamaḥ’ (I.92.4d). The first passage describes the pure
white rays of the dawn breaking through as it were, the doors
made of darkness. The second passage compares this very phe­
nomenon of daybreak with the cattle coming out of the cowshed.
Hillebrandt felt that the 'image of the rock or of the cowshed, out
of which the Dawns are released could not have had its origin in
the climate of India but in a land where winter indeed banished
the cattle into strong sheds'. He thought that the Indian Aryans
had very little reason to celebrate the return of light, because in
India 'the shortest and the longest day differ only by a few hours'.
Hillebrandt's second view that Uşā of Rgveda is not a goddess of

15. Ibid, pp 22-24
And Upanishads', part I, Delhi, 1976, pp 121-122
an Indian dawn seems to have resulted from his first view that Uṣā is primarily the dawn—goddess of the New year. He seems to have missed the fact that not only in the Rgveda but in later Vedic literature also light has remained an object of adornment and worship. It may be mentioned in this connection that Keith is of the opinion that in the Rgvedic depiction of Uṣā is reflected the daybreak as it was in Punjab and as such worship of Uṣā belongs to the earlier period of Vedic civilisation.

The natural phenomenon of sunrise after daybreak has given birth to three different myths viz., (a) Uṣā is the mother of the sun, (b) she is the wife of the sun and (c) the sun is her enemy. It is said that Rātri moves away making place for Uṣā so that god Sāvita may be born. Thus, in the Rgveda (1.113.1) the seer says — ‘yathā prasūtā savituh savāya eva rātryuṣase yonimāraik’. Commenting on this Sāyaṇa states that just as Rātri makes place for Uṣā who is born of her, so also Uṣā makes place for Savitā’s birth. In the very next verse Uṣā has been referred to as ‘ruṣadvatsa’.

The Indian commentators like Sāyaṇa, Skandasvāmin etc. have

17. Vedic Mythology, vol.I, p.28
interpreted this word as 'one who has the shining one i.e. the sun as her calf'. In another verse (III.61.4) it is said that Uṣā who has given birth to the sun is the protectoress (patnī) of the day. Being the mother of the sun she becomes the mother of the rays of the sun too. Thus, it is said: 'mātā gavāmasi', \(^{21}\) (IV.52.3\(^{b}\)).

While the seer Āṅgirasa Kutsa has pictured Uṣā as the mother of the morning sun-Savita, the seer poets Vasiṣṭha, Gotama and Parāśara have seen in the dawn-goddess the wife or mistress of the sun. Vasiṣṭha and Gotama call her 'sūryasya yośā' or 'jārasya yośā' whom the sun follows as a man would seek his woman.\(^{22}\) The word jāra derived from Vyṛ to wear out means one who makes a thing to gradually pass away. In the passage quoted above viz., 'jārasya yośā', the word jāra stands for the sun the 'jarayita' of Rātri.\(^{23}\) Western scholars like Keith, Macdonell and Griffith however, take the word in its conventional sense viz., a lover.\(^{24}\) The etymological meaning of the word yośā (derived from Vyuo to unite) mean, a woman. The phrase 'suryasya yośā', thus simply means the 'sun's woman' and it need not necessarily mean 'the mistress of the sun'. Again when the sun is called the jāra of

\(^{21}\) Cf. IV.52.2\(^{b}\).

\(^{22}\) VII.75.5\(^{a}\); I.92.11\(^{d}\); I 115.2

\(^{23}\) Cf. Saṅyāna on I.92.11.

Usā in the phrase ‘usō na jāraḥ’ (1.69.1a, 5a) by the seer Parāśara, he does not seem to mean that the sun is the lover of Usā as it has been interpreted by Macdonell or Griffith.25 In this case, Sāyaṇā's interpretation of the above quoted phrase as ‘uṣaso jarayitā sūrya iva’ appears to agree better with the sense conveyed by the rest of the corresponding passages of the two Mantras (1.69.1, 5) where the said phrase occurs. This is because, in both these Mantras the refulgence of Agni has been compared with that of the sun.26 The sun becomes the jāra of Usā simply because with its appearance the soft lustre of Usā is overpowered by the stronger and brighter light of the former. In a verse of the Rgveda (V.79.9) Usā has been actually requested by the seer to hurry up in her journey lest she be scorched by the rays of the sun. In it the poet says — ‘vyuccha duhitar divo ma ciram tanuthā apah / net tvā stenam yathā ripum tapāti sūro arciṣā sujāte asvasunṛte //’ [O Usā the daughter of heaven dispel darkness. Do not delay our activities. O one of noble birth who is invoked for the sake of the horse may not the sun with its rays burn you in the manner in which one punishes a hostile thief.]

The day to day phenomenon of the soft lustre of dawn merging with the bright sunlight has been depicted poetically as the dawns

taking refuge in the refulgent sun; ‘ruśantam bhānumarūṣāśirasīśriyuh’ (1.92.2d). Sāyāna in his commentary on this passage says—‘...ārocamanāsta uṣasah...şubhravarṇam...sūryam...āsevanta / tena saha ekībhavantīyarthāḥ’.

Not only the sun-god but the rain-god Indra too has been described in the Rgveda as hostile to Uṣā. It is said in IV.30.9 that the mighty god Indra crushed the chariot of Uṣā and she being frightened by him fled away. According to Hillebrandt here Indra is none other than the sun-god himself and as such the verse in question describes the same natural phenomenon which one comes across in verse V.79.9.viz., the sun overpowering the dawn.

Hillebrandt, however, seems to have missed the fact that the hymn to which the verse IV.30.9 belongs also describes hostilities between the sun and Indra. A more plausible explanation of the hostility of Indra towards Uṣā seems to be the phenomenon of a thunderstorm taking place at daybreak. This is because the hymns which speak of this hostility have depicted Indra as the killer of Vṛtra, Śambara and Šuṣṇa who are well-known in the Rgvedic mythology as the obstructors of rain.

Thus, in X.138.5 it is said

27. Griffith however, has translated this passage as ‘red-hued, they have attained their fulgent brilliancy ’, The Hymns Of The Rgveda , p.58
28. Cf. IV.30.8-11; X.73.6; X.138.5.
30. See IV.30.4 & 6.
31. Cf. I. 32.10; I.51.11; I. 52.6; I.59.6; I.121.11 etc.
that when Indra the killer of Vṛtra frightened away the enemies
the sun began emerging and consequently Uṣā foresook her
cart. A similar idea has also been expressed in X.73.6.

Kosambi however, has interpreted the myth of Indra's enmity with Uṣā as representing a conflict between the cult of Uṣā
and that of Indra. According to him Uṣā was a mother goddess
belonging to an earlier period whose cult was overpowerd by the
new war-god of the patriarchal invaders. Kosambi seems to feel
that conflict of these two cults can be the only explanation of this
myth, for as he says in the *Rgveda* ' there is no reason or expla-
nation given for ' the hostility between the two deities. He is
also of the opinion that Uṣā is a pre-Aryan Mother-goddess.
According to him after the conflict with the cult of Indra, Uṣā's ear-
lier high position became degraded to that of a hetaera.

Hillebrandt is also of the opinion that Uṣā has been considered a
wicked woman in some hymns of the *Rgveda*. These observa-
tions are now being examined in the light of Sāyaṇa's commentary.

As it has been already stated above Uṣā is depicted in some
verses as the mother of the sun. In one verse (1.113.19) she has
been called the mother of even all the gods. According to Sāyaṇa

32. Cf. Sāyaṇa on X.138.5.
33. Kosambi, D.D., Indian Studies : Past & Present, No.1,
1959, pp159-60
34. Ibid, p.159
in this verse she is depicted either as the mother of the gods or as the creator of lights. According to Skandasvāmin however, in this verse in which Uṣā is called 'mātā devānām' she is depicted as the mother of the Āditays. The most significant however, is the fact that in IV.2.15 she has been referred to as the mother of the very first worshippers of Agni on earth. It is said that the seven primeval sages viz., the Āṅgirasas generated these worshippers out of 'mother Uṣā'.

So far Kosambi's opinion that Uṣā in Rgveda has been connected with hetaerism is concerned, it is based on (a) Sāyaṇa's interpretation of the word vrā as a name of Uṣā and on the fact that (b) this particular word occurs in the Rgvedic passage 'viśyā iva vrā anasvantaḥ' (I.126.5). In this passage the word vrā is qualified by the word viśyā which in the opinion of Kosambi points to the system of having common clan wives the abolishment of which led to the rise of prostitution in society. In this connection he has also referred to the view of Geldner who too has taken the word viśyā as denoting prostitutes. Here one would like to refer to Sāyaṇa's interpretation of the above quoted passage. He

36. 'divyantīti devāh raśmayasteśāṁ nirmātri' Sāyaṇa on I.113.19, Also see Skandasvāmin on I.113.19, Rgveda, part II, Hoshiarpur.
37. See Sāyaṇa on IV.2.15
38. See Sāyaṇa on I.121.2 and IV.1.16
40. Ibid, p.162
says – ‘viṣaḥ prajāstatra bhava viṣyāḥ/ vriyanta iti vrā vrātāḥ ..... viṣām vrātā yathā parasparamurāgavantastathaiva ete apīyarthah’. Griffith too has translated the passage ‘viṣyā iva vrā’ as ‘like troops of subjects’.\(^4\)

Kosambi has identified Uṣā with Urvaśī saying that Uṣā is her higher form. The point of identity between the two according to him is that in X.95.8 and 9 Urvaśī and her companions are described as stripping off their garments. In the same manner Uṣā is also described as baring ‘herself to the sight of men’. Again in I.124.7 Uṣā is described as revealing ‘her secret charms like a lascivious woman or like a smiling one’ (\textit{hasreva}) and also as approaching ‘men like a brotherless woman..... for the sake of wealth’. According to him in this verse she is obviously described as approaching men like a brotherless woman who displays herself to collect a dowry. He also states that depiction of Uṣā as ‘revealing her bosom and charms to men is quite common’ in the \textit{Rgveda}. Kosambi by way of illustration quotes the Rgvedic passage ‘nodhā iva āvirakṛta priyāṇī’ (I.124.4\(^b\)) and interprets the word \textit{nodhā} as ‘a girl with yet immature breasts’. On the basis of these observations he arrives at the conclusion that it is Uṣā’s ‘function to attract men’.\(^4\)

Goddess Uṣā, as we know has been vividly depicted in

\(^4\) \textit{The Hymns Of The Rgveda}, p.87
\(^4\) \textit{Indian Studies: Past & Present}, No.1, 1959, pp 158-59,163
the _Rgveda_ as a young maiden who being bedecked and bejewelled by her mother shows off her lustrous form. The seer of I.123.11 says—‘susamkāsā mātrmrṣṭeva yοṣā vistanvrkṛnuṣe drṣe kam’.

In the very next passage of the same verse the seer addresses her as _bhadrā_ (the noble one) and entreats her to dispel darkness with her lustre. Again in I.124.6 her form has been called pure. In I.123.10 she has been described as smilingly approaching the _deva_ and revealing her bosom before him. As pointed out by Sāyaṇā the _deva_ in question can be none other than the sun whose _yoṣā_ she is. A similar picture of Uṣā has been drawn in I.124.7 too, in which she has been clearly compared to a wife longingly and smilingly approaching her husband. In this verse the seer says—‘jāyeva patyā uṣāti suvāsā uṣā hasreva ni riṇite apsaḥ’. Sāyaṇā in his commentary on this verse observes as follows: ‘uṣāḥ atinaisena andhakārenāvṛtattvāt malinavasanāpi prabhāte svatejasāvṛtattvāt suvasanā satīpatisthānyena sūryeṇa sākāṁ samkrīḍamāṇā hasreva hasaneva apsaḥ dantasthānīyāni rūpāṇi nīlapitādīni yadvā nirūpyamāṇāni padārthajātāni nitarāṁ ni riṇite gamayati prakāśayatītyarthāḥ’. In the first two _pādas_ of the same verse Uṣā has been compared to a brotherless maiden who approaches men for wealth. The text runs as follows: ‘abhrāteva purīsa eti pratiṣī gartārgiva sanaye dhanānām’

43. Sāyaṇā on I. 123.10
44. Cf. _Nirukta_, 3.6. Also see Durga Ibidem.
According to Sāyaṇa this passage consists of two sentences. In the first sentence the word *pumisah* means *pitrādīn*. He is of the opinion that in this sentence Usā is either compared to a maiden who being brotherless has to approach her father and other members of her family for clothes and ornaments, or is compared to a brotherless maiden who goes to her father's house for performing *pitṛkarma*. *Pitṛkarma* as one knows is otherwise the duty of a son. The son not being there, the daughter has to perform it. The purport of the passage according to Sāyaṇa is as follows: just as such a maiden goes to her father's place so also Usā approaches the sun for the sake of her own manifestation. In this case the sun is like her father. Thus, this passage alludes to the fact that Usā owes her lustre to the sun.

In the second sentence of the abovementioned text Usā is compared to a *gartāruk*. Sāyaṇa interprets the word *garta* as *grhaṇāma*, but goes on to say that in the present context it means the place where the officials and judges of the royal court take their seats. According to him *gartāruk* is the person who ascends this place. In his opinion, the purport of the passage is that just as a widow in order to get her rightful share of her late husband's property approaches the platform of justice so also Usā

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45. A similar idea has also been expressed by Yāska. Cf. *Nirukta* 3.6
46. Cf. Sāyaṇa on I.124.7a
47. Cf. *Nighaṇṭu*, 3.4
goes to her home i.e., to heaven for obtaining her wealth of light. Yāska, however, offers a completely different explanation of this passage. According to him it refers to a childless widow who has to climb a garta i.e., a post for proving her chastity so that she may gate her share of her late husband's property. 48

So far as the meaning of the Rgvedic passage 'nodhā iva etc. (quoted by Kosombi in support of his view that Uṣā acts like a seducer) is concerned, Sāyaṇa gives a completely different interpretation of the same. The passage in question belongs to the following pāda:

\[
\text{'upo adarśi śundhyuvo na vakṣo nadhā ivavākṛta priyāni/}
\]

(1.124.4\text{ab}). The words nodhā śundhyu, and vakṣa are explained respectively by Yāska as (a) 'nodhā ṛṣīrbhavati navanām dadhāti ', (b)śundhyurādityo bhavati ', and (c) 'vakṣo bhāso'. Sāyaṇa has taken up these interpretation and has said that 'śundhyuvo vakṣa ' means the rays of the sun which are his 'vakṣasthāniya '. Just as these rays are seen by all so also Uṣā is perceived by one and all. Again just as the seer Nodhā in course of his 'devatāstuti ' reveals to the gods all that is dear to him so also Uṣā manifests her lustre which is dear to all. A more or less similar interpretation of this text has been offered by Veṅkaṭamādhava also.

He says — ‘ uṣā upadṛṣyate śodhayitarādityasya vakṣa iva / seyamṛṣi nodhā iva stutyā kāmān āvīṣkurute rūpāṇi ’. 50

It may be mentioned in this connection that the Rgvedic passage in which Uṣā is described as revealing her bosom just like a cow yielding her udder 51 is nothing but a imagery depicting the first rays of daybreak and need not necessarily be taken in a literal sense. Depiction of Uṣā in all the Rgvedic texts referred to in this discussion are instances of poetical fancy in which the poet volitionally imagines an object under the character of another. 52 In it the poet or the reader remains conscious of the difference between the Prakṛta and Aprakṛta. It may not be out of context to state here that just as Uṣā has been fancied as a dancing girl or as a brotherless one so also she has been imagined as a ‘ sunāri ’ or ‘ bhadrā yoṣā ’. Thus, in one verse it is said ‘ yoṣeva bhadrā ni riṇīte apṣaḥ ’. 53

So far as Hillebrandt’s view that Uṣā is depicted in the Rgveda as a ‘ wicked woman, is concerned, one should take into consideration the Vedic text on the basis of which such a

50. Veṅkaṭamādhava on 1.124.4 ; Rgveda, Hoshiarpur. In the Rṣyaṇukramāṇi the name Nodhā is mentioned as the seer of RV, I.58-64, VIII.88 and IX.93.
51-I.92.4b.
52. ‘ sambhāvanotpṛeksā prakṛtasya parātmanā ’,
Sāhityadarpan, X.40
53-I.48.5ab ; V.81.6b
view is upheld. The text in question runs as follows: ' striyam yaddurhanāyuvam vadhīr duhitaram divaḥ ' (IV.30.8). The word durhanāyuvam in this text has been interpreted by Hillebrandt as 'a wicked one'. Griffith too has translated it as 'meditating ill'. Sāyaṇa, on the other hand has interpreted the word as 'duṣṭahananamicchantīm'. This explanation seems to agree with the epithet ' mahiyamānām ' given to Uṣā in the very next verse.

Uṣā is hailed not only because she is the harbinger of light, but also because of the fact that with each daybreak there began another sacrificial day. To say in the words of the Rgvedic seer ' the dawns set forth the commencement of the great sacrifice by removing the darkness of the night '. In one verse (1.113.12) Uṣā has been called rtapā and rtejā which according to Sāyaṇa means respectively ' satyasya yajñasya vā pālayitī ' and ' yajñārtham prādurbhūtā '. It is said that she is born for the sake of the sacrifice for as it has been already mentioned above each sacrificial day begins at daybreak, Being sumaṅgalī she carries forth the sacrifice which is pleasing to the gods : ' sumaṅgalī vibhratī devavitim '. By dispelling darkness she as it were favours the performance of the sacrifice : ' aminātī daivam vratānī '.

54. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.220
55. Cf. IV.30.9
a deity who is honoured in the rituals, Uṣā is expected to bestow wealth upon the worshippers. Invocation of Uṣā as a dawn-goddess and as a goddess of the sacrifice has led to the rise of a good number of significant epithets pertaining to her. Gonda has presented a scholarly discussion on what he calls the 'descriptive names' of Uṣā. The most noteworthy epithet of Uṣā as it appears, is maghonī. The word magha as we know, means wealth. The single epithet maghonī suffices in fully depicting the nature of Uṣā. As a personification of dawn she possesses the wealth of light which she gives to one and all. In the Vedas while light has been equated with life and goodness, darkness has become the symbol of all that is hostile to them. In her capacity as a sacrificial deity Usā has become 'indratamā maghonī (VII.77.3a) who bestows material wealth upon the sacrificers. She is said to give immense wealth to the sacrificer who makes it a point to stay in the house (amā) i.e., in the place of sacrifice: amā sate vahasi bhūri vāmamuṣo devi dāśuṣe martāya (VI.64.6cd). Bergaigne has translated this passage as: 'Thou bringest abundant possessions, to a man

58. Cf. l.48.1, 2, 12,15,16; l. 92. 3, 7,8; IV.51.7,10; V.79.4,7; VI 65.2 etc.
59. See Epithets In The Rgveda, Gravenhage, 1959, pp96-105
60. Cf. l.48.10; l.113.16, 17; l.123.6; III. 61.3,4; VI.64.1; VII.77.2-4. etc.
61 Cf. Nighantu, 3.4.
who has not left his residence ' and has seen in Uṣā a goddess of fortune.

Two other noteworthy epithets of Uṣā are sūnrtāvati and sūnrtāvari. These are actually synonymous terms. According to Gonda they mean ' rich in youthful vitality '. He has interpreted the word sūnrtā as ' youthfully vital '. Therefore, he holds that in the passage viz., ' bhāsvatī netri sūnrtānām '(1.92.7 ; l.113.4a) Uṣā is described as ' brilliant bringer of forces of youthful vitality '.63

According to Sāyaṇa however sūnrtā means ' priyasatyātmikā vāk ' of which Uṣā is the ' pranetri '.64 According to Skandasvāmin the word sūnrtā, inspite of not being recorded in the Nighañtu as a synonym of Vāk stands for the same i.e., Vāk.65 Both Skandasvāmin and Veṅkaṭamādhava have interpreted the phrase ' netri sūnrtānām ' (1,113.12b) as netri/pranetri of speech.66 All the three commentators believe that Uṣā is called so because as Sāyaṇa says — ' uṣasi hi jātāyām manusyaśparamukhāḥ prāṇināḥ svasvavyāpārāya itastataḥ śabdāṁ kurvanti / ' 67

In this connection one would wish to refer to yet another

63. Epithets In The Ṛgveda, p.96
64. Sāyaṇa on I.92.7 Cf. Sāyaṇa on I. 3.11 for his detailed interpretation of the word sūnrtam.
65. Skandasvāmin on 1.3.11 ; Ṛgveda, Hoshiarpur, part I.
66. Ibid, part II.
67. Sāyaṇa on I.92.7. Also see Sāyaṇa and Skandasvāmin on l.113.4,12 and Skandasvāmin on l. 92. 7.
epithet of Uṣā viz., aśvasūṁṛtā. It occurs in the refrain ‘ sujāte aśvasūṁṛte’ found in V.79. Gonda translates the word as ‘whose vitality of youth is apparent by (gifts of ?; the daily appearance of the sun’s ?) horses’. Griffith on the other hand, has translated the same as ‘delightful with thy steeds’. He seems to agree more or less with the alternative explanation of the said word offered by Veṅkaṭaṁadhava viz. ‘kalyāṇāśve’. His first interpretation of the word is — ‘madarthaṁ kalyāṇanirṛcitrabhāde’ and it seems to mean ‘you who make auspicious sound for my sake’. However, this meaning does not appear to be quite clear for us. Śāyaṇa’s interpretation of the word ‘aśvasūṁṛte’ viz., aśvarthā priyasatyātmikā stutirvāg yasyāḥ sā ‘too seems to be vague in its meaning. One feels that perhaps the word may be taken to have meant ‘one who is lauded for the sake of obtaining horses as yāgaphala’. This is how the word has been translated by Trivedi.

Yet another plausible interpretation of this word may be obtained if the word aśva is taken to mean the all pervading sun. Then the word aśvasūṁṛte would mean one who is lauded for the sake of the all pervading one i.e. for the emergence of the sun.

68. Epithets In The Rgveda, P.98
69. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.278
70. Rgveda, Hoshiarpur, part IV, p.1921
In the *Nighantu* (1.11) the word *sarasvati* is listed among the synonyms of *Vāk*. In that same list occurs another word for speech viz., *sarah*. The word *sarasvati* is derived by adding the suffixes *matup* and *hip* to the word *sarah*. Durga takes note of the fact that in the *Nighantu* the synonyms of *Vāk* follow the synonyms of *Megha* and observes that this has been done because it is from the clouds that the biggest sound is produced. But the word *sarah* (with the same accent on the first syllable) also occurs in the *Nighantu* (1.12) among the synonyms of water. This list of synonyms of water comes immediately next to that of the synonyms of speech. Thus the word *sarasvati* derived from the word *sarah* comes to mean both *vāgvatī* (i.e.*śabdavatī*) and *udakavatī*. Yāska points out to the fact that in the *Rgveda*, *Sarasvati* is worshipped both as a river and as a divinity. He says 'vāk kasmāti? vacestrā sarasvatītyetasya nađīvad devatāvacca nigamā bhavanti'. According to Yāska the word *sarasvati* denotes a river: 'sara ityudakanāma sartestadvatī'. He has not stated the derivation of the word in the sense of a divinity. However, he has mentioned Sarasvati the goddess among

72. 'vāco nāmāni vāṁnāmāni uttarāni prakṛtebhyo meghanāmabhyaḥ/ meghesveva hi bhūyaśī vāgbhavatī'.
Durga on *Nirukta*, 2.7.
73. *Nirukta*, 2.7.
the 'madhyasthānā striyah' and has said that according to the Nairuktas she is 'madhyamikā vāk'. Skandasvāmin in his commentary on the *Rgveda* (I.3.11) says 'madhyamasthānā hi sarsavati/ sā ca garjitalakṣanāmi vācārṇi codayitī'. Sāyaṇa too has followed the view of the Nairuktas and has held that Sarasvatī as a divinity is the personification of the sound of thunder: 'madhyamasthānā hi vāk sarsavati'. In *Rgveda* V.43.11. the sacrificers invite Sarasvatī to come to the place of sacrifice from the great *Parvata* in heaven. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on this verse states as follows: 'yaṣṭavyā devī sarasvatī divoh dyotamānād dyulokādāgantu tathā bṛhatō mahataḥ parvataḥ parvavataḥ puraṇavataḥ priṇanavato'ntarikṣānmeghādvā .... āgacchantu / anena mādhyamikā vāgucyate // In this context one may refer to the observations made by Bergaigne to the effect that in Rgvedic verses clouds are often called mountains. He says – 'The clouds, with which mountains are enveloped (V.85.4), are considered themselves as mountains, not only because of the aspect which they assume on the edge of the horizon, but also and especially because the celestial rivers spring from them. The mountains, where the Maruts shine (VIII.7.1) and whose springs they cause to flow (V.59.7) are certainly the-clouds described in I.19.7'.

75. *Ibid*, II.27
76. Sāyaṇa on II 30.8 Cf. Sāyaṇa on VII.96.2 ; X.17.7.
The verse (V.43.11) mentioned above refers to Sarasvatī as *ghṛtāci* which means 'she who sends waters.' Thus, Sarasvatī as a deity of mid-region becomes associated with waters. Sarasvatī being a deity of the mid region becomes associated with Indra—the god of rain par excellance. She is particularly associated with the Maruts—the gods of storm and rain. Both Sarasvatī and the Maruts have the atmospheric ocean i.e., the mid-region as their mother. Just like Indra or the Maruts, Sarasvatī too kills Vṛtra the obstructor of rain. While Indra is called *paviravān* (VIII.1.24) Sarasvatī is called *pāviraṁ kanyā* (VI.49.7). According to Nirukta (12.30) the word *pāvira* means a pointed weapon: 'paviḥ śalyo bhavati yadvipunāti kāyam tadvat paviramāyudham'. Sarup translates the expression 'pāviraṁ kanyā' as 'the daughter of lightning' and Bergaigne translates the same as 'daughter of the thunderbolt'. It may be mentioned here that in X.65.13 *tanyatu* i.e., the resonance of lightning is called *pāviraṁ*. As

78. In I. 167.3 of *Rgveda* this epithet is given to lightning. Skandasvāmin explains the word as follows—'ghṛtamityudakānaṁ añcatirgatyarthah,..... udakam prthivim prati gamayati yā sā ', on 1.2.7.
79. Cf. VI.52.6 ; X. 131.5.
80. Cf. II.30.8 ; III. 54. 13 ; VII. 9.5 ; VII. 39.5 ; VII 36.6. ; X 78.6.
81. Cf. VI.61.7
82. (a) Sarup, L, *The Nighantu And The Nirukta*, Delhi, 1987, p. 193
pointed out by Khan when 'the thunderbolt moves it creates sound'. This sound belongs to the mid-region and represents Sarasvati, associated with the mid-region as 'mādhyamikā vāk'. Thus, Sarasvati is none other than a personification of the sound of thunder. Sarasvati the daughter of the thunderbolt is further called citrāyu (VI.49.7) i.e., she with a variety of movements. This expression seems to allude to the movements of lightning in the sky.

While her path is described as golden, she is called the terrible one: 'sarasvati ghorā hiranyavartanīḥ' (VI.61.7) Skandasvāmin in his commentary on this says — 'hiranya sādṛśi vidyudvartanirgamanamārgo yasyāḥ sā ..... yato vidyut tatastato gantrīityarthāḥ'. Sāyaṇa has simply held that the word 'hiranyavartanīḥ' means 'one who has a golden chariot'. According to Khan by this epithet Sarasvati the river is meant. He holds that the river goddess 'is so rich in wealth and so munificent in distributing it among mankind that she is symbolically supposed as traversing the golden path or possessing a chariot made of gold'. He has opined that the word hiranyavartanīḥ is akin to the word hiranyavatī.84 It may be mentioned here that in the Śāṅkhāyana brāhmaṇa (12.2) Sarasvati has been called one of the three forms of the thunderbolt. This seems to strengthen the view held by Skandasvāmin that by the word 'hiranyavartanīḥ' is meant Sarasvati

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84. Sarasvati in Sanskrit Literature, p. 59-60
the goddess of the mid-region who moves by the path of lightning. It is interesting to note that she has been described as a killer of Paṇi too. In I.6.5 one reads about Indra who with the help of the Maruts — who are apt in breaking untraversable terrains (‘ārujatnubhiḥ’) recovered the cows hidden by the Paṇis. In VI.61.1. Sarasvatī is said to have killed the great Paṇi. In the very next verse it is said that in doing so she with her very powerful rushing waters broke the ridges of the mountains: ‘śuṣmehbir ..... ārujat sānu giriṇāṁ taviśebhirūrmibhiḥ’. As one may see this description reminds one of the Maruts described in I.6.5. Therefore, one feels that Sarasvatī as described here is a personification of thunder and lightning accompanied by very heavy down pour. In VI.61.2. she is referred to as pārāvataghni. In the Nirukta, (2.24) the word pārāvata is interpreted as ‘ pāram pāram bhavati / avāramavaram ..... /’ i.e., pāram is that which is “afar” and avāram is that which is ‘near at hand’. Thus, the epithet pārāvatāghnī may be interpreted as ‘she who causes devastations far and wide. Incessant and heavy rains are indeed known to cause severe land slides in mountainous regions. Sāyaṇa too has said ‘ parāvati duśrādeśe vidyamānasyāpi vṛkṣāderhantrī’. He however, maintains that in the verse in question in which this epithet occurs the deity invoked is Sarasvatī— the river. Same is the view of Yāska too. But

85. Cf. Sāyaṇa on I.6.5.
86. Sarup. L., The Nighaṇṭu And The Nirukta , p.35
as can be gathered from the Rgveda rains, waters too are sometimes called rivers.

According to Bergaigne, the word sarasvatī is the name of the celestial river ‘par excellence’. As per Vedic concept, waters from the earth are carried to heaven by the rays of the sun and these accumulate in the disc of the sun. These are brought down to the mid-region by the Maruts and from there these fall down on earth as rains. This concept has been alluded to in the Rgvedic verses like I.6.9; V.54.9; V.59.1; V.60.1. etc. In verse X.75.1 it is said that the seven rivers have a threefold existence and of these rivers Sindhu is the mightiest. In his commentary on this verse Sāyaṇa has observed as follows: ‘tā nadyaḥ sapta sapta bhutvā tredhā prthivyāmantarikṣe divi ceti triprakāram cakramu prāvahan’. As we know Sarasvatī is counted as the seventh of the group of seven rivers mentioned in the Rgveda: ‘sarasvatī saptathī sindhumātā’ (VII.36.6). Celestial waters are referred to as Sindhus i.e., rivers in the Rgveda. In the Veda not only celestial rivers but also the celestial ocean has its prototype on earth. In the opinion of Bergaigne ‘the terrestrial rivers, at least the principal ones amongst them have each of them a

88. Cf. TS., 2.4.10.
89. Cf. II.12.3; V.53.7; VI.52.6; VII.47.4; X.64.13 etc.
90. Cf. Nirukta, 2.10.
celestial form’. The fact that in the concept of the *Rgveda* Sarasvatī has a two-fold existence has been clearly referred to in VI.61.11 and VII.96.1. The terrestrial counterpart of the celestial Sarasvatī was a mighty river on the banks of which many great sacrifices were held by the Vedic people. In the hymns dedicated to Sarasvatī both these forms are depicted side by side. In this way Sarasvatī becomes the river par excellence of Vedic India. She is lauded with choicest epithets like *nadināmasūryā* (VII.96.1), *ambitame nadítame devītame* (II.41.16), *uttarā sakhibhyāḥ* (VII.95.16), *apasāmapastamā* (VI.61.13) so on and so forth. Unlike some other deities of the *Rgveda* like Savitā, Indra, Puṣan, Uṣā etc. Sarasvatī’s naturalistic basis was not quite forgotten by the seer poets.

Sarasvatī as a deity of the atmospheric region is closely associated with her male counterpart Sarasvat. Sarasvat is an atmospheric deity. In I.164.52 this deity who is a giver of rain seems to have been identified as the sun. There it is said:

‘divyāṁ suparṇāṁ vāyasāṁ bhantamapāṁ garbhāṁ / abhipato vrṣṭibhiḥ tarpayantāṁ sarasvantamavase johavīṁ //’ But in VII.96.6 he seems to be depicted as the god of the sound of thunder. In the *Aitareya brāhmaṇa* (3.4) Sarasvat is said to be the god of

Yāska has stated that according to the Nairuktas Sarasvati is 'mādhyamikā vāk', and he has quoted the verse 'maho arṇah sarasvati’... etc. (1.3.12) as an example in which she is invoked as a goddess of speech. According to him in this verse she has been referred to as presiding over all wisdom.  
Sāyaṇa is of the opinion that in III.54.13 Sarasvati is depicted as the goddess of learning: ‘gadyapadya(tūpeṇa prasaranamasyaśtiti sarasvati vāgdevatā’.  
In the verse in question, Sarasvati is invoked together with the Maruts and Sāyaṇa’s aforestated explanation appears to be rather out of context. There is yet another verse in the Rgveda viz., IX.67.32 in which according to Sāyaṇa, Sarasvati has been invoked as a goddess of learning. This verse runs as follows: ‘pavamāṇīryo adhyetṛṣibhīḥ sambhṛtāṁ rasam / tasmai sarasvati duhe kṣīrāṁ sarirūmadhūdakam //’. Griffith has translated this verse as follows — ‘whoever reads the essence stored by saints, the Pāvamāṇī hymns, Sarasvatī draws forth for him water and butter, milk and meath’.  

