

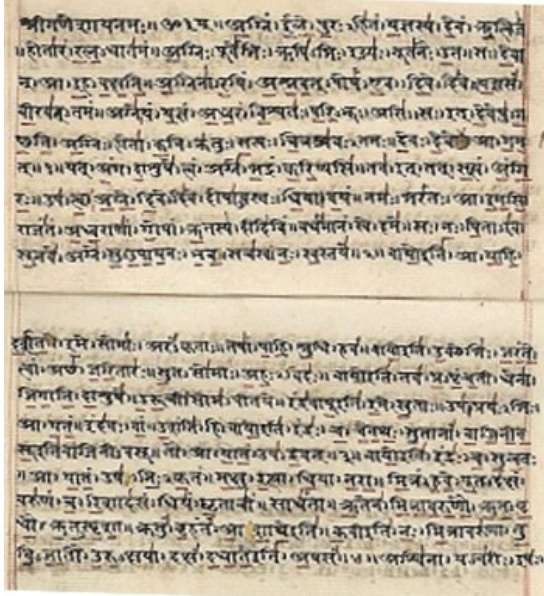


August 2009

Glory of Bharath » Bharatheeya Samskrithi

Rig Veda

The Rig Veda is the oldest of the Vedas. All the other Vedas are based upon it and consist to a large degree of various hymns from it. It consists of a thousand such hymns of different seers, each hymn averaging around ten verses. The Rig Veda is the oldest book in Sanskrit or any Indo-European language. The Rig Veda is the book of Mantra. It contains the oldest form of all the Sanskrit mantras. It is built around a science of sound which comprehends the meaning and power of each letter. Most aspects of Vedic science like the practice of yoga, meditation, mantra and Ayurveda can be found in the Rig Veda and still use many terms that come from it.



The Rig Veda comprises of ten mandalas or sections -

- **Mandala 1** comprises 191 hymns. Hymn 1.1 is addressed to Agni, and his name is the first word of the Rigveda. The remaining hymns are mainly addressed to Agni and Indra, as well as Varuna, Mitra, the Ashvins, the Maruts, Usas, Surya, Rbhus, Rudra, Vayu, Brhaspati, Visnu, Heaven and Earth, and all the Gods.
- **Mandala 2** comprises 43 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. It is chiefly attributed to the Rishi g? tsamada saunahotra.
- **Mandala 3** comprises 62 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra and the Vishvedevas. The verse 3.62.10 has great importance in Hinduism as the Gayatri Mantra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to visvamitra gathina?.
- **Mandala 4** comprises 58 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra as well as the Rbhus, Ashvins, Brhaspati, Vayu, Usas, etc. Most hymns in this book are attributed to vama?deva gautama?.
- **Mandala 5** comprises 87 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra, the Visvedevas ("all the gods?"), the Maruts, the twin-deity Mitra-Varuna and the Asvins. Two hymns each are dedicated to Ushas (the dawn) and to Savitr. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the atri clan.
- **Mandala 6** comprises 75 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra, all the gods, Pusan, Ashvin, Usas, etc. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the barhaspatya family of Angirasas.
- **Mandala 7** comprises 104 hymns, to Agni, Indra, the Visvadevas, the Maruts, Mitra-Varuna, the Asvins, Ushas, Indra-Varuna, Varuna, Vayu (the wind), two each to Sarasvati (ancient river/goddess of learning) and Vishnu, and to others. Most hymns in this book are attributed to vasi??ha maitravaru?i.
- **Mandala 8** comprises 103 hymns to various gods. Hymns 8.49 to 8.59 are the apocryphal valakhilya. Hymns 1-48 and 60-66 are attributed to the ka?va clan, the rest to other (Angirasa) poets.
- **Mandala 9** comprises 114 hymns, entirely devoted to Soma Pavamana, the cleansing of the sacred potion of the Vedic religion.
- **Mandala 10** comprises additional 191 hymns, frequently in later language, addressed to Agni, Indra and various other deities. It contains the Nadistuti sukta which is in praise of rivers and is important for the reconstruction of the geography of the Vedic civilization and the Purusha sukta which has great significance in Hindu social tradition. It also contains the Nasadiya sukta (10.129), probably the most celebrated hymn in the west, which deals with creation. The marriage hymns (10.85) and the death hymns (10.10-18) still are of great importance in the performance of the corresponding Grihya rituals. It is the Purusha Sukta that talks about creation.

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There are 1028 hymns in the **Rigveda**, most of them dedicated to specific **deities**. **Indra**, a heroic god, slayer of Vrtra and destroyer of the Vala, liberator of the cows and the rivers; **Agni** the sacrificial fire and messenger of the gods; and **Soma** the ritual drink dedicated to Indra are the most prominent deities. Invoked in groups are the **Vishvedevas** (the "all-gods"), the **Maruts**, violent storm gods in Indra's train and the **Ashvins**, the twin horsemen. There are two major groups of gods, the **Devas** and the **Asuras**. Unlike in later Vedic texts and in Hinduism, the Asuras are not yet demonized, **Mitra** and **Varuna** being their most prominent members. Aditi is the mother both of Agni and of the **Adityas** or Asuras, led by Mitra and Varuna, with Aryaman, Bhaga, Ansa and Daksha.

Surya is the personification of the Sun, but Savitar, Vivasvant, the Ashvins and the Rbhus, semi-divine craftsmen, also have aspects of solar deities. Other natural phenomena deified include Vayu, (the wind), Dyaus and Prithivi (Heaven and Earth), Dyaus continuing Dyeus, the chief god of the Proto-Indo-European religion, and Ushas (the dawn), the most prominent goddess of the Rigveda, and Apas (the waters). Rivers play an important role, deified as goddesses, most prominently the Sapta Sindhu and the Sarasvati River. Yama is the first ancestor, also worshipped as a deity, and the god of the underworld and death. Vishnu and Rudra, the prominent deities of later Hinduism (Rudra being an early form of Shiva) are present as marginal gods.

The essence of Rig Veda is samatva - equanimity. Rig Veda showed the unity in diversity by recognizing the same Divinity latent in every living being and that Divinity was all pervasive. "Isavasyam Idam Sarvam".



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