

# **The Rig Veda Study Guide**

## **The Rig Veda by Anonymity**

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# Plot Summary

The Rig Veda is one of the world's classical pieces of literature. It is part of the tradition of preserving ancient texts for a few reasons. One purpose for doing so, is in order to connect people with the origins of knowledge, religion and culture. Another reason for this is to empower the vision and sense of humanity as a whole, not only throughout the world but also for all time by preserving our connection with the generations who have come before and after us. Those who read The Rig Veda have rather direct access, through a translation from the Sanskrit, of life for the earliest Hindus approximately 3000 years ago. The date of origin has been 'estimated' as having fallen within a 300 year 'window' of 1200 BC or as recently as 900 BC. As additional reference points, this also falls within the Hebrew and Chinese and Mayan calendars. The Rig Veda begins with the very beginnings of religious philosophy typically referred to as metaphysics and ontology. Through the sequence of preserved pieces, the early development of Hindu theology is revealed and shared. To some extent it is even explained.

The form of the writings that comprise The Rig Veda are called 'hymns' by the scholars who have assembled or preserved these works. They are not structured into a recognizable poetic form of the modern English speaking world when presented in translation. They also do not have any standard lyrical form that would be customarily used in English. Having not seen the originals and due to not being a Sanskrit or Hindu scholar, the summary writer is not able to provide any authoritative insight into the nature of the forms in their language of origin in relation to those available to people of that culture. As such, given the frequent religious connotations of the works, it is presumed that the scholars have selected the term 'hymn' as the most accurate description available. On the rare chance that any reader does not know, a hymn is a religious lyric.

The Rig Veda covers a lengthy time span. There are a small number of references to "the poet" that come up during the course of the writings, but there is no author ever named or given any 'byline'. Without extensive research there is no precise way to interpret what this means. The Anonymous designation is accurate. Whether there was one author or more is not clear from the body of works themselves.

Essential principles of theological belief, and attitude towards that which is revered is the main discernible purpose of the messages delivered through The Rig Veda. Readers can take these in a variety of ways. There is both timelessness about it as well as 'timeliness'. The latter will greatly please history buffs. There is evidence to support the notion of 'progress' in human culture since then, when at least some of the contents are seen as 'backwards.' At the same time there are accuracies contained within the work. Early on, readers will read about the impact of thunder and lightning upon the human psyche. This has changed only very slightly or not at all during the thousands of years that followed. The week before this summary was physically formed, the writer observed grown women and men as well as children working through their instinctive and intuitive reactions to the mighty crackles, the blinding, flashing light and "the boom

boom" of a storm. However primal or cultural, this is but one of the facts of life on earth that is captured by the unnamed authors of The Rig Veda.



# **Book 1, Creation & Death : Chapter 1, Introductions, Creation & Death.**

## **Book 1, Creation & Death : Chapter 1, Introductions, Creation & Death. Summary**

Unless otherwise specified, readers can expect that each section of this part of the summary covers approximately 50 pages of the corresponding text. In this first case, readers will find that there are three divisions in the table of contents that refer to the material that is entailed herein. The first is the introductory material. Here, there is a 'best guess' made. The translator is unquestionable: Wendy Doniger has done the translations and annotations, even the selections. There is an introduction that has obviously been written by a scholar but there is no byline. There are two candidates for who most likely did this: one is Wendy Doniger, and the other is another woman named Betty Radice who is cited in Penguin's edition as having been the "advisory editor." Readers do well to check their editions, to see who has performed these functions for them.

This book has been devised with the idea in mind that taken alone, readers may leave the writings confused. This is not necessarily true at all. However, the scholars have arranged the work so that it can satisfy history buffs and university personnel who are using it as a textbook. The way this is done is that in addition to the introduction, which informs readers a bit about the history of the entire project and 'culture' surrounding The Rig Veda, there are two types of supplemental material with every single piece of the writings. The first is a supplied interpretation. Some will find this to be very helpful, but for some readers it will be too much like being spoon fed when this is no longer necessary. The second is a set of notes that follow on after the translated items. These will be of greater value to the more scholarly and the more scrupulous, skeptical and to those with a questioning nature. It is there that some of the choices that have been made with the translations are revealed to readers. For those who just want to read the hymns in English, it may be perceived as pointless padding to the efficient literary work.