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94. Nirukta, 11.27.
95. Sāyaṇa on III.54.13.
96. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p. 497
is 'very interesting' because it connects Sarasvati with rasa (essence of poetry) as well as with the student of the rasa of ancient poetry, unto whom a reward is offered by her. As against this Keith has expressed the opinion that in Rgvedic Sarasvati one 'need not see anything more than a river goddess'. A similar view has also been expressed by Airi. In his opinion 'the personality of Vāk in the RV 'essentially stands distinct from Sarasvati'. Nevertheless, he has admitted that 'goddess Vāk is seen in two forms in the RV and one of this is atmospheric speech'. He has further stated that Vāk (as described in VIII.100.10) 'gladdens the worshipper by shedding rain for their welfare'. Although nowhere in the Rksamhita Sarasvati has been directly identified as the goddess of speech, yet it seems that the later idea of Sarasvati as Vāgdevī has its root in this very Vāgdevī Samhitā, in the deification of the sound of thunder. Both goddess Vāk and goddess Sarasvati are described as having their origin or their abodes in the mid-region. Both have been associated with the act of giving rain. Again the origin of the sounds produced by the earthly beings is traced in the Rgveda to the goddess Vāk of the mid-region. The verse in question viz., VIII.100.11, clearly indicates

98. Keith, A.B., The Religion And Philosophy Of The Veda And Upanishads, part I, p. 173
99. Airi, R., Concept of Sarasvati, p. 38
100. Cf. I.164.41; V.43.11; VII.36.6; X.125.7.
the birth of the idea of a goddess of speech out of the idea of a goddess of the sound of thunder. Commenting on this verse Sāyana says — 'yam devīm dyotamānām mādhyamikām vācam devā mādhyamikā ajanayanta janayanti tām vācam viśvarupah sarvarūpāḥ vyaktavāc'vyaktavācaśca paśavo vadanti tat pūrvakatvādvākpravṛtteḥ'. However, it should always be noted that nowhere in the verses of the Ṛgveda, Sarasvati has been identified with the goddess Vāk. It is only from texts like the Nighantu and the Nirukta and the commentaries of traditional scholars, that one learns that Sarasvati is mādhyamikā vāk. The later concept of Sarasvati as the goddess of learning appears to have for its basis the following factors — (a) identification of Sarasvati as speech of the mid-region in the aforementioned works; (b) the allusion to the birth of the goddess of human speech from atmospheric goddess of speech; (c) recognition of Sarasvati as a very sacred river on the bank of which great sacrifices were performed to the accompaniment of recitation of Vedic Mantras; (d) depiction of Sarasvati as inspiring delightfully true speech and good intellect; (e) depiction of Sarasvati as showering milk, ghee, honey and water upon the student of the Pāvamāni verses and (f) allusion to

101. Cf. Lal, S.K., Female Divinities In Hindu Mythology And Ritual, p.178
102. Cf. 'codayitrī sūntānām cetantī sumātinām 'I.3.11, Sāyana, Skandasvāmin and Venkaṭa identify Sarasvati described here as Vāgdevi.
Sarasvati as a deity who bestows wealth upon the reciter of Mantras.

By the time of the later Vedic texts Sarasvati as a goddess of speech or intellect or learning becomes quite well established.

In the two Rgvedic Brāhmaṇas Sarasvati has been directly identified as Vāk. In Aitareya brāhmaṇa (3.37) it is said — 'vāgvai sarasvati paviravi'.

While discussing the nature of Rgvedic Sarasvati one needs to take into account two other noteworthy aspects of her nature as a female divinity. The first of these aspects is her association with the Pitṛs and the second is her depiction as a bestower of offsprings. Her association with the Pitṛs and her nature as a very sacred river reminds one of the holy river Gaṅgā of later period. When Sarasvati is worshipped for the sake of offsprings she is invoked with two other deities viz., the Aśvins and Sinīvālī. This aspect of her nature may perhaps be interpreted in the light of the fact that she is associated with the rains and rains cause regeneration in nature. This factor accompanied by the fact that Sarasvati is a female divinity would easily lead to the conception

103. X.30.12.
104. Cf. VS., XIX. 12 ; XXI.58 ; XXV.1 ; TS., V.7.11.1 ; V.7.12.1 ; AV., V.7.4 ; VI 3.2 ; TB., I.6.2.2 ; SB., 2.5.4.6 ; 7.5.1.31 ; TMB., 6.7.7 ; JB., 2.16.etc.
105. Cf. AB., 2.24 ; 3.1 ; 6.7 ; ŚāṅB., 5.2.12 ; 8.14.4.
106. Cf. X.17.8,9 ; II. 41.17 ; VI.61.1 ; VII.96.4-6 ; X.184.2
of Sarasvatī as a Mother Goddess — a symbol of fertility and as such would be worshipped for the protection of the unborn baby.

ĀPAH

The word āpaḥ which always occurs in the plural number is found in the Rgveda as the name of female divinities who are personifications of all waters in general. In other words these goddesses represent rain-waters, waters in the form of clouds, waters of springs, oceans and rivers and even of man made water bodies. They are all born in the mid-region or in heaven. Thus, it is said in the Rgveda that waters are divyāḥ (heavenly), khanitrimā (dug out of earth) and svayamiṇī (of natural springs). Although the Vedic people have located the origin of all waters in the atmospheric region, yet they were aware of the indestructible nature of water. They knew that clouds are formed when water-vapours rise upto heaven from the water-bodies on earth when it is scorched by the rays of the sun and that the same waters return to it as rains. This water cycle has been referred to in the following verse:

`samānametadudakam uccaiti avacāhabhiḥ / bhūmin parjanyā jinvanti divam jinvantyagnayāḥ//' (I.164.51) [ Uniform with the

107. In VS., XIX. 94. Sarasvatī is depicted as the wife of the Āśvins and mother of Indra.
108. Cf. VII.49.1, 2.
passing days, this water mounts and falls again. The tempest—clouds give life to earth, and fires re-animate the heaven '.—Griffith ]. The roles played by the rays of the sun and the thunder clouds in creating the waters have been clearly stated in VII.47.4. too. The verse runs as follows — ' yāḥ sūryo raśmibhirātatāna yābhya indro aradad gātumūrmim / te sindhavo varivo dhātanā no yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sadā naḥ// ' [ ' Whom Sūrya with his bright beams hath attracted, and Indra dug the path for them to travel, May these Streams give us ample room and freedom. Preserve us evermore, Ye Gods, with blessings ' — Griffith ]110 Thus, the observation made by Bergaigne to the effect that the Vedic Aryans were yet to arrive at that advanced stage of knowledge which have established the undestructible nature of the water cycle does not hold good.111

In IV.58.1 it has been said that the mysterious name of water is ' jihvā devānāmāmṛtasya nābhiḥ’. Water being the tongue of the immortal gods never dries up and thus becomes the essence of immortality. Significantly water is called ' the tongue’ for, the tongues of men and animals are characteristically always remain wet. The Vedic Aryans, appear to have used the word āpah (which always occurs in the plural number) to

110 *Ibid*, p.359. Cf. Sāyana on VII.47.4
to indicate all waters which never being destroyed essentially remain the same everywhere and thus are immortal.

In the invocations of Āpaḥ two distinct characteristics of these divinities come to the forefront. One is that of mothers and the other that of healers and purifiers. They are time and again lauded as mothers. In VI.50.7, Āpaḥ are called 'mātrtamāḥ bhīṣajaḥ' and 'sthātuḥ jagataḥ janitriḥ'. In another verse they are hailed as 'āpo asmān mātaraḥ śundhayantu' (X.17.10). In yet another verse the seer calls the water divinities 'bhuvanasya janitrīḥ'. Again in X.9.2 the worshippers beg Āpaḥ to bless them with 'śivatamaḥ rasaḥ'. The relation between a mother and her children is alluded to in this verse through the phrase 'usatiriva mātaraḥ'. Commenting on this verse Sāyana observes as follows—'usatya iva putrasamṛddhim kāmayamānā mātaraḥ stanyarasam yathā bhājayanti prāpayanti tadvat'. Etymologically the word mātṛ means one who creates the same logic which has led to the conception of Sarasvatī as a Mother Goddess, seems to have formed the basis for the origin and development of the concept of the waters as Mother-Goddesses. In the first stage of this development the word mātṛ must have been used in its etymological sense. As one feels with the passing of time as the result of a natural mental

112. Cf.I.23.16.
process of thinking on the part of the worshippers Āpaḥ became the mothers of all moving and non-moving beings. However, in the personification of the water-goddesses their original character as a natural phenomenon was never lost. In other words Āpaḥ are deities whose personification has remained rather incomplete.

The concept of the water-goddesses as healers or purifiers seems to be closely connected with their being looked upon as mother-goddesses. This has further led to the concept of these goddesses as holy mothers. 113

The idea that these goddesses are cleansers or healers of diseases seems to have arisen out of the hygienic value of water in man's day to day life. In nature too showers of rain are always seem to have cleansed the atmosphere there by introducing a new sense of freshness which is both lively and soothing. This is why the Vedic seer says — ‘apsvantaramṛtamapsu bheṣajam’ (1.23.19). 114 The idea of the water divinities as cleansers was extended by the seers of hymn poetry from the physical to the moral sphere. They became cleansers of all kinds of sins committed by man and were invoked for washing them away: ‘idamāpaḥ pravahata yat kimca duritāṁ mayi’

113. Cf. VI.50.7; X.17.10.
114. Cf. ‘apsu me somo’braṇī antaḥ viśvānī bheṣaja’, 1.23.20; ‘yūyum hi sthā bhiṣajah’, VI.50.7. Also see 1.23.21; VII 49.2.
yadvā ahamabhidudroha yadvā śepu utānṛtam // ' (1.23.22).\textsuperscript{115}

[ 'Whatever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have wrought. If I have lied or falsely sworn, Waters remove it far away from me '— Griffith ].\textsuperscript{116}

Before concluding this discussion on the nature of the water-goddesses one should take note of a few Rgvedic verses dedicated to Āpha. This is because, these particular verses seem to shed some light upon the myth of Indra's excessive fondness for the drink of soma-juice as well as on the relation between soma and the waters. It is said that this juice of the soma plant exhilarates him and gives him strength for doing away with the Asuras and for performing other deeds of valour. As examples one may quote the following passages from the Rgveda —

(a) ' asya mandāno madhvo vajrahaso'himindra arṇovṛtam vivṛṣcat' (II.19.2\textsuperscript{ab}) [ 'Cheered by this meath Indra, whose hand weilds thunder, rent piecemeal Ahi who barred up the waters........'— Griffith ]\textsuperscript{117} (b) ' uto nvasya papivāṁśamindram na kaścana sahatā āhavesu ' (VI.47.1\textsuperscript{cd}) [ 'No one may conquer Indra in the battle when he hath drunken of the draught offered by us '— Griffith ].\textsuperscript{118}

\textsuperscript{115. Cf. Sāyaṇa on 1.23.22.}
\textsuperscript{116. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.14}
\textsuperscript{117. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.142}
\textsuperscript{118. Ibid, p.312. Cf. VII.22.2; VIII.81.6.}
verse dedicated to Āpaḥ it is said: ‘ apāminapāt madhumatīrāpo
dā yābhirindro vārvṛde vīryāya ’ ( X.30.4 cd ). In this verse
Āpaḥ are called full of sweetness and are said to bestow
strength upon Indra. Indra seems to take as much delight in
the sweetness of Āpaḥ as he does in that of soma-juice. Thus,
it is said: ‘ tamūrmimāpo madhumattamam vo’pām napādavatu
āśuhemā / yasminnindra vasubhir mādayāte ..... // ’ ( VII.47.2 )
[ ‘ May the Floods’ Offspring, he whose course is rapid, protect
that wave most rich in sweets, O Waters, That shall make Indra
and the Vasus joyful.....’ — Griffith. ] Commenting on this
verse Sāyaṇa has interpreted the words ‘ madhumattamam
ūrmim ’ as ‘ rasavattamam prasiddham somākhyam rasam ’.
In this verse Aparśi Napat — the deity of lightning has been
invoked to protect the sweetness of the water deities. Āpaḥ are
called the source of madhu in X.30.7 and 8 too. The sweetness
contained in water has been called the exhilarating drink of
Indra: ‘ matsaramindrapānamūrmim ’ ( X.30.9a ). It is inter­
esting to note that the sweet wave of waters drunk by Indra is
said to be born in the sky or in the sun and has been referred
to as ‘ tritantu ’ i.e., having three streams. According to Sāyaṇa
this drink is nothing but the rain water.120 It may be mentioned
in this connection that the phrase ‘ madhumān ūrmim ’ happens

119. The Hymns Of The Rgveda , p.359
120. Cf. X. 75.2 ; Sāyaṇa Ibidem.
to be an epithet of soma-juice also: 'indavo madhumanta urmayaḥ' (IX.86.2d). Like Ṛpaḥ soma too is born in heaven and is called 'divah śīśuḥ' (IX.39.5b) 121 Being exhilarating to the gods soma flows for the sake of Indra, Varuṇa and Vāyu— the three deities connected with waters. It is said that soma covers the sky and it is obtained when water and milk are milked from the sky. 123 Indra is said to have drunk three ponds full of soma while killing Vṛtra and this soma was milked by the Prśnis from the clouds. 124 Just as on one hand the god Soma is called the creator of rivers, on the other he is said to have celestial rivers as his mothers. 125 In this way we come across many statements in the Rgveda which seem to identify the juice of soma with the waters. In this connection one may refer to Bergaigne who is of the opinion that in the Rgveda Soma is said to have had its origin in the celestial waters, 126 i.e., in the rains.

In the Rgvedic mythology the sweet essence of the rain water becomes Indra's drink. It exhilarates and revitalises him and for its sake he kills the demon Vṛtra.

121. Cf. IX. 86.15. c
122. Cf. IX.84.1.
123. Cf. IX.83.5 ; IX.74.4.
124. Cf. V. 29.7,8 ; VI. 17.11 ; VIII.7.10.
125. Cf. IX.97.41 : IX.86.19 ; IX. 61.7.
Worship of trees and plants is one of the oldest cults which has survived till date in many societies. Trees and plants like the Āsvattha and the Tulasī are still being worshipped in India. Instances of worship of plants, trees, shrubs etc. in the Vedas, barring of course the Atharvaveda, are very few and far in between. The Ṛgveda consists of only one hymn (X.97) in honour of plant deities i.e., Oṣadhayaḥ and another one in that of the forest as a whole (X.146). Plants seem to have been deified because of their utilitarian value as bearers of fruits and leaves which besides providing food and nourishment to both men and animals also contain in them powers to cure ailments and diseases. Men from very ancient times were aware of the usefulness of trees and plants. Almost all parts of plants such as fruits, leaves, barks and roots have been utilised by men from ancient times for curing diseases. In the lone Rgvedic hymn addressed to Oṣadhayaḥ the healing, nourishing and revitalising qualities of various plants have been lauded. It is interesting to note that the seer of the hymn is a certain 'Bhiṣag', i.e., a medicine-man. It may also be noted that just as in case of Āpaḥ personification of Oṣadhayaḥ too has remained incomplete. This hymn dedicated to the plant-goddesses.

127. Cf. X.97.1.
is supposed to be recited during application of medicine to a 
patient. This has been indicated in X. 97. 22. The recitation 
is supposed to increase the potency of the medicine which is 
being applied. This has been indicated by the expression 
‘ brhaspatiprasūtāḥ ’ ( X.97.15,19 ). Brhaspati, as suggested 
by Sāyaṇa here means "mantrabhimāṇī devaḥ". 

It seems that the Oṣadhayaḥ are considered to be 
female deities, for both among humans and animals, it is 
only the females who provide nourishment to their offsprings 
and take care of them. The epithet mātaraḥ applied to these 
goddesses is indicative of this fact. In X.97.4 it is said : 
‘ oṣadhirīti mātarastadvo devirūpa bruve ’. In his commentary 
on this passage Sāyaṇa observes as follows : ‘ mātaraḥ janānāṁ 
mātrabhūtāḥ / mātrvaddhitakāritvāt mātrtvopacāraḥ / athavā mātara 
ārogyanirmātryaḥ /’

The Oṣadhis have been classified into four varieties viz., 
Aśvāvatī, Somāvatī, Īrjayantī and Udojaḥ. Sāyaṇa has left 
these words unexplained, and so has Veṅkaṭamādhava. Griffith 
has translated the words as ‘ rich in steeds, rich in soma, in 
nourishment, in strengthening power ’. It appears that the

129. Sāyaṇa on X.97.15. 
130. X.97.7. 
131. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.611
word *aśvāvati* derived from the word *aśva* (derived from *Vaś* to pervade) may be interpreted as meaning medicinal plants which are effective on a large variety of diseases or which have immediate effect on patients. So far as the word *somāvatī* is concerned, we know from verses dedicated to Soma or Indra that the *soma*-plant acts as an exhilarant or as a stimulant. Thus, *somāvatī* might have meant those plants used as medicines, which when applied rouse the vital functions of one's body or rouse one's mind. In fact the *soma*-plant has been called the best and the king of all Osadhis.  

The other two words viz., 'ūrjayantī' and 'udojah' seem to stand for plants used as tonics to nourish and strengthen the body. The potency of the medicinal herbs has been alluded to through the epithets 'sajitvari' (X.97.3) i.e., 'those which conquer all at once' and 'niśkṛtīḥ' (X.97.9) i.e., 'the relieving ones'. As can be gathered from the hymn dedicated to the plant-goddesses a great variety of plants and herbs having medicinal value were available in Ṛgvedic India.

\[ \text{\textit{NADYAH}} \]

The terrestrial rivers other than Sarasvati which have been invoked as goddesses in the *Ṛgveda* are Gaṅgā, Yamunā.