The section dedicated to creation contains a number of hymns. The best part about these is that there are a few admissions. One of these is that the very origins of the world and of human culture are inquired into. This is then shown in relation to the beginning of the gods. There is a very clear differentiation between the Hindu religion, as shown here, and the Jewish, Moslem and other monotheistic religions. The gods are said to have come after the emergence of humanity, rather than God having come before it. This 'coincidentally' has also been hinted at in the history of Rome's origins but there is some contradiction to that, as the founder of the city of Rome was said to have been a demigod- that is, one of his two parents was a deity. In the case of Romulus, which came long after The Rig Veda had been written, the god of War was reported to be his father- despite an apparent mortal stand-in rapist/rape event as the material



plane method his conception. The immaculate conception of Jesus the Christ is a case where the father was a deity- the god Yahweh, of the Jews, but not only without rape, without even a mortal male as a 'stand in' during the conception. In the Rig Veda, paradox and contradiction are also recognized within the creation portion of hymns. Soon enough, the author explains, forces of creation and life as seen from the material plane are called gods, and are named. Indra is the first of these.

In this case, the discussion will be continued in the analysis portion of the summary. There are times when the summary and analysis are distinct from one another for important reasons and other occasions when there is very little reason to separate one from the other.

## **Book 1, Creation & Death : Chapter 1, Introductions, Creation & Death. Analysis**

The first set of hymns of The Rig Veda have been accurately marked as relating to creation. The writers sang or chanted about the origin of the world and the beginning of the gods. Natural, observable forces are the source of some need or yearning to define them in an extraordinarily special way- as god or gods. Indra, who is first named with an almost hesitant effort to approach the reality of the world, is quickly re-learned as an entity. Those readers who have a strong faith in the divine may find this disturbing, suspicious or indicative that the Hindus were 'on the wrong track' from the very beginning of their religion, for seeing nothing beyond the world of the senses and for deifying forces of earthly nature. The Hindus are hardly the only ones to make such an attempt at religion. Atheists and agnostics reading may feel an 'Aha!' sense to the same information. Somehow, your perception that there was something 'fishy' about this whole religion thing is confirmed by this discovery that some ancient rained on people living in India simply named 'the forces of creation on earth' Indra. In this sense, the whole thing was a kind of mask over an inscrutably mystery. To use the vernacular, "I didn't really know so I just called it Ka."

Later on, Death is discussed. This natural power is also redefined as an entity. Here the author uses the name Yama. This being is described as 'the King of Death' at least once.

The other main feature of these first sections of text, are that they include some rituals. In some cases it is obvious, whereas in others it is not. The rites include burial ones. Here, where death and burial are the subjects, fire is brought up the most. For readers of today, the purification of fire includes the unmentioned disease-prevention cleansing that justifies both cooking food and burning the dead. Issues relating to space and the use thereof are secondary but also significant. It is only mentioned because readers may be prone to taking this and only cleansing means and agents such as water and soap for granted.

Finally, there are a few key terms defined here. Brahma, which grows in meaning later, here means the very breathing associated with the process of living. Dharma refers to



actions and behaviors that stem from inborn qualities as far as anyone knows. Celestial means what it says, quite literally. The Sun, the Moon and other planets, as well as the distant stars are all celestial bodies. Astronomy and science currently seek and describe some of what astrology has long pointed to, the influence of the celestial forces upon the planet earth, humans in general, and individuals specifically.



## **Book 2, Indra, Agni & Soma : Chapter 1, First Gods & the Mysterious Soma**

### **Book 2, Indra, Agni & Soma : Chapter 1, First Gods & the Mysterious Soma Summary**

Previously unmentioned, was the introduction of something called Soma. It is not entirely certain exactly what Soma really is. It is primarily described as a substance that can be derived from a plant. The hymns explain that it causes some type of ecstasy. From the present perspective, and the fact that it is called a 'white substance' that can be procured by crushing the plant. Whatever it was, it was regarded highly and is normally referred to as not having been easy to come by. The largest quantity of Soma ever told of in the entire Rig Veda is 'three bowls of Soma', and that is much later in the book.

This summary chapter starts out with the hymns covered in the Death section. Burial hymns have just been introduced. After providing some description of funerary rites, the hymns turn more to the emotional aspects of the situation. There is a great one that calls out to drive away death. This reminds everyone of the truth that for many, the death of any one emphasizes the mortality of the others and that this is often frightening.