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132 X. 97. 18,19,23.
133.Cf. Sāyaṇa on X.97.3.
134.Cf. X.97.1,2 and 18.
Sindhu, Vipāśā, Śutudrī, Parusṇī, Marudvṛdhā, Asiknī, Vitastā, Āṛjikīyā, Susoma, Tristamā, Rasā, Susartu Śvetyā Kubhā, Mehantu, Krumu and Gomati. Of these the last eight rivers are tributaries of Sindhu. Griswold has pointed out that the mention of Gaṅgā in X.75.5 indicates that this hymn was composed at a period when the Ṛgvedic people had advanced further towards the eastern part of the country. So far as the geographical locations of these rivers are concerned Stein has made the following observation — 'The analysis of the river names given in our Ṛgveda verse has proved that leaving aside the still uncertain Āṛjikīā, they follow each other in strict order from the east to west'.

The primary deity of X.75, which consists of nine verses is the river Sindhu. She has been described as a mighty river flowing swiftly through mountainous regions. The sound of her roaring waters is described as touching the sky. Sindhu has for her lord the deity Varuṇa who it is said has dug out her path. Thus, in the hymn we read the following description: 'pra te'radadvaruno yātave pathah sindho yadvajān abhyadravastvam / bhūmyā adhi pravatā yāsi sānunā yadeśāmagrami jagatāmirajyasi // divi svano yatate

135. X.75.5,6 ; III. 33.1
137. A,Stein as quoted by Griswold, p.300, fn.1.
bhūmyoparyanantam śuśmamudiyarti bhānunā / abhrādiva pra
stanayanti vṛṣṭayāḥ sindhuryadeti vṛṣabho na roruvat // '(X.75.2,3)
[ 'Varuṇa cut the channels for thy forward course, O Sindhu.
when thou runnest on to win the race. Thou speedest o'er
precipitous ridges of the earth, when thou art Mistress and
Leader of these moving floods. Her roar is lifted up to heaven
above the earth: she puts forth endless vigour with a flash
of light. Like floods of rain that fall in thunder from the cloud,
so Sindhu rushes on bellowing like a bull'.]138 In yet another
verse (X.75.8) river Sindhu is depicted as a maiden beau-
tifully clad in a golden robe and mounted on a beautiful chariot.
She is referred to as rich in horses, in food, wool and in plants
called Silamā and Nīgunḍī. 139 This description of the river
indicates the characteristics of the settlement on the banks of
Sindhu.

In hymn III.33. we come across a dialogue between sage
Viśvāmitra and the rivers Vipāśā and Śutudrī. Here Viśvāmitra
invokes the two rivers so that they may make way for his chariot
to cross them. The rivers being pleased with his invocations

138. This is Griffith’s translation with slight modifications introduced
to it. Cf. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.587. Griffith has referred
to Sindhu in the masculine gender. In the verses Sindhu has
been indicated as a female deity and Sāyaṇa has called her a
devī.

139. Cf. Śāyaṇa on X.75.8.
oblige him. The sage in his invocation has called Śutudri the most motherly one and Vipāśā the broad and rich one. They are said to have been created by their lord Indra, the killer of Vṛtra. At his ordinance they increase in volume and flow on. This seems to indicate that these two rivers were primarily fed by rain waters. While concluding it may be mentioned that personification of these rivers is but very slight.

PRTHIVĪ, DYĀVĀPRTHIVĪ AND RODASĪ

Although the Rgvedic Indians were very much preoccupied with life on earth, the Rksamhitā consists of only one complete hymn dedicated to the goddess of earth and it consists of only three verses. However, she has been invoked in five complete hymns along with heaven as a dual divinity called Dyāvāprthivī. Again in a few verses Prthivī has been eulogised together with heaven as a dual goddess called Rodasī. Besides these there are groups of verses as well as scattered verses belonging to different Sūktas dedicated to different gods, in which the earth-goddess also has her share of eulogies.

The word prthivī is derived from Vprath — to spread out and has been explained by Yāska as "prathanāt prthivīyāhuḥ." This derivation has its basis in the Rgveda itself where for

140. III. 33.6. Also see III. 33.2.
141. Nirukta, 1.13.
example in a verse (II.15.2) Indra is said to have spread out the earth: ‘प्रथिवीम पप्रथात’. Similar allusions to the derivation of the word प्रथिवी are found in other Vedic texts too.142

Sāyaṇa too has interpreted the word as ‘viprathanavati’.143

In the Nighaṇṭu (1.3) the word प्रथिवी is recognised as representing both the earth and the atmospheric region. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on V. 84.1 has stated that it is dedicated to the goddess of the mid-region. He is also of the opinion that there are two forms of प्रथिवी — the goddess and the physical earth. It seems that according to him the goddess प्रथिवी is the presiding deity of both the earth and the mid-region. In the very first verse of the hymn to प्रथिवी the distinction between the goddess प्रथिवी and भूमि has been indicated. In it the seer says — ‘बजित्था परवतनामः क्षिद्रां बिब्हर्षि प्रथिवि प्र यां भूमिमः प्रवातवति महन्ना जिनोषि महिनी //’ Sāyaṇa has interpreted this verse as follows: ‘...........viprathanavati mādhyasthānādevate tvam itthā itthamatra amutrāntarikṣe vā baṭ satyāṁ parvatānāṁ meghānāṁ vā khidram khedanam bhedanam bibharṣi dhārayasi he mahini mahati he pravatvati prakāṛṣṇavati pravaṇodakavati vā yātvām bhūmim pratyakṣāṁ prthivim mahnā mahatvena mahatodakenā vā prajīnoṣi prakāṛṣṇa prīnavasi.

142. Cf. ‘tāmaprathayat sa prthivyabhavat’, ŚB., 6.1.1.5; ‘sa (prajāpatiḥ).....tat puṣkaraparne prathayattat prthivyai prthivitvam’, TB., 1.1.6.6,7.
143. Sāyaṇa on V. 84.1.
The second verse of this hymn also throws sufficient light on the nature of goddess Prthivī. In it on one hand she is called vicārīni — i.e., the moving one and on the other, has been hailed as arjunī i.e., she of white colour (of white lustre). She is hailed as a goddess who scatters the rain-bearing clouds. These descriptions too appear to project her as a goddess of both the physical earth and the atmospheric region. This fact has been presented more clearly in the last verse of the hymn. There it is said that goddess Prthivī grasps the trees (or firmly grasps the trees on earth) with her might and her clouds in the sky cause downpours of rain and flashes of lightning.

In the concept of the dual divinity called DyāvāPrthivī the mid-region becomes automatically included in it. There is indeed a verse describing the sun moving in the space between heaven and earth. According to Sāyaṇa the sun does so by the grace of heaven and earth. In this connection it may be recalled that in the Rgveda there occurs a verse (VII.104.23) in which prthivī has been distinguished from antarikṣa. In this case however, the two words prthivī and antarikṣa seem to stand rather for the physical earth and the atmosphere above it, treated as animated objects. This fact has been taken note of by Sāyaṇa in his commentary on VII.104.23.

In the hymns to Dyāvaprthivī, the pair is sometimes depicted as husband and wife and are called the father and mother respectively of all-beings. The pair has also been projected as twin sisters. These two concepts of Dyāvaprthivī further allude to the idea that heaven and earth are complementary to each other and they act together. This has been clearly stated in a verse which runs as follows: 'pitā mātā viśvavidā sudāṃsasā / samirāṇe rodasī' (VI.70.6). [Heaven and earth — the father and mother the knowers of all are of wonderful deeds, are in union.] A similar idea has been expressed in III.54.7 in which Dyāvaprthivī are called 'samānyā svasārau'.

Heaven and earth are considered the parents (mātārau) not only of moving and non-moving beings, but even of the gods. They are said to have given birth to the gods, for the safety of all: 'devānāmavasā janitrī' (I.185.6). They are called devaputre quite a number of times. In one verse heaven and earth have been referred to as the parents of the sun, who it is said purifies all not excluding its parents. But

145. Cf. I 185.10,11 ; VI.70.6 ; I.191.6 ; I.164.33.
146. Cf. I.185.5 ; III 54.7.
147. Cf. Sāyaṇa on VI.70.6.
149. Cf.I.158.3.
150. Cf. I.106.3 ; I.185.4 ; IV.52.2 ; VI.17.7 ; VII.53.1.
in the very next verse the sun has been called the creator of Dyāvāprthivī. The epithet devaputre seems to refer to the fact that all natural phenomena like the sun, fire, wind, thunder, lightning etc. have their origin and existence within the space covered by heaven and earth. All activities in nature are carried through these natural phenomena. These are the powers and objects which bestow life on nature. In this sense they become the Putras 152 i.e., 'protectors' of heaven and earth. In fact this idea has been alluded to in the Rgveda by describing heaven and earth as cradling the gods who in their turn carry on their respective activities in the bosom of Dyāvāprthivī.153 The concept of Dyāvāprthivī as the parents of all beings further leads to the idea of celestial origin of man. Thus, in I.164.33ab it is said: 'dyaurme pitā janitā nābhiratra bandhurme mātā prthivī mahīyam'. 154 This passage may be compared to yet another passage where it is said: 'amī ye saptaraśmayastatrā me nābhīrātata' (I.105.9a).155 The idea that heaven is the creator of all has been directly stated in the passage viz., 'pitā yat sīmabhī rūpair avāsayat' (I.160.2d) .[For, the father (heaven) has caused all to be clothed in beautiful forms.]

152. Cf. 'putraḥ purutrāyate niparanādvā ', Nirukta, 2.11.
153. Cf. III.54.8-10
In this context it should be noted that although Dyaus is called a father, the word *dyaus* is itself in feminine gender. The dual divinity Dyāvāprthivī is also female. The Rgvedic seers have bestowed on this deity a number of epithets like *devī, yajate* (worthy of worship), *ṛtāvarī* (truthful ones), *Yajñasya netrī* (leaders of the sacrifice), *gabhīre, sumeke* (well fashioned ones), *anādhāre* (supportless ones), *śucī, madhudughe* (the showerers of honey), *ajare* etc. However, inspite of such personifications, the original nature of Dyāvāprthivī as physical earth and heaven has never been lost. The activities of nature that go on in the bosoms of heaven and earth have been alluded to in a number of verses like 1.150.4.; 1.160.3.; IV.56.1 and VI.70.2,4,5.\(^{157}\)

Out of the many epithets of heaven and earth one particular epithet viz., *rodasi* deserves special mention. This epithet has been used to qualify heaven and earth so frequently that it has become a distinct name of this dual divinity. In the Nighaṇṭu (3.30) this word occurs as a synonym of Dyāvāprthivī. In the Aitareyabrāhmaṇa (2.41) Rodasī is identified as heaven and earth: ‘dyāvāprthivī vai rodasī’.\(^{158}\) The word *rodasi* derived from *Vṛud* — to cry means ‘śabdam kurvāne’.\(^{159}\)

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156. Cf. IV.56.2,3,4; VI.70.1.
157. Cf. Sāyaṇa on these verses.
158. Cf. ŚB., 6.4.4.2; 6.7.3.2; JUB., 1.32.4.
159. Cf. ‘krandasi rodasī śabdam kurvāne ’ Sāyaṇa on II.12.8. In X.121.6. the word *krandasi* is an epithet of Dyāvāprthivī.
dual goddesses of heaven and earth are called Rodasī it seems to mean that they resound with the sounds made by various natural phenomena like thunder, rushing waters, hurricanes, blazing fire etc. as well as with the sounds produced by men and animals. This very idea appears to have been expressed when Dyāvāprthivī are called ' uruvyacasā ' in 1.160.2. This term is interpreted by Sāyāna as ' prabhūtavacanavatyau '. 160

In the hymns and verses dedicated to the glorification of Dyāvāprthivī, have been reflected man's profound sense of gratitude and deep attachment towards heaven and earth resulting from his total dependence on them. The worshipper invokes them for protection and for forgiving the sins committed towards both the gods and fellow beings and also for a blissful life on the bosom of mother earth. 161 Man's deep sense of attachment and gratitude towards them has made him wonder as to which of the two come into being first. He also feels a deep sense of reverence towards the creator of heaven and earth. 162

160. In TB., 2.2.94. is given a mythological interpretation of Dyāvāprthivī as Rodasī: ' yadarodīḥ ( prajāpatiḥ ) tadanayaḥ rodastvam '.
161. Cf. I.185.10 ; I 160.2 ; I 185-2-8,10 ; VII.104.23 ; I.185.11 ; I.159.5 ; I.160.5 ; IV.56.4 ; VI.70.3 etc.
162 Cf. I. 185.1 ; I.160.4 ; IV. 56.3.
ADITI AND DITI

The seers of the *Rgveda* did not feel it necessary that goddess Aditi be honoured with a complete hymn in her praise. In the *Rgveda* she is usually praised along with other gods and goddesses. Nevertheless, Aditi occupies quite a significant place among the deities of the *Rgveda*. Her enigmatic character has given rise to a variety of views and opinions regarding her true identity. While some scholars treat her as a personification of an abstract idea, others consider her to be the personification of some natural phenomenon. According to Hillebrandt she is 'the daylight in its imperishableness'. His view, as he himself has stated stands close to the view held by Roth that Aditi is celestial light symbolising 'eternal and inviolable principle which sustains the Ādityas and which constitutes their being'.[^163]

It may be noted here that in the St.Petersberg Lexicon, Roth has offered the opinion that Aditi represents the boundlessness of heaven. Again according to Max Müller Aditi is infinity represented by the limitless sky.[^164] Oldenberg is of the opinion that 'Aditi is a personified idea' and she represents the state of being unbounded. He says that this 'unboundedness' does not imply that Aditi is 'imperishableness'.[^165]

Hardy believe that Aditi is the earth, according to Colinet she is the feminine form of Dyaus.\textsuperscript{166} The opinion of Max Müller has been echoed to a certain extent in Bergaigne's view that Aditi 'represents' the 'limitless space'.\textsuperscript{167} In the opinion of Macdonell the concept of Aditi was born out of the phrase 'aditeḥ putrāḥ' which occurs a number of times in the Rgveda and refers to the Ādityas. Thus, he has as the basis for his view one of the prominent characteristics of Aditi viz., her motherhood of the Ādityas. Macdonell states that as the mother of the Ādityas 'she might occasionally be identified with Heaven and Earth'.\textsuperscript{168} Macdonell seems to hold the view that in the ultimate analysis Aditi represents heaven and earth. Keith is found to have agreed with the opinion of Macdonell that the concept of Aditi as a goddess arose out of the expression 'aditeḥ putrāḥ'.\textsuperscript{169} Just like Macdonell, Oldenberg also believes that the concept of Aditi is posterior to that of her children i.e., the Ādityas. Both are also of the opinion that Aditi is out and out an Indian goddess.\textsuperscript{170}

\textsuperscript{166} As quoted by A. Macdonell, in \textit{Vedic Mythology}, Delhi, 1981, p. 123
\textsuperscript{168} Macdonell, A.A., \textit{Vedic Mythology}, p. 123
\textsuperscript{169} Keith, A.B., \textit{The Religion And Philosophy Of The Veda And Upanishads}, part I, p. 217
\textsuperscript{170} Macdonell, \textit{Vedic Mythology}, p. 123 (Oldenberg, \textit{The Religion Of The Veda}, p. 105)
In this connection the view upheld by Dandekar must be taken into consideration. He is of the opinion that 'the mythology dominated' by Aditi and her sons 'does not exhibit even the faintest traces of naturalism that is to say, of the worship of the Powers of Nature as Divine Beings'. He further states that the Ādityas (i.e., 'the unbound ones') who are included in the entourage of Varuṇa and Aditi ('the unboundedness') 'belong to one and the same religious ideology which forms the fundamental basis of the Varuṇa—religion in the Veda'. It is to be noted here that according to Dandekar the essential nature of Varuṇa is that he includes and transcends all Vedic divinities.  

In the *Nighantu* (1.11; 1.11; 2.11; 3.30) the word *aditi* is listed as a synonym of Pr̄thivī, Vāk, Go and Dyāvāpṛthivī. In the *Nirukta* (4.22) the word is explained as 'adīnā devamātā' i.e., the unimpaired mother of the gods. The word *adīnā* is derived from *Vādin* — to decay. Devarāja in his commentary on *Nighantu* has derived the word *aditi* also from *Vādin*. According to him Aditi is called so because, while carrying the burden of the entire creation she never feels impaired. Sāyaṇa interprets the word as 'aditiradinā akhaṇḍaniyā vā'. Thus, he derives the word from either *Vādin*— to decay or *Vādo*— to cut into pieces.

171. Dandekar, R.N., *Vedic Mythological Tracts*, Delhi, 1979, pp 53,61
172. Sāyaṇa on 1.89.10.
In the *Rgveda* the word *aditi* is found to have been used as qualifying *Dyaus*, *Prthivi*, *Dyāvaprthivi* and also *Agni*. It seems possible that the concept of an independent deity called *Aditi* has evolved out of the idea of the goddesses of heaven and earth being *aditi* i.e., unimpaired (*adīnā*) or limitless (*akhanḍanīyā*). A parallel to this may be found in the rise of a separate deity of heaven and earth called *Rodasī* from the epithet *rodasī* applied to them.

One comes across a number of similarities between the nature of *Dyāvaprthivī* and that of goddess *Aditi*. Of these the most striking one is that both are hailed as having the gods as their sons. While the former is called *Devapatre*, *Aditi* is most well known as the mother of the Ādityas or of the gods in general. Her sons the Ādityas consist of *Mitra*, *Aryamā*, *Bhaga*, *Varuṇa*, *Dakṣa*, *Aṃśa*, *Savitṛ*, *Sūrya* and the Maruts. Not only the Ādityas but all the gods whose names are worthy of worship are said to be the sons of *Aditi* in *Rgveda* (*X.63.2*). As mother of the gods *Aditi* bears the epithets *rājaputrā* (*II.27.7*) and *suputrā* (*III.4.11*). Another similarity between *Dyāvaprthivī* and *Aditi* is that while the former is said to have the sun both as the son and the father, *Aditi* has Dakṣa both as

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173. Cf. V.59.8 ; X.11.1 ; X.63.3,10 ; I.72.9 ; I.43.2 ; I.185.3 ; IV.55.1 ; VII.62.4 ; I.94.15 ; VIII.19.14. Sāyaṇa *Ibidem*.
174. Cf. I.136.3 ; II.27.1 ; VIII.47.9. Tradition recognises Indra too as one of the Ādityas Cf. Sāyaṇa on IV,18.4,5.
the son and as the father. In X.72.4 it is said ‘aditerdakṣadātīḥ’. Dakṣa being an Āditya is but a sun-god. A third similarity between these two divinities is that while Dyāvāpṛthivī is called uruvyacasa (1.160.2), Aditi is referred to as uruvyaca (V.46.6).177 Over and above this, as it appears in X.63.3, the Ādityas are referred to as the sons of mother Prthivī and father Dyaus. In this verse the seer says—

‘yēbhyo mātā madhumat pīyūṣam dyauradītādribarhāḥ ..... tān ādityān anu mada svastaye’. 

[ Praise the Ādityas for the sake of your well-being ..... the Ādityas for whom mother earth swells with sweet milk and unimpaired heaven who is covered with clouds swells with nectar. ] As a matter of fact, there occurs a verse (X.65.9) in the Rgveda which states that the Ādityas belong to earth, heaven and the waters i.e., the mid-region: ‘devān ādityān aditiṁ havāmahe ye pārthivāsah divyāsah apsu ye ’/ In his commentary on this verse Sāyaṇa says — ‘ye devāḥ pārthivāsah pārthivāḥ prthivyāṁ bhavāḥ ye ca divyāḥ divi jātāḥ ye ca apsu antarikṣe samuṭpannāstānapāhavyāmahe’. In this verse the seer perhaps means to say that the Ādityas belong to the whole nature and he on his part worships them along with nature which is represented

176. Cf. ŚB. 4.1.4.1
177. The significance of the word uruvyacasa has been already discussed under Dyāvāpṛthivī.
178. Cf. Sāyaṇa on X.63.3.
by Aditi. The idea that Aditi is identical with all creation has been expressed in 1.89.10. In it the seer declares that Aditi is heaven and also the mid-region; she is the mother as well as the father; she is even the son; she is both the gods and the five races of man, nay she is all that is and all that is to be. In this verse the word *aditi* is connected with words in the neuter as well as in the masculine gender. It is also connected with words in singular and plural numbers. In this way Aditi is identified with all beings. The verse runs as follows:

‘aditir dyauraditirantarikṣam aditirmātā sa pītā sa putraḥ / viśvedevā aditih pañcajanā aditirjātamaditirjanitvam // ’ In his commentary on this verse Śāyaṇa has observed that ‘sakalajagadātmanā aditih stūyate’. Skandasvāmin in his commentary on *Nirukta* (4.22) has given a philosophical interpretation of the word *aditi*. There he has said ‘adhyātmamapi aditih prakṛtiḥ’. It may not be out of context to state here that in the *Katha Upaniṣad* (II.1.9) the word *aditi* means mother nature who pervades all creation. Radhakrishnan in his comments on this verse from *Katha Upaniṣad* says — ‘The term is used here in the sense of mother-nature, the source of all objectivity’. Significantly in support of his view he has referred to the Rgvedic verse (1.89.10).¹⁷⁹ In his opinion goddess Aditi—

the mother of the Ādityas seems to stand ' for the invisible, the infinite, which surrounds us on all sides and also stands for the endless expanse beyond the earth, the clouds and the sky. It is the immense substratum of all that is here and also beyond '. According to him in Rgveda I.89.10 ' we have the anticipation of a universal all—embracing, all—producing nature itself, the immense potentiality of the prakṛti of Sāmkhya Philosophy '.

The Rgvedic seers have invoked goddess Aditi primarily for protection against evil forces, for granting them all round happiness, for forgiving their sins and for the sake of her unimpaired light.

So far as goddess Diti is concerned she has been mentioned only thrice in the Rgveda. Only once she has been invoked (for wealth) in VII.15.12. About her Keith has observed that 'compared with Aditi the goddess Diti is merely a name.

The concept of Diti seems to have developed as an antithesis of Aditi. Thus, Bergaigne says — ' everybody agrees in regarding the word diti as having been formed adhoc for being opposed to Aditi, very nearly in the same way how the word

181. Cf. I.107.2 ; II. 27.7 ; II.29.3 ; VII.35.9 ; VII. 82.10 ; X.12.8 ; X.33.3.
182. Keith, A.B., The Religion And Philosophy Of The Veda and Upanishads, part I, p.217
asura, when the meaning of ‘god’ became its fixed meaning is contrasted, later on with the word sura ‘god’. Bergaigne believes that while Aditi is ‘unlimited space’ Diti is ‘space as contained in the visible limits of the world, that is to say between the disc of the earth and the vault of heaven’.  

Apte on the other hand believes that Diti represents that particular point in the western sky ‘on the belt of Zodiac (ṛta) on reaching which the luminaries enter into ‘bondage’ of darkness’. It is a point ‘exactly opposite to the one in eastern horizon represented by Aditi (unbinding) on reaching which Devas (luminaries) emerge into freedom from bondage of darkness? 

Again according to Ghule, Aditi is upper hemisphere and Diti the lower one.  

So far as the commentator Sāyaṇa is concerned he has once interpreted the word diti as adātā, once as khaṇḍitā prajādikā and once simply as a devī.  

ARANYĀNI

Belief in animism in ancient societies is known to have led primitive men to worship almost everything on earth, like stones, hills, trees, flowers, streams so on and so forth. Hopkins

185. Sāyana on RV., IV.2.11 ; V.62-8 ; VII.15.12.
has pointed out that 'the tree-world as a whole was an earlier object of cult than any individual tree'. This is because, the savage dreads the powers of jungle more than that of any one single tree known to him. As he says — 'the forest as a whole is dangerous also to the more advanced animist who fears the spirits of the wild though they may be offset by the gentle fairies and elves living likewise in the wood'. However, the praise of the sylvan maid presented in the Rgvedic hymn (X.146) to Arāṇyāṇī is rather a secular composition in which no attempt is made to placate the spirit or spirits living in the jungle. It is a beautiful poem describing a forest situated at the out skirts of a village. It is a forest frequented by village folk for cutting woods, for gathering fruits and also in search of their cattle grazing inside it. A beautiful picture of the forest is drawn in the hymn. The sounds made by the insects, are compared to the sounds of the Āghāṭi i.e., the kāṇḍavīṇā. The insects are, as it were, singing in praise of the Sylvan Lady. As evening approaches the carts that have been driven into the forest start emerging from it. Those who stay back in the woods till dusk fancy themselves as hearing some one screaming. The poet says — 'the lady of the woods herself does not harm


187. Cf. Śāyaṇa on X.146.2.
any one. A person is harmed only when he falls victim to some other harmful causes.\(^{188}\)

Inspite of being thus frequented by the village people the sylvan maid remains as it were, aloof from human beings. She never seems to take any interest in the life of the villagers, nor she is afraid of living all alone in the woods. The poet asks ‘ arāṇyāṇyāṇyāṇi asau yā preva naśyasi kathā grāmam na pṛcchasi na tvā bhūrīva vindati // ’ (X.146.1) [ O ! Lady of the Woods, you who seem to move away (from us) how is it that you do not ask about the village ? Are you not afraid (of being all alone )? ] The hymn to Arāṇyāṇi end:s with a beautiful eulogy to the sylvan maid – the mother of the wild animals:

\[ ' āṉjanagandhim surabhim bahvannāmakṛṣṭivalām / prāham mṛgānāṁ mātaramarāṇyānim aśamīśam // ' (X.146.6)\]

[ ' Now have I praised the Forest Queen, sweet scented redolent of balm, The Mother of all sylvan things who tills not but hath stores of food '. — Griffith. ]\(^{189}\) This Ṛgvedic goddess of the forest is a gentle being, a benevolent lady. She inspires in man a sense of wonder and mystery rather than a sense of fear or dread. The hymn in her honour reflects a fine perception of Mother Nature on the part of its seer poet Devamuni.

\(^{188}\) Cf. Sāyaṇa on X.146.5.

\(^{189}\) The Hymns Of The Ṛgveda, p. 641
The hymn (X.127) dedicated to the goddess of night is another secular composition. The solemn beauty of the night seems to have inspired the seer poet Kuśika to reflect upon the nature of the lady of the night. He addresses her as 'duhitar divah'. Sāyaṇa has explained it as 'dyotamānasya sūryasya putri yadvā divasasya tanaye'. The epithet 'duhitardivaḥ' may also be interpreted as daughter of heaven. This particular epithet belongs also to Uṣā and Uṣā and Rātrī have been referred to as sisters in X.127.3.

The hymn presents a beautiful picture of the night whom the poet calls 'amartyā devī (X.127.2). In the language of the seer the goddess of night at the very outset spreads out darkness far and wide, thereby totally engulfing one and all. Thereafter, she pierces this darkness with her light i.e., with the light of the clusters of stars twinkling in the night sky: 'orvapra amartyā nivato devyudvataḥ/ jyotisā bādhate tamaḥ // ' (X.127.2) ['Immortal, she hath filled the waste, the Goddess hath filled height and depth: She conquers darkness with her light'—Griffith.]

190. Sāyaṇa on X.127.8.
191. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on AV., XIX. 47.5. (which is dedicated to Rātrī) has explained this epithet as 'dyulokasya putri'.
192. The Hymns Of The Rgveda, p.632
of the poet the stars are her eyes with which she observes everything. It may be stated here that in the *Atharvaveda* (19.47.3) the stars are called 'nṛcaksaso draṣṭāraḥ' which according to Sāyaṇa means 'nṛṇāṁ karmaphalasya draṣṭāraḥ'.

As darkness gradually sets in, animals and birds return to their respective dwellings, so do men. As darkness deepens there begins another phase of activities. The fierce nocturnal beasts come out, so do the thieves. The poet begs the goddess of night for protection against these evil beings. This description of the goddess Rāṭrī reminds one of the interpretation of the word *rāṭrī* by Yāska. In the *Nirukta* it is said that Rāṭrī is called so, because she on one hand activates those who move at night and on the other hand inactivates those whose activities are confined to day time.

The goddess of night inspite of her beauty, presses in on man as it were, with her 'tamaḥ kṛṣṇam' and he begs the goddess of dawn to relieve him of the oppressive burden of darkness: 'upaṁā pepiśattamaḥ kṛṣṇam vyaktamasthita / uṣa rṇeva yātaya //',

*clearly hath she come nigh to me who decks the dark with richest hues: O Morning, cancel it like debts*. — Griffith. In this connection it may

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193. X. 127. 6. Cf. AV., XI. 47. 6-9.
196. *The Hymns Of The Rgveda*, p.632
be mentioned that though goddess Rātrī has been called a sister of Uṣā the fact that darkness is the antithesis of light has always been kept in mind. In the words of the seer the goddess of night keeps her sister at bay for, with the approach of her sister, she the goddess of darkness has to retreat, thereby making place for her bright sister. According to Keith the importance of goddess Rātrī lies in her very connection with the goddess of dawn.

In *Rgveda* III.55.11. Rātrī is invoked with Ahaḥ. The two are called twin sisters of opposite nature, one being black and the other white.

**UŚĀSĀNAKTĀ**

The goddesses of dawn and night are invoked in the *Rgveda* as a dual divinity called Uśasānaktā. They are hailed as heavenly maidens who are both daughters of heaven. Their beautiful forms are referred to a number of times through epithets like 'surukme' ('śobhanadīptyābharane'), 'ṣupēṣasā' ('śobhanarūpe'), 'ṣuṣilpe' ('ṣurūpe'), 'darśate' ('darśanīye') etc.

The Rgvedic seer has taken note of the paradoxical fact that it is by virtue of their being directly opposed to each other

197. X.127.3. Cf. 'savituḥ savāya rātryuṣase yonimāraik', *RV.*, 1.113. 1cd.
199. Cf. VII.2.6 ; X.70.6 ; X.110.6.
200. Cf. I.188.6 ; IX.5.6 ; X.70.6 ; X.110.6. Sāyaṇa Ibidem.
that light and darkness co-operate with each other. This thought has been expressed by him through the epithets *virūpe* and *upāke* in III.4.6. Sāyaṇa explains these two words respectively as ' *prthagrūpe* ' and ' *parasparāṇi samgate* '. Unlike the hymn to Rātṛi the verses dedicated to Uṣāsānaktā are sacrificial in character. They are called worthy of sacrifice and are hailed as good bestowers of the fruits of the sacrifice. They have been referred to as the very architects of the sacrifice. It is said that the goddesses of dawn and night, like expert weavers spread the threads of the ritual. In Sāyaṇa’s opinion the two sacrificial divinities called Uṣāsānaktā who are invited to the place of sacrifice are in reality the two Agnis manifest as the two natural phenomena viz., the dawn and the night. Thus, according to him these verses invoke not two female deities but a male god.

It may be noted here that Uṣāsānaktā appears to have been considered worthy of being worshipped because of the simple fact that all the gods manifest themselves in the bosom of day and night. In other words, nothing surpasses time and time is made up of day and night.

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203. Cf.III. 4.6 ; X.70.6.
Hymn X.125 which is usually known as Vāgāṁbhrṇīya Sūkta or Devī Sūkta, is one of the very few hymns which in Vedic tradition is known as an Ādhyātmika Sūkta. Yāska has defined an Ādhyātmika Sūkta as follows: ' athādhyātmikamuttamapurusayogāḥ/ aham caicena sarvanāmnā yathaitamindro vaikuṇṭho lavasūktam vāgāṁbhrṇīyamiti.' According to this definition, in such a hymn a divinity proclaims his or her own greatness. Thus, in this case the word ādhyātmika does not denote a hymn pertaining to philosophical thoughts or speculations. For instance, the so called Ādhyātmika Suktas viz. the two Indro Vaikuṇṭha Suktas (X.48,49) and the Lava Sūkta (X.119) are not philosophical hymns.

According to Durga the commentator of Nirukta the deity of the Vāgāṁbhrṇīya hymn is Vāk. By the word vāk he has meant the Vedic Mantras, recited by the priests during the performance of sacrifices. Veṅkaṭamādhava too seems to entertain a similar view. Sāyaṇa, however, holds that this hymn is a philosophical composition in which Vāk, the Brahmavidūṣī daughter of seer Āmbhrṇa, after having realised her identity with Brahma — the ultimate cause of all, has lauded her ownself. As such she is both the seer and the deity of this

204. Cf. Nirukta, 7.2.
206. Cf. Veṅkaṭamādhava on X.125.3.
The very name of the seer of this hymn viz., Vāk, the daughter of Ambhrṇa seems to be quite significant. Nothing is known about Ambhrṇa. In the Nighantu (3.3) this word occurs as a synonym of the words mahat and brhat. The word has also occurred once in the Rgveda (1.133.5), where according to Sāyaṇa the word means ‘atibhayankaram śabdāyamānam bhrana śabde..... yadvātipravrddham’. From the point of view of the science of etymology the word brahman too means atipravrddham. The Nirukta (1.8) says — ‘ brahma parivṛddham sarvataḥ ’. In the Viśvakoṣa the word is explained as brṇhati vardhate niratiśayamahatvalakṣaṇavrddhimān bhavati.208 It may not be out of context to recall here that in a later Vedic text it is said that Brahman as the creator of the beings is said to have filled heaven and earth with his cry (terrible sound) because of which these two regions are jointly known as Rodasi.209 It may also be noted in this connection that in later Vedic tradition Vāk has been called the second self and the very greatness of the creator.210 She is also called

207. Sāyaṇa on X.125.1.
208. Volume 13, p.141
209. Cf. TB., 2.2.9.4.
210 Cf. 'prajāpatirvā idameka āsit tasya vāgeva svamāśid vāg dvitiyā ’, KS., 12.5 ; ‘ vāgवā asya svo mahimā ’, SB., 2.2.4.4.
immortal first born of *Rta*. She is proclaimed as the mother of the Vedas and the very source of immortality unto whom offerings are made.²¹¹ Again it is said that Prajāpati produced goddess Vāk so that she may be omnipresent and be the impeller of all.²¹²

Goddess Vāk, as she herself has declared, is born in the waters of the ocean: 'mama yonirapsvantaḥ samudre' (X.125.7b). Sāyaṇa in his commentary on this passage says — 'samudravantyasmin bhūtajatānīti samudrāḥ paramātmā / tasmin apsu vyāpanāśīlāsu dhīvṛttiśvantaḥ madhye yadbrahma caityanyam tanme kāraṇamiti'.