The next song shows how primitive things are, but also extols human advancements. In this case, the reality is that the power of speech is honored. The ability cherished goes beyond the super power that allows one person to teach another even under radically different circumstances because speech permits transmission of knowledge, and shows deep appreciation for the fact that spoken word allows for a description of emotions and thoughts that would otherwise remain invisible or ambiguous. There is a special claim here, that speech can help people to develop to their full potential but cannot change what 'their best' is.

### **Book 2, Indra, Agni & Soma : Chapter 1, First Gods & the Mysterious Soma Analysis**

During this second section new divine names are developed: Agni and Indra. They will recur later and turn out to be crucial to Hinduism.

There follow a number of hymns to and about leaders. One is about a beloved King; included is a highly relevant point- that the King only was so because he did have the popular support of the people. This is followed by two, each of which is dedicated to a priest. One is for an old priest, whereas the other is devoted to a priest who runs religious sacrifices.





Then there is a hymn that centers around generosity. Withholding of resources is a terrible sin, that has very serious consequences. The generous are well loved; the stingy find little sympathy and the poorer need to somehow receive enough for them to be safe to continue to be generous rather than broken by exploitation when and if they do continue to give. The author tells readers that generosity is so important that any one is better off dealing with generosity, even if from a stranger than a miser—even if the miser is closely related to oneself.

There are hymns that involve ritual sacrifices that include horses in this section of the text. These hymns may be places where readers who normally do not check the notes or the interpretations would choose to do so. These are predominantly of historical value.



## **Book 2, Indra, Agni & Soma : Chapter 2, More Agni & Soma**

### **Book 2, Indra, Agni & Soma : Chapter 2, More Agni & Soma Summary**

Once again, this is a case where the delineations supplied in the table of contents does not entirely align with the summary's divisions. The text moves from descriptions of the 'horse sacrifice' into further discourse on the newly named god Agni. Indra was identified with the Sun and with the creation of the universe. Agni, readers learn within the first few hymns of this section is different, at least at this point.

Some of the writings are referred to as prayers. In these cases, the beings are 'called upon' or spoken to as though sentient. Bear in mind that this means, irrespective of whether or not they are: this is done either from the assumption that they are, or in case they are or because it helps the human to relate this way even when it is not true.

During the opening hymn, straightforwardly called, "I Pray to Agni," the role of the priest in the culture of the time and place is presented. Along with this is another theme, the mixing of the mortal and the immortal. In truth, this peculiar issue is just as confounding today as it was at the time when The Rig Veda was written. Clear to some, confusing to others, the question of immortality and mortality inspires, frightens and perplexes readers. Certainty itself is simultaneously longed for and dubious. This comes up repeatedly. In the very next hymn, the author describes the god Agni as a priest. Here, the notion of an immortal in the guise of a mortal or a being who in some other manner displays the characteristics of both also recurs.

There is a new form of drama in this portion, when Agni fights against demons. More delightfully than ever before, he wins. The powers of light overcome forces of evil.

Soon thereafter, Agni is called a number of other things. Fortunately, none of these are 'curse words.' He is referred to as 'child of the waters' in one hymn. Later, he is identified with pervasiveness. He is also called an 'all knower.' Readers can only hope that the interpretation is not a misunderstanding of the idiomatic 'know it all.' Typically 'know it alls' do not actually know everything but they do tend to have absolute and complete and superior knowledge and acumen compared to the vast majority of others, especially when within their 'area' of expertise. Normally, scholars interpret the ancients as having meant 'all knowing' literally, but there is some possibility that they were 'know it alls' who held great authority. Indra was one of these. There is a hymn in which he is able to draw the god Agni back to himself.

There are two hymns in which Indra's virtues are brought to the fore. Indra is viewed as an internal deity as well as one that has external existence. Indra is also referred to in



intimate relation with the law. Here the laws of nature are also involved when it is remarked that Indra favors those who follow their own natures.

There is one intriguing matter revolving around mortality. Agni, having been brought in tune with Indra, is reported to have become immortal. However, he describes this as having been a very strange process. According to the hymn, when Agni left the realm of mortals into immortality he felt as if he were going from his home reality into a realm in which he was a foreigner.