The ideas presented about goddess Vāk in later texts mentioned above seem to have had their beginning in the Rgvedic hymn to Āṁbhrṇī Vāk. For, here Vāk herself proclaims her omnipresence: 'ahameva vāta iva pra vāmyārabhamāṇā bhuvanāni viśvā / paro divā para enā prthivyaitāvatī mahinā sam babhūva' // (X.125.8) According to Sāyaṇa in this verse Vāk is identified with all creation which she pervades and at the same time she spreads herself far beyond it.²¹³ She is the controller of all and is manifest in all beings: 'tām mā devā

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²¹¹ Cf. *TB.*, 2.8.8.5.
²¹² Cf. *KS.*, 12.5.
²¹³ Cf. 'ekastathā sarvabhūtāntarātrūpam rūpam pratirūpo bhavati bahiśca', *KUp.*, II.2.96.
vyadadhuh purutrā / bhūristhātrām bhūryā veśayantīṁ ' (X.125.3). Commenting on X.125.3 Sāyaṇa has presented the following explanation: 'aham rāṣṭrī īśvaranāmaitat sarvasya jagata īśvarī ..... māṁ bhūristhātrām bhūrī bhūrīṁī bahūni bhūtajātāni āveśayantīṁ jivabhāvenātmānam praveśayantīṁ māṁ purutrā bahuṣu deśeṣu vyadadhuh devāḥ vidadhati / uktaprakāreṇa vaiśvarūpyenaḥavasthānāt'.

According to him the purport of the aforementioned Vedic passage is that whatever the gods do they do so for her, in other words they are the agents of Vāk. Again the proclamation of goddess Vāk that whatever a living being does such as eating, seeing, breathing, hearing etc., he does so because of her. This statement finds a parallel in X. 121.3 in which Hiranyagarbha Prajāpatī is described as the controller of all living beings. When Vāk declares that those who do not realise that she is the power behind all beings, waste away, we are reminded of the Bhāgavadgītā (IX.24) where Lord Kṛṣṇa says — 'nā tu māmabhi jānanti tattvenātaścyavanti te'. Similarly when we are told that it is Vāk who stretches out the bow of Rudra for killing the enemies of Brahma and thus, fights for the sake of

214. Also see Sāyaṇa on IV.30.3.
215. Sāyaṇa on X.125.3.
216. X.125.4.
217. Loc.cit.
we recall the declaration of Lord Kṛṣṇa in the Gitā (IV.7) that whenever Dharma is threatened He comes down to the earth for doing away with the evil doers.

According to Phukan in the concept of Āmbhrṇi Vāk presented in the Rgveda through just eight verses, may be found the essence of the teachings of all Śāstras. The idea of Vāk who is born out of the ‘Great One’ (Ambhrṇa) and as such is omnipresent reminds one of the concept of Puruṣa and Prakṛti of the Sāmkhya philosophy. In post Vedic times Āmbhrṇi Vāk was ‘identified with Devī the creative potency Śakti, the goddess of universal omnipotence; therefore, the Vāgāmbhrṇiya-Sūkta became Devī-Sūkta... The concept of an all pervading all powerful goddess who is the controlling power behind everything as presented in this hymn has been echoed in the Candi (1.57.58) which describes the goddess Śakti as follows: ‘nityaiva sa jagamūrtistayā sarvamidam tatam/ tathāpi tat samutpattir bahudhā śrūyatām mama // devānām kāryasiddhyarthamāvirbhavati sā sadā / utpanneti tadā loke sā nityāpyabhidhiyate / ’

Vāgāmbhrṇiya Sūkta also seems to contain an allusion 218. X.125.6.

to the concept of word principle which in later Hindu tradition is held to be identical with Śiva — the supreme Reality. It may not be wrong to say that the seed of the concept of Śabdabrahman which is peculiar to Kashmir Śaivism was sown in the Rgveda itself in hymn X.125.221

Gaurī Vāk, Vāk Gauḥ, Vāk and Sasarpārī

There are three minor goddesses of speech in Rgveda viz., Gaurī Vāk, Gauḥ and Vāk. Of these the first two goddesses are personifications of the sound of thunder, whereas the goddess Vāk is a deity of speech or sound uttered or produced by earthly beings.

Gaurī Vāk and Vāk Gauḥ are associated with the act of sending forth rain to the earth, so that life may be sustained on it. Gaurī Vāk is described as having a number of abodes (adhiṣṭhānas) in various objects and places like the clouds, the sun, the mid-region, the different directions so on and so forth.222 Vāk Gauḥ on the other hand, is described in a highly symbolical language. She is depicted as a milch cow accompanied by her calf. She constantly lows with affection for the calf. The rains are her milk, the lowing sound made by her is the

222. Cf. I.164.28,41,42.
sound of thunder and the calf is the earth. In *Rgveda* VIII. 101.15. Vāk Gauḥ is referred to as the mother of the Rudras, daughter of the Vasus and sister of Ādityas. In it she is hailed as the very source of immortality and as the guileless Aditi. In the very next verse (VIII.101.16) the seer declares that man of lesser intellect always avoids this goddess. This perhaps means that such a man is unable to realise her true nature or the power wielded by her. It should be mentioned here that according to Sāyaṇa the deity of the two aforementioned verses is but a personification of the cow. But when considered from the point of view of the nature of the hymn VIII.101 which is dedicated to deities like Mitrāvaraṇau, Aśvinau, Vāyu, Āditya, Sūrya, Uṣā and Pavamānāgni, it seems unlikely that the deity Gauḥ invoked in it would represent an earthly animal like the cow.

So far as the goddess Vāk is concerned, it has been already pointed out in our discussion on the nature of Sarasvatī, that in the *Rgveda* (VIII.100.11) her origin too has been traced to the atmospheric goddess of speech. Like Vāk Gauḥ goddess Vāk is also depicted as a milch cow who showers food and drinks for the sake of man. This description of the goddess reminds one of another *Rgvedic* verse viz., IX.67.32 in which it

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224. Sāyaṇa on VIII.101. (introduction)
is said that Sarasvati showers milk, ghee, honey and water for the sake of the student of the Pāvamāni verses. As stated in I.164.45. speech is of four types. Of these the last one is ordinary human speech. The first three being unmanifest are known only to the men of wisdom. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on this verse has presented a detailed discussion on the nature of these four types of speech. In doing so he has taken into account the views of grammarians, etymologists, ritualists and so on and forth.

Goddess Sasarparī is hailed in just two verses of the Rgveda. There she has not been directly called a goddess of speech. However, her description in the two verses indicates that she too is a personification of speech. She is described as ' amatim bādhamānā brhat mimāya jamadagnidattā / ā sūryasya duhitā tatāna śravo deveśvamṛtam ajuryam // ' (III.53.15).

Thus, she is said to be the daughter of the sun. She is given to men by the sages who have lit the sacrificial fire. Sasarparī dispels lack of wisdom by her mighty voice and distributes food among the gods. She produces a still greater amount of food for the sake of the races of man upon whom she at the same time bestows longevity. Sasarparī is called pakṣyā which according to Sāyaṇa means ' pakṣādinirvāhakasya sūryasya duhitā '. Venkatamadhava has interpreted the word as

225. Cf. Ill. 53,15,16.
226. Sāyaṇa on Ill.53.16.
According to Śāyaṇa, Sasarpārī is 'sarvatragadyapadyātmakatvena sarpaṇāśilā vāgdevatā'. As it appears Sasarpārī is in all probability is a personification of 'māntri vāk'. She is called the daughter of the sun, perhaps to lay stress on the power of the Mantras upon all, not excluding the Devas.

ŚRADDHĀ

A unique contribution of the Rgveda to Hinduism is the concept of Śraddhā which ever since the Vedic period till date has played a vital role in the religio-cultural life of the Indians. Śraddhā has been deified and invoked as a female divinity in Rgveda X.151., in five verses. She is said to be instrumental in lighting the sacrificial fire. It is because of Śraddhā that man performs sacrifices and offers oblations to the gods. She is glorified as the most exalted wealth. Both gods and humans worship her with longing hearts. The worshipper glorifies her three times a day in the three Savanas. He begs her to grant him ever increasing Śraddhā so that he may attain wealth by performing more rituals. The underlying idea of the hymn seems to be that when one performs a sacrifice one needs to have faith in the benevolent powers of the gods and in the potency

227. Veṅkaṭamādhava on III. 53.16, Rgveda, part III, Hoshiarpur p. 1432
of the rituals. This faith or belief is of vital importance for, it is only through it that the worshipper gets vasu. It is said that just as the gods had deep faith in the omnipotent ones (asuresu) so also the offerers of oblations to the gods seek to have faith in the potency of the rituals.228 The verse in question runs as follows: 'yathā devā asureṣu śraddhāmugesu cakrire / evami bhoṣeṣu yajvasvasmākamuditam kṛdhī // ' (X.151.3). Although Sāyaṇa has interpreted the word bhojesu as 'bhokṛṣǔ bhogārthiṣu' the word as indicated by its context229 seems to mean dātrṣu. According to Sāyaṇa the word śraddhā means 'puruṣagato'bhilāṣaviśesah' or 'ādāratiśaya'.230 Of these two interpretations the later appears to have been more acceptable to him.231

Goddess Śraddhā, as it appears, is a personification of 'ādāratiśaya' inspired by 'purusagato'bhilāṣah'. The ritualistic religion of the Veda being by nature totally materialistic, it is not surprising that the motivating force behind the Vedic Indian's belief in god and religion should be the longings of one's heart. It is however, to be remembered that the word śraddhā itself in this hymn does not mean desire. The concept of Śraddhā as presented in X.151. may perhaps be explained as 'Śraddhāvān labhate kāmam'. In later Vedic texts Śraddhā has been called

228. Cf. X.151.1-3.
229. Cf. X.151.2. See Sāyaṇa on X.107. 8-10.
230. Sāyaṇa on X.151.1.
231 Cf. Sāyaṇa on I.108. 6; VI.26.6; VIII.1.31.
the mother of desire. In the Taittirīyābrāhmaṇa (2.8.8.8) it is said: 'Śraddhāṁ kāmasya mātaram haviśā vardhayāmasya'. As it has been pointed out by Hara, Śraddhā is intellectual rather than being emotional and has its origin in ritualistic context. 232 Śeshagiri Rao states that the concept of Śraddhā refers to a function of the heart. 233

The word śraddhā is derived from śrat + vṛdhā — to place. As shown by Dandekar the words śrat, śrd and hṛd are synonymous terms meaning the heart. 234 The etymological meaning of the word as shown by Rao is ‘to put one’s heart on something’. In the Nighanta (3.10) the word śrat is listed as a synonym of the words satya and rta. From the point of view of the Nighanta the word śraddhā means to have faith in truth. In the context of Vedic ritualism truth is equivalent to (a) trayāvidyā, (b) the gods and (c) dharma. 235

We come across various opinions regarding the identity of goddess Sūryā. Keith simply calls her the 'sun maiden'. Macdonell believes that she is 'the sun conceived as a female'. According to Oldenberg the word sūryā 'is the feminine form of the masculine word sūrya'. He thinks that in the concept of Sūryā one simply comes across the sun-god appearing as a female divinity who has been given the status of the 'daughter of the sun'. Again Hillebrandt has perceived complete identity between Sūryā and Usā. Falk on the other hand, has held that Sūryā is the 'nocturnal hyper cosmic sun' and that the myth of the marriage of Sūryā is an 'amāvāsyā-myth', symbolically represented as a marriage between the sun and the moon. Again according to Bhawe Sūryā is a personification of poetry. Lal has elaborately discussed the nature of Sūryā and the myth of Sūryā's marriage. He has pointed out that the personification of Sūryā is very slight.

236. Keith, A.B., *The Religion And Philosophy Of The Veda And Upanishads*, part I, p.198
there being very little personal detail of Sūryā both in Vedic and post-Vedic literature. According to him ' Sūryā is not a divinity in the real sense of the term '; her significance rests on the role played by her in the myth of her marriage. In Lal’s opinion Sūryā, who seems to have no naturalistic basis may be regarded as the personification of a ‘ purely abstract idea ’. He however, has not specifically stated the exact nature of the abstract idea meant by him.

Sāyaṇa in his commentary has interpreted the word sūryā as the wife or the daughter of the sun. In the Rgveda itself Sūryā is called ' sūryasya duhitā '. Yāska however, is of the view that Sūryā is the wife of the sun and is identical with goddess Uṣā. It may be noted here that in the hymns dedicated to the Aśvins, Sūryā is mentioned as mounting their chariot and the Aśvins are called her husbands. But Uṣā who also has been associated with the Aśvins, has not been described as such. She has been rather called the sister of the Aśvins. Again according to Yāska one of the Aśvins is the son of Uṣā.

243. Cf. 1.116.17 ; 1.117.13 ; 1.118.5 ; VI. 63.5,6 ; VII. 69.2.
244. Nirukta, 12.7.
245.Cf. l.167.5 ; IV.44.1 ; V.73.5 ; VI.63.5 etc.
246. Cf. l. 46.14 ; l. 180.1 ; l. 183.2 ; IV. 52.2.3 ; VIII.5.2 ; X.39.12 etc.
248. Nirukta, 12,2.
It has been already mentioned above that in the *Rgveda*, Sūryā is always called the *duhīta* of the sun. The word *duhīta* derived from *Vduḥ* — 'prapūraṇe' — in the strict sense of the term means *prapūrayītī*. If considered from the point of the etymological meaning of this word, the phrase 'sūryasya duhīta' would mean 'sūryasya prapūrayītī' and thus, Sūryā would come to be the rays of the sun, with which its disc is as it were, filled up. Veṅkaṭamādhava, as a matter of fact, in his commentary on *Rgveda* 1.167.5. has stated that Sūryā is 'dīptāvayava ādityasya abhigantavyā dīptiḥ'. In the *Rgveda* (V.73.5) too an allusion to Sūryā as representing the rays of the sun, seems to have been made. This verse according to both Sāyāṇa and Veṅkaṭamādhava states that when Sūryā mounted the chariot of the Aśvins, the twin gods were encompassed by burning rays of reddish hue.

\[ \text{URVAŚI} \]

In Vedic as well as post-Vedic literature Urvaśī is an Apsaras par excellance. In the *Rgveda* (VII.33.11,12) Urvaśī is referred to as the mother of sage Vasiṣṭha. In hymn X.95 she is engaged in a dialogue with Purūravas her human husband. As indicated in the hymn, she finally seems to leave him.

249. Cf. Sāyāṇa and Veṅkaṭamādhava on V.73.5.
for good. This she does inspite of being repeatedly entreated by Purūravas not to leave him. Max Müller is of the opinion that in this hymn is depicted the correlation of the sun (represented by Purūravas) and dawn (represented by Urvaśī).²⁵⁰ According to Weber too Purūravas is the sun and Urvaśī is dawn.²⁵¹ In the opinion of Goldstücker, Urvaśī represents the morning mist which evaporates with sunrise.²⁵² According to Kosambi, the character of Urvaśī is identical with that of the goddess of dawn. He believes that goddess Uṣā is a higher form of Urvaśī. In his view ‘Urvaśī had become an Uṣas before finishing with Purūravas’.²⁵³

Urvaśī as depicted in X.95 is a nymph and as she herself has said, there can be no lasting relationship with a nymph: ‘durāpanā vātā ivāhamasi’ (X.95.2d) In this connection a question may be raised as to whether such a nymph be at all given the status of a goddess in the Ṛgveda. The answer to this question may be sought in the following Ṛgvedic verse, in which Urvaśī is invoked along with goddess Iļā and the rivers—‘abhi na iļā yuthasya mātā smannadībhīrurvasī vā grnātu/

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²⁵⁰ Max Müller as quoted by Macdonell, in *Vedic Mythology*, p.136, fn.10.
²⁵² Cf. Chamber’s Encyclopaedia, Under the word Purūravas.
urvaśī vā brhaddivā gṛṇānābhyūṛṇāvā prabhṛthasyāyōḥ //
( V.41.19 ) [ May Ilā mother of the herds of cattle, and Urvaśī along with the streams accept us ; May Urvaśī in lofty heaven accepting, as she partakes the oblation of the living'.—Griffith] 254 In this verse the seer describes Urvaśī as a deity of great lustre and expects that she will praise the devotion of the worshipper. Thus, in this verse she has been given the status of a divinity. According to Yāśka whom ever a seer praises in his Mantra for the sake of attaining something, becomes the deity of that Mantra. 255 According to Sāyaṇa, Urvaśī invoked in the aforementioned verse is a personification of ' mādhyamikī vāk '. According to an alternative explanation given by him Urvaśī in this verse is ' bahūnām vaśayitrī ādityākhyā dyusthānā devatā '. His first interpretation of Urvaśī that she is speech belonging to the mid-region, seems to have some basis. For, in X.95.17 she has been referred to as ' antarikṣaprām rajaso vimanīm '. Thus, in it she is said to fill the mid-region and is called the creator of the waters. 256 Again in X.95.11 she is associated with flashes of lightning and has been described as bringing forth objects of desire which are full of water or are associated with water ( apyā kāmyāni ). According to Sāyaṇa the word apyā means waters pertaining to the mid-region. 257

254. The Hymns of The Ṛgveda, p.257
255. Nirukta, 7.1.
256. Cf. Sāyaṇa on X.95.17.
257. Cf. Sāyaṇa on X.95.11.
YAMI

In the *Rgveda* very little has been said about Yamī. All we know about her is that she is the twin sister of Yama the first of the mortals to die. He is also the king of the dead. We are also told that Yamī and her brother are the offsprings of the Gandharva residing in the waters, and the water maiden. The *Rgvedic* pair Yama and Yamī corresponds to Yima and Yimeh of the *Bundahīs*. Thus, they belong to the later part of the Indo-Iranian period. According to an Indo-Iranian myth Yima and Yimeh became husband and wife and were the parents of the human race. The *Rgvedic* dialogue of Yama and Yamī seems to contain a memory of this myth. This dialogue clearly indicates the abhorance on the part of the *Rgvedic* people towards such an immoral idea of incest between a brother and a sister. In it Yama clearly states that what was done in the past shall not be repeated: *(‘na yat purā cakṛma ’)* and that sisters will always have husbands who are not blood relations *(‘ā ghā tā gacchān uttarā yugāṇi yatra jāmayaḥ kṛṇavannajāmi ’)*.

259. Cf. X.10.4.
262. X.10.4ᵃ ; X.10.10ᵃᵇ
Although the Rgveda does not contain any indication that Yama and Yamī are personifications of natural phenomena, reference to the Gandharva of the waters and the water-maiden as their parents in X.10.4 indicates a naturalistic basis of the pair. According to Sāyaña the Gandharva of the waters is the sun in the mid-region and the water-maiden is Saranīyū — his wife. This interpretation of Sāyaña as it appears, has for its basis the myth of Vivasvān and Saranīyū narrated in the Nirukta (2.10). The Rgvedic Gandharva corresponds to Avestan Gandarewa who is a dragon like monster dwelling in the waters. Thus, just like Yama and Yamī their father—the Gandharva of the waters also seems to be Indo-Iranian in origin. The Rgvedic Gandharva is closely associated with the Apsarasas. He is also referred to as pouring down waters unto the earth and the sound of the waters are described as worshipping him. He is further described as producing some kind of sound. According to Sāyaña, the word gandharva means 'gavāmudakānāṁ dhartā' and the sound produced by it is the sound of thunder cloud. In his opinion, the Apsaras associated with the Gandharva is lightning. According to

263. Sāyaña on X.10.4.
265. Cf. X.123.5.
266. X.123.2-4.
267. Sāyaña on X.123.4,5.
Macdonell, the water-maiden referred to as the mother of Yama and Yami is an Apsaras. It may be stated here that in Vedic literature the nymphs are often connected with waters. Yāska too has derived the word *apsaras* as ‘apsārinī’ i.e., one who moves in the waters. Sāyaṇa on the other hand has explained the same as ‘apāṁ sārayitrī apsu kṛḍārtham saranti vā’. Yāska holds that the mythological Yama and Yami respectively are ‘madhyama’ deity and ‘mādhyamikā vāk’.

Griswold too has offered the view that Yama and Yami have a naturalistic basis. He feels that they are personifications either of the moon and the dawn or heaven and earth. According to him ‘Heaven and earth as natural twins might very well be called Yama and Yami. They are also the parents of all that is’.

\[\text{NIRRTI}\]

The word *nirṛti* (in various case endings) occurs in the *Rgveda*, twenty one times. Nirṛti as a goddess has been directly invoked in four verses of Maṇḍala X. i.e., in X.59.1-4 and once indirectly in I.38.6. In these verses she has been

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268. *Vedic Mythology*, p.134
269. Cf. *RV.*, IX. 78.9 ; *AV.*, II. 2.4,5 ; *ŚB.*, 9.4.1.10.
270. Sāyaṇa on X. 123. 4,5.
invoked to spare man from the pains and sufferings brought forth by death. Keith calls her the goddess of 'dissolution.'

Sāyaṇa has given a number of explanations of the nature of Nirṛti such as 'pāpadevātā', 'mṛtyudevātā', 'rakṣojātidevātā', 'bhūmi', 'prthivī', 'alakṣmi', and 'duḥkham' or 'praduḥkham'. In his commentary on I.164.32 Sāyaṇa has taken note of the fact that the Nairuktas have interpreted the word nirṛti as bhūmi. In the Nighaṇṭu (1.1) the word occurs as a synonym of the word prthivī. In the Nirukta (2.7) Yāska has given two different derivations of the word. According to him when derived from nir + Vṛ to enjoy the word stands for the earth, but when derived from nir + Vṛ to go it means sufferings (kṛcchāpatti).

It seems that in Rgveda (X.59.1-4) goddess Nirṛti stands for the sufferings like disease, decay, death etc., which characterise earthly existence. No earthly being can ever escape her influence. For, she is of ever increasing might (parāparā), is unconquerable (durhaṇā) and baleful (durvidatrā). However, the seers of Rgveda have not thrown

273. Keith, A.B., The Religion And Philosophy Of The Veda And Upanishads, Part I, p.267
274. Sāyaṇa on I.24.9; X.59.1; X.36.2; I.38.6; VII. 37.7; X.114.2; I. 164.32 and X.10.11.
275. Commenting on Nirukta 2.7 Durga Says 'kṛcchasya duḥkhasyāpattih prāptiryasmāt'.
276. I.38.6; X. 36.2. In AB. (4.10) Nirṛti is called the mistress of all moving beings.
much light on the nature and identity of this goddess. It is in later Vedic texts that one comes across various statements on the nature of goddess Nirṛti. In this connection one may refer to a verse from the *Atharvaveda* (VI.84.1) which runs as follows:

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yasyāsta āsani ghore juhoma eṣaṁ vaddhānāmavasarjanāya kam / bhūmirītī tvābhīpramanvate janāḥ nirṛtirītī tvāham pari veda sarvataḥ // [ People know you as *bhūmi* but I always know you as *nirṛti* — you unto whose terrible mouth I offer oblations so that the fetters (of sufferings) may be slackened.]
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This verse from the *Atharvaveda* indicates that the word *nirṛti* primarily stands for the darker side of earthly existence and that through secondary connotation the word means the earth. In the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (7.2.1.11) it is said that this earth is *nirṛti*, because, one who undergoes sufferings, wear out upon her.\(^{277}\)

In the same *Brāhmaṇa*, Nirṛti has been identified as sin.\(^{278}\) It may be recalled that in Vedic tradition sin includes all kinds of physical sufferings.\(^{279}\) As indicated in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (7.2.1.11) the earth is called *bhūmi* when there is prosperity, but when there is all round sufferings it is called *nirṛti*.

\(^{277}\) Cf. Sāyaṇa on ŠB., 7.2.1.11.

\(^{278}\) ŠB., 5.2.3.3 ; 7.2.1 ; 7.2.1.5.

\(^{279}\) Cf. *RV.*, II. 27.14,17 ; II. 28. 10 ; ŠB., 6.3.2.7 ; 6.3.3.7 ; 8.5.1.6 ; 11.1.5.7.
While taking note of the fact that in Vedic texts Nirṛti is identified with the earth as well as with the goddess of death and decay, Bhattacharji has made the following observation — 'In one of her aspects she represents not only death but also decay, a natural precondititon of death. If we bear in mind that interment was a very old mode of disposal of the corpse, the connection between the earth—goddess Nirṛti and decay and death becomes very clear. This is borne out by the ŚB (VII.2.11). Purūravas says to Urvasī that if she does not come back 'he will lie in Nirṛti's lap or the fierce wolves will devour him '. (ŚB. IX.5.1.8)......we can clearly visualize burial behind the image, while the second passage describes two types of destruction — 'lying in Nirṛti's lap' and 'being devoured by wolves', again indicating that lying in the lap of Nirṛti, the earth is same as being buried.280

__/Dakṣiṇā_

The deification of Dakṣiṇā and her glorification as a benevolent goddess in the Rgveda (X.107 and I.18.5) point to the importance laid on the act of dakṣiṇādāna at the end of every ritual. In X.107.3 Dakṣiṇā is described as leading the holy act to its completion and as such she is

said to form a part and parcel of the ritual itself. There the priest says — ‘daivī pūrtiḥ daksinā devayajyā’. In the ritualistic religion of the Veda, the ritual being viewed as remaining incomplete until and unless the sacrificer pays adequate fee to the priests, Dakṣinā becomes an important feature. In his commentary on 1.18.5 Veṅkaṭamādhava has referred to Dakṣinā as ‘yajñasya patnī’. The hymn to goddess Dakṣinā (X.107) is in fact mainly a glorification of the ‘daksināvān’ sacrifice. For such a wise person goddess Dakṣinā becomes an armour against all evil. The more a person gives, the more he gets back. By the grace of Dakṣinā all his wishes and desires are fulfilled.282

Yāska has derived the word dakṣinā as follows: ‘dakṣinā daksateḥ samardhatikarmanah / vṛyddham samardhayaṭīti/’ According to him dakṣinā is called so because it leads the quality of the act to all round enhancement.283

√SARAMĀ

Tradition looks upon Saramā as the deity of Rgveda X.108.1,3,5,7 and 9. We come across Saramā and read about her activities also in I.62.3; I.72.8; III.31.6; IV.16.8 and

281. Cf. Śāyana on X.107.3.
282. X.107.7-11.
283. Nirukta, I.7. Also see Śāyana on I.18.5.
V.45. 7 and 8 of *Rgveda*. The *Sūkta* X.108 is known as the *Saramāpanisamvāda*. In it Saramā acting as an emissary of Indra engages herself in a dialogue with the Paṇis and requests them to release the cows stolen by them. In the other verses mentioned above she is depicted as recovering the cows stolen by the Paṇis or by one single demon called Vala. This she does for the sake of Indra and the Aṅgirasas. It is said that she agrees to find the stolen cows so that her son may be provided with food. Saramā finds the cows by following their noise made by them. She is able to do so because she is endowed with fine legs. After recovering the cows she obtains profuse milk from them by the grace of Agni. Human race is sustained by this milk: ‘yena nu kam mānuṣī bhojate viṣ’. Before she set out in her task the Navagvas performed a ten month sacrifice in honour of Indra. At the end of this sacrifice she obtained the cows by following the path of *Ṛta*. When Saramā fetched the cows the prayers of the Aṅgirasas became fruitful. As the Aṅgirasas came across the cows at day break, milk flowed in the highest abode. According to Sāyaṇa this ‘highest abode’ is the place of sacrifice. He is of the

284. Cf. I.62.3b
285. Cf. III.31.6c
286. Cf. I.72.8b
287. Cf. V.45. 7,8.
opinion that Saramā described in these verses is either ' saraṇaśīla
stūtirūpā vāk ' or ' indreṇa prahitā devaśunī '.

In the Nirukta (11.24,25) Saramā's name occurs among the goddesses of the mid-region. Yāska has derived the word from Vśṛ—to move. In course of his discussion on the nature of Saramā he has stated that Saramā of the myth of the Paṇis is a divine bitch. Durga in his commentary on Nirukta 11.24,25 says that while Aitihāsikas consider Saramā to be as divine bitch, the Nairuktas see in her Mādhyamikā Vāk. In the Rgveda one does not come across any direct statement to the effect that Saramā is a bitch. Saramā may be called a bitch only on the basis of indirect statements made in VII.55.2,3 and X.14.10. While in the former instances a watch dog has been addressed as ' sārameya ', in the latter the two dogs of Yama are called ' sārameyaun '.

According to Bergaigne, Saramā represents prayer in general and her fine legs in his opinion are ' perhaps the rythm of prayer '. He thinks that the path of Rta she is said to follow means the path of sacrifice in which prayers are uttered. Bergaigne has put forward this view on the basis of the association of Saramā with the Āṅgirasas. He argues that the most noteworthy feature of the Rgvedic myth

of the Aṅgirasas' is exactly the efficacy of song in assuring victory for Indra' in his bid to recover the cows stolen by the demons. Bergaigne has also pointed out two points of similarities between Saramā and Sarasvatī whom he regards as a goddess of Vāk. He takes note of the facts that just like Saramā, Sarasvatī too triumphs over the Paṇis (VI.61.1): just as Saramā discovers food, Sarasvatī discovers rivers for human race *ibid, 3*; and finally just as Saramā is the companion of the Aṅgirasas, Sarasvatī is the companion of the ancestors designated by the general name of Pitṛs'.

In the later Vedic text such as the *Maitrāyaṇīsaṃhitā* (IV.6.4) Saramā is regarded as Vāk: 'vāgvaś saramā'

\[ \text{\textit{SACI}} \]

According to *Devatānukramaṇī* Śacī is the deity of *Rgveda* X.159. The hymn subscribes to the characteristics of an Ādhyātmika Sūkta as defined in the *Nirukta* of Yāska. This is so, because in it its seer Śacī, the daughter of Pulamā and wife of Indra describes her supremacy over Indra and his other wives. By way of illustration the second verse of the hymn is being quoted here. It runs as follows: 'ahāṁ keturahāṁ mūrdhāham ugrā vivācanī/ mamedanu kratum patiḥ sehanāyā upācare' [I am the banner and

the head, a mighty arbitress—am I: I am victorious, and my Lord shall be submissive to my will—Griffith.[290]

In the *Nighantu* (2.1) the word śacī occurs as a synonym of words like damīsaḥ, kratu, śakma, sakti etc. In the *Rgveda* this word occurs in the plural number to denote great deeds particularly those performed by Indra whose primary characteristics is the performance of acts that require valour and strength. Indra is called Śacīpati i.e., the lord of mighty deeds. The concept of Śacī Paulamī as the wife of Indra is the outcome of poetic fancy based on the idea of Indra as the lord or protector of great deeds.[294]

In this short hymn Śacī Paulamī declares that she reigns over Indra who in turn follows her dictates. She has performed the same sacrifices by dint of which Indra became mighty (kṛtvā). By doing so she has subjugated all her enemies including her co-wives. Her sons have become mighty and her daughter most beautiful.[295]

290. *The Hymns Of The Rgveda*, p.644
291. Cf. I.62.12; I.103.2; I.109.8; VI.44.9; VI.45.24; VI.47.13; VIII.2.15, 32; VIII.16.7; X.22.14; X.89.4.etc.
292. ‘yā ca kā ca balakṛtirindrakarmaiva tat’, *Nirukta*, 7.10.
293. Cf. I.106.5; VII.2.13; VI.45.9; VIII.14.2.
The triad of goddesses formed by Sarasvati, Iija and Bhārati are known as Devyastisra or Tisrodevī. One verse belonging to each of the ten Āprī hymns is dedicated to these triad of goddesses.

In the Nirukta, (7.8) the name of Iija occurs among the female companions of Agni the presiding deity of the earth. Yāska has derived the word Iija from Viṣṇa to worship. According to this derivation the word means 'one who is worshipped'. Again Bhārati, is in the opinion of Yāska the lustre of Bharata i.e., the sun. This makes her a goddess belonging to the Dyusthāna. So far as goddess Sarasvati is concerned, her nature and origin has already been discussed in detail.

Śaṭyaṇa’s interpretation of the significations of Iija and Bhārati is more or less same as that of Yāska. According to him they are manifestations of Agni. About Bhārati he states as follows: ‘bharata ādityastasya svabhūta diptih. According to him not only Bhārati, but even Sarasvati, the Antarikṣadevata and Iija the Bhūdevī too are but manifestations of the power of the sun. According to an

296. I.13.9.
299. On X.110.8.
alternative explanation offered by Sāyaṇa, while Iḷā is a personification of speech uttered by Adharyu during the performance of a ritual, Bhāratī is a representation of Vāk pertaining to the sun. Sarasvatī being Vāk belonging to the Antarikṣa the three goddesses represent speech produced in the three regions. It may be stated in this connection that in II.3.8 of the Rgveda, goddess Bhāratī has been hailed as 'viśvatūrtiḥ' and Sāyaṇa has explained the same as 'sarvaviṣayagatā vāk'. Another epithet given to Bhāratī is 'ghṛtapadi' (X.70.8) which according to Sāyaṇa means 'dīptapadopeta'. In VII.16.8 of Rgveda Iḷā's name has been mentioned. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on this verse while explaining the epithet 'ghṛtahastā' pertaining to Iḷā says that she is 'annarūpā havirlakṣaṇā devī'. In this context it may be noted that in I.31.11. this goddess has been referred to as the upholder of the sacrifice established by Manu – who incidentally in the Rgveda is the human sacrificer par excellence. Again in V.41.19 Iḷā has been called 'yuthasya mātā' i.e., mother of the cattle.

Macdonell opines that Iḷā is 'Nourishment' and is a personification of the offering of milk and butter derived

300. Sāyaṇa on I.188.8.
301. Sāyaṇa on I.142.9. A similar view has also been expressed by Veṅkaṭamādhava in his commentary on I.142.9.
from the cow. So far as goddess Bhāratī is concerned both Macdonell and Oldenberg believe that she is called Bhāratī because of her association with the race of the Bharatas. They are of the opinion that she is a personification of the oblations offered by the Bharatas during rituals performed by them.

In the Āpri verses the three goddesses are invited to take their seats at the place of sacrifice. They are invoked to protect the ritual so that its performance may be flawless. It is interesting to note that while Bhāratī is referred to as being accompanied by other Bhāratīs, Sarasvatī is said to be accompanied by the Sārasvatīs and Ḡā by the gods and men. All the three goddesses bear the epithet ‘mahī’ and are described as decayless beautiful divinities who bestow happiness upon the worshippers.

RĀKĀ, SINĪVĀLĪ AND GUṆGU.
The Rgvedic verses in which the three goddesses viz., Rākā, Sinīvālī and Guṅgu have been invoked do not throw any light on the real identity and origin of these deities. However, in the Aitareyabrāhmaṇa (32.10) Rākā is identified as

302. Vedic Mythology, p.124
303. Ibid, p.87. The Religion of the Veda, p.23
304. Cf. I.13.9 ; I.142.9 ; II. 3.8 ; III.4.8 ; IX.5.8.
the full moon. There it is said: ‘ya pūrva paurnamāsī sānumatiryā uttarā sā rākā’. Commenting on this Śāyaṇa says—
caturdaśīsamyogāccandramasi kalāhīne satyanumatirityucyate/
tat saṁyogābhāvena candramanṣṇāle pūrne sati rāketyucyate/’
In V.42.12 of Rgveda, Rākā is described as a deity of brilliant lustre. Again according to the Aitareyabrāhmaṇa (32.10) the moon seen on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight is called Śinīvālī and the invisible new moon is known as Kuhū: ‘ya pūrva’māvāsyā sā śinīvālī, yottarā sā kuhūḥ’. Śāyaṇa in his commentary on this statement says—
a tṛāpi caturdaśīsamyogāccandraśane satyamāvāsyā śinīvālyucyate/ tadyogarahitena candradarśanabhāve kuhūriti/
So far as the nature of Rākā is concerned, according to Aitareyabrāhmaṇa (13.13) she is the sister of the gods and she helps increase virility in men. But elsewhere in the Aitareyabrāhmaṇa (15.4) Rākā has been identified as Usā. Śinīvālī is called Gauḥ and Kuhū is identified as the earth. Here it may be recalled that in the Rgveda (X.90.16) Gauḥ is identified as the goddess of speech and in a later Vedic text i.e., the Vājasaneyīsamhitā (11.55) Śinīvālī is directly referred to as Vāk.

In the Rgveda, Kuhū has not been mentioned any

305. Cf. Śāyaṇa V.42.12.
where. According to Sāyaṇa the goddess Guṅgu named in this Veda is same as Kuhū. In his commentary on II.32.8 he says — ‘atra guṅguśabdena rākāsinīvālyoḥ sāhacaryāt kuhūruucyate’. In the Rgveda Guṅgu appears only by name sans any reference to her characteristic feature. Both Rākā and Sinīvālī are entreated to bless the worshippers with sons. Sinīvālī is called a sister of the gods and extolled as a deity who makes childbirth safe and easy. She is a deity who blesses man with many sons. 306 As a matter of fact, her very form described in the Rgveda (II.32.6,7) as an epitome of femininity indicates that she is a goddess of fertility. The statement made in the Aitareyabrāhmaṇa (13.13) that Rākā helps increase virility in men seems to be an elaboration of Rgveda II.32.4. 307

Elaborate discussions on the nature of Rākā and Sinīvālī have been made by Lal who has taken note of the etymological significances of the words viz., rākā and sinīvālī. 308

VĀSUNĪTI

According to the Rgveda (X.16.3,4) when a person dies his eyes enter the sun, his life-breath merges with air.

306. II.32.7 Cf. Sāyaṇa Ibidem.
308. Cf. Female Divinities In Hindu Mythology And Ritual, pp212-215
and that part of him which is birthless and as such is also
deathless either enters the earth or the waters or the plants
or goes to heaven. In the language of the Rgvedic seer
this immortal object is called *asu*. In X.18.8, a dead
person has been called *gatāsu* and in X.15.1 the Pitrs are
referred to as entities made up of *asu*. In the *Rgveda*
we also come across a female goddess called Asuniti who
after the death of a man leads his *asu* to its new abode.
Goddess Asuniti is invoked in the *Rgveda* in only two verses.
In these verses (X.59.5,6) she is invoked by the friends
of a dead man Subandhu by name to return his eyes and
life-breath so that he may live again. She is begged for
prolonging man's life thereby enabling him to enjoy his existence
on earth. Sāyaṇa in his commentary on these two verses
has called Asuniti ‘*manuṣyāḥmasūnāṁ netri*’ and
‘*prāṇadāyini*’. According to him the word *anumate*
in X.59.6 is an epithet of Asuniti herself. The *Devatānukramaṇī*
of the *Rgveda* too does not recognise a separate Rgvedic
deity called Anumati. 309 *Aitareyabrāhmana* (32.10) has
referred to a goddess Anumati who is a representation of a
particular phase of the moon. But the word *anumate* in
X.59.6 cannot possibly stand for a moon-goddess.

309. According to western scholars in X.59.6, a separate deity
called Anumati has been invoked. According to *AB* (32.10)
also Anumati is a separate deity. See under Rākā.
Yāska derives the word *asunīti* as ‘asūnayati’ (10.39). Durga in his commentary on this states that Asunīti stands for the *Madhyama Prāṇa*, because once this *Prāṇa* leaves the body it leads other *Prāṇas* out of it.

**Kṛtyā**

Kṛtyā according to Śāyaṇa is an *abhicārābhimāṇini devatā*. As can be gathered from the three verses (X.85.28-30) dedicated to her, she is a blue and red goddess who assails newly wed couples. The groom it is said, gets afflicted when he covers himself with the bridal garment (‘vadhūvāsa’). The calamity is warded off when Kṛtyā leaves the bride. Once she is freed from the clutches of Kṛtyā she is required to wear new clothes and offer riches to Brāhmīns. In later Vedic literature, particularly in the *Atharvaveda*, Kṛtyā has risen to prominence as a goddess of witchcraft.

**Śāraṇyū**

According to Rgvedic mythology Śāraṇyū is the daughter of Tvaṣṭr and wife of Vivasvān i.e., the sun-god. She at first gave birth to Yama and Yamā. Thereafter the

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310. Śāyaṇa on X.85.28.
311. Cf. X.17.1,2.
gods concealed her among men. There she stayed taking the form of a mare and gave birth to another pair of twins viz., the Aśvins. This legend however, does not throw any light upon the real identity of Saranya. Sāyaṇa takes her to be a goddess of the mid-region who gave birth to Agni and Vāk belonging to this particular region. Yāska, on the other hand believes that Saranya is a personification of the night and is the wife of the sun. She being the night disappears with the appearance of the sun. This very phenomenon is mythologically-presented as her concealment.

According to Macdonell, in all probability Saranya is none other than Sūryā or Uṣas. Max Müller believes that Vivasvān is the sky and Saranya the dawn and the first pair of twins viz., Yama and Yamī born of her are respectively the day and the night.

Etymologically the word saranyu means 'the swift one': 'saraṇya saraṇat' (Nirukta, 12.10). According to Devarāja, the commentator of the Nighaṇṭu Saranya is the dawn who swiftly merges with the sun as it appears in the eastern sky.

312. Sāyaṇa on X.17.2.
313. Nirukta, 12.11.
314. Vedic Mythology, p.125
315. Max Müller as quoted in Vedic Mythological Tracts, fn.12, p.122
The *Rgveda* has devoted only one verse in honour of goddess Prśni. In this verse (VI.48.22) she is eulogised along with Dyaus and Bhūmi. The verse alludes to the creation of the sky, the earth and the waters in the mid-region which are all said to be unique in their nature. This is so because there does not exist another sky or another earth and the waters too do not have anything like them. In the verse, the waters are called the milk of goddess Prśni. Prśni as a female divinity is considered to be the mother of the Maruts. The Maruts bear the epithet 'prśnimātaraḥ' i.e., 'those who have Prśni for their mother' in I.23-10. According to Sāyana, Prśni is either 'nānāvarṇayuktā bhūmi' or 'mādhyamikā vāk'. Sāyana's interpretations of the goddess seems to have for their basis the fact that the Maruts besides being called 'prśnimātaraḥ' are also known as 'gomātaraḥ' (I.85.3) which as it appears identifies Prśni with Gauḥ. In the *Nighaṇṭu* (1.4) too the two words are treated as synonymous. In the *Nighaṇṭu* (I.1,11) the word *gauḥ* occurs also as a synonym of the words

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316. The word *Prśni* occurs in the *Rgveda* both in the female and masculine gender. In the latter case it is used as an epithet of the sun-god. Cf. IV.3.10; IV.5.7; V.47.3 etc. Yāska considers the word to be another name of Āditya. Cf. *Nirukta*, 2.14.

317. Cf. II.34.2; V.58.5.
and vāk. One feels that Pṛśni as the mother of the Maruts represents the mottled-rain cloud from which rises the rumbling sound of thounder. As a matter of fact, in *Rgveda* I.23.12 the Maruts are directly referred to as being born from the sound of lightning: ‘haskārād  vidyutasparyato jātāh’.

Sītā of *Rgveda* is an agricultural deity presiding over the furrow. In other words she is a deification of the furrow. She is invoked in the *Rgveda* (IV.57.6,7) so that the ploughed land may yield wealth in the shape of abundant crop. Invoking her the worshipper says — ‘arvācī subhage bhava site vandāmahe tvā / yathā naḥ subhagā asasi yathā naḥ suphalā asasi // ’ indraḥ sītām nigṛ ṇāt ā tu tāṁ pūṣānuyacchatu / sā naḥ payasvatī duhāmuttarāmuttārāṁ samāṁ // (IV.57.6,7) [‘Auspicious Sītā come thou near: we venerate and worship thee, That thou mayest bless and prosper us and bring us fruits abundantly.

May Indra press the furrow down, may Pūṣān guide its course aright. May she, as rich in milk, be drained for us through each succeeding year. — Griffith]

318. *The Hymns Of The Rgveda*, p.235
Dvāradevyah are goddesses of the doors that lead men and gods to the place of sacrificial. These goddesses are invoked in the Āpṛī hymns. Just as in case of Devyastisra, here too one verse from each of the ten Āpṛī hymns is devoted to the honour of Dvāradevyah. Like the former group of divinities the latter group too are out and out sacrificial deities. These goddesses are hailed as the uplifters of the sacrifice (‘ṛtvṛdhaḥ’). The very first two verses dedicated to them throw enough light on their nature. These verses are being quoted below to illustrate this fact:

(a) ‘śrayantām ṛtvṛdho dvāraḥ devirasāscata / adyā nūnam ca yaṣṭave // ’ (I.13.6) [Thrown open be the Doors Divine, unfailing that assist the rite, For sacrifice this day and now. — Griffith]

(b) ‘vi śrayantām ṛtvṛdhaḥ prayair devebhyo mahīḥ/ pāvakāsah puruspṛhaho devirasāscata // ’ (I.142.6) [Thrown open be the Doors Divine, unfailing that assist the rite, High, purifying, much - desired, so that the Gods may enter in.— Griffith]

According to Śāyaṇa these goddesses of the doors

319. Cf. Śāyaṇa on I.13.6 ; I.142.6 ; I.188.5 ; II.3.5.
320. The Hymns Of The Ṛgveda , p.8
321. Ibid, p.98.
are but forms of Agni. Skandasvāmin too feels that these doors are the flames of the fires lit all around the place of sacrifice. Commenting on 1.13.6. he has said: ‘dvārah yajñagr̥hadvāro vā jvālā vāgneh/ tā hi tasya dvārabhūtāh deviḥ/’.

PATHYĀSVASTI

As per tradition Pathyāsvasti is the deity of Rgveda X.63.15 and 16. Sāyaṇa has identified her as goddess of the earth. According to him the word ‘pathyāsvasti’ means ‘pathiyogyesu sodakeśu deseśu svasti kalyāṇam’. She is a goddess who grant wellbeing to man everywhere on earth, be it a thoroughfare or the sacrificial altar; be it one’s own home or the dense forest.

It may be noted in this context that Sāyaṇa in his commentary on the Aitareyābrāhmaṇa (2.1) has stated that Pathyā is a manifestation of goddess Aditi. In the Nirukta (11.45) she has been regarded as a goddess of the mid-region. Yāska has interpreted the word pathyā as ‘panthā antarikṣam tannivāsat’. In Vedic usage the words prthivi, aditi, and antarikṣa are interchangeable terms. In the Nighantu (1.1,3) these are treated as synonyms. In Rgveda, V.84.3

322. Sāyaṇa on I.13.6; II. 3.5.
323. Rgveda, part I, Hoshiarpur, p.77
goddess Prthivi is described as presiding over both the earth and the mid-region above it. Again as one knows, the word aditi has been used as an epithet of goddess earth a number of times in the *Rgveda*. 324

**DHIŞANĀ**

Although in the *Devatānukramani* Dhiṣanā has not been mentioned as a goddess invoked in the *Rgveda*, yet Sāyaṇa has opined that Dhiṣanā in *Rgveda* 1.22.10 is Vāgdevī. This according to him is so because in the Śukla Yajurveda declarations have been made to this effect. 325 In the aforementioned verse Dhiṣanā bears the epithet varutri meaning varaniya. It should be noted that this verse is primarily dedicated to Agni and as such Dhiṣanā in it is treated only as a 'nipātabhāk' 326 deity. There is however, another verse viz., X.35.17 in which Dhiṣanā has been directly invoked as follows:

' rāyaḥ janitrim dhiṣanāmupa bruve ' In this case Sāyaṇa has stated that Dhiṣanā in this passage is either 'sarvadevastutirūpā vāk' or is a ' devi '.

Hillebrandt believes that Dhiṣanā is the goddess of

324. Cf. I.43.2 ; I.72.9 ; I.185.3 ; Sāyaṇa Ibidem.
325. Cf. VS., 11. 61 ; ŚB., 6.5.4.5.
According to Macdonell, Rgvedic Dhiṣanā is a personification of abundance.

\textit{Devapatnyāḥ}

The wives of the gods viz., Agni, Indra, Varuṇa and the Āśvins constitute a distinct class of goddesses, by virtue of the fact that they are not personifications of anything concrete or abstract.

These goddesses are Agnāyī, Indrāṇī, Varuṇāṇī and Āśvinī. They are projected as eager to receive eulogies from men and are invoked for the sake of all round happiness, protection from all evil and blessings in the shape of sons and food.

These wives of the gods are called ‘acchinnapatrāḥ’ in I.22.11. Sāyaṇa believes that this epithet indicates that these goddesses are conceived of as birds. Thus, he says—

‘acchinnapatrā acchinnapakṣāḥ na hi pakṣirūpāṇāṁ devapatnīnāṁi pakṣāḥ kenacid chidyante ‘. Veṅkaṭamādhava, however, believes that this epithet stands for ‘acchinnapatanā’ i.e., of continuous movement. Another epithet given to

328. \textit{Vedic Mythology}, p.124
329. Cf. I.22. 11, 12 ; II. 32.8 ; V. 46. 7,8
these female divinities is 'nrpatnīḥ' (I.22.11) i.e., protectresses of men.

\textbf{BRHADDIVĀ}

In the \textit{Anukramaṇī} of the Rgvedic deities, Brhaddivā has not been recognised as a divinity. But Macdonell considers her to be the goddess invoked in four verses dedicated to the all-gods viz., II.31.4; V.41.19; V.42.12 and X.64.10. In the last one of these verses she is hailed as \textit{mātā}. According to Sāyaṇa, in it Brhaddivā has been invoked as the lustrous mother of the gods. So far as the rest of the verses are concerned, he holds that in II.31.4 the word \textit{brhaddivā} is an epithet of the sun-god called Bhaga, in V.41.19 it is an epithet of Urvaśī and in V.42.12 it is used as an epithet of goddess Rākā.

\textbf{ŚAŚIYASTI}

According to Rgvedic tradition Śaśiṣyasī is a goddess invoked in V.61.5 to 8 of the \textit{Rgveda}. In reality she is not a divine being but is the wife of a king Taranta by name. The verses devoted to her praise are Dānastuties. In them the seer Śyāvāśva lauds her benevolence, for, she has

offered him opulent gifts consisting of horses, cattle and goats. Because these gifts to him he praises the queen as being superior to a man who neither worships the gods nor gives away wealth to other men.

Sārparājñī

As recorded in the Anukramanī of the Rgvedic gods, the deity of X.189 is either Sūrya or Sārparājñī. The seer of this very short hymn is said to be a lady called Sārparājñī. In the Anukramanī it is said: ‘āyamgauḥ sārparājñyātmadaivatam vā’. So far as the hymn itself is concerned, the word sārparājñī does not occur in any one of its three verses. As can be gathered from the hymn in it, the seer worships the sun-god whom she has referred to as Prśni and Pataṛīga. Sāyaṇa in his commentary has pointed out that both these words are epithets of the sun.

We come across goddess Sārparājñī only in later Rgvedic text such as the Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa 27.4. In this work she has been identified with the earth, Vāk and Gauḥ. In it the word sārparājñī is explained as ‘sarpato rājñī’, i.e., the queen of the moving beings.