## **Book 2, Indra, Agni & Soma : Chapter 2, More Agni & Soma Analysis**

During this next block of text, the rudimentary forms of early Hinduism come into focus. Readers begin to develop some image at least of the culture that created these verses. People are happy that something comprehensible has been passed on. If nothing else it is as good as finding an excellent fossil in the dirt: humans were up to something worth while way back then.

Indra has transitioned from the position of being some vague term devised to cover the very limited cosmogony for earth, into being a recognizable and well known god. Codified laws and those observed as actually or apparently built into the world are attributed to him.

Agni emerges progressively as a god as indicated by the title. Along with this, the type of imagery used by the culture who first discovered or devised this entity also grows clear. Bulls and cows are employed when efforts are made to convey the wealth and power and sometimes gender of the deific forces. There is more; readers need to rest assured that the summary serves better as a supplement to the book for students but is not intended to be a substitute.

Soma is the other main topic of these hymns. There is a sequence devoted exclusively to them. The effects and qualities of Soma are given to readers. It has healing powers, it is overwhelming. The substance is intoxicating. It is butter. Soma drives out evil. Soma drinkers are in ecstasy. Soma may help lead to or can indicate some intimacy with immortality. Soma is said to reflect the joy of life itself; others call it a kind of 'nectar' or form of 'honey'. It is associated with the quote, "...the forces of darkness fled in terror." (p. 135)



# **Book 3, Cows of the Rig Veda : Chapter 1, Indra's Cows**

## **Book 3, Cows of the Rig Veda : Chapter 1, Indra's Cows Summary**

With the exception of those in the cattle industries of the Americas, this emphasis on bovine powers is too easy to trivialize. Power and wealth were both intricately bound up with and often based upon cattle. For those involved with these forces directly in the current world, you will more easily understand why. For the rest, just attempt to raise them in your mind to the exalted status they truly hold, and even more held, in the culture that created these hymns. They, like money and large houses and cars and lots of land, indicate wealth.

This being the case, Indra is indicated as 'the lord of cows.' During the hymns that the table of contents labels as falling under the category of this god's name: Indra, comes the Cows in the Cave. Here, and in the few that follow, Indra's deeds and abilities are praised. He is noted for being a kind and benevolent protector and is viewed equally well for being a highly effective killer. In this case, he has destroyed a villain or enemy called Vtra. The truth of this has not been missed. Prayers to Indra often include both requests for his protection, and gentle mercies. In the bluntest of terms this means: Hurt others on my behalf, but please do not harm me or those others who I do not wish to come to harm. Everyone faces this manner of truth one way or another, today just as back then. Whether a storm, God, a goddess, the Mother, the Father or the military, it is normal to have such feelings and dispositions towards 'forces.'

## **Book 3, Cows of the Rig Veda : Chapter 1, Indra's Cows Analysis**

As above, this part of the analysis contains summary. This is due to the type of book that it is. There is a change in the form of the hymns during the second half of those that fall under the name 'Indra.' For the first time, the verses take on the format of a dialogue.

'Sarama and the Panis' is the first of these. Perhaps surprisingly, this one turns out to be about the posturing prior to a battle and a clear indicator of intentions. Sarama shows up and announces himself to the Panis. They ask what he wants and he tells them in no uncertain terms that he is coming after their possessions. They object strongly. They even offer to replace conflict with friendship. He refuses this, assuring them that the god Indra is on his team.



Later on, Indra is reaffirmed as both a creator and a destroyer god. Praise and loyalty are included in prayers. He is also honored once more as a fighter. During the hymn 'Indra & the Maruts' Indra is included as a speaker. He informs the other that he likes the religious rites and the oblations honoring him. There is a sense that he is content to be viewed as 'the knower of all creatures,' and as 'the creator' and as 'the terrible' and 'the destroyer.' It is noticeable that these qualities of Indra's are also cited as characteristics of Yahweh and of the monotheistic God; the true one known to mankind by diverse names, but with globalization more people will be familiar with the one name, or at least with the most commonly used names for this entity. More people refer to this entity nowadays as the Creator but in truth, the Christ's Father continues to hold the role of Destroyer - a fact which his son Jesus played down but did not deny.

Unlike Yahweh who created and sent a son, Jesus the Christ, Indra was not ever written of in The Rig Veda as having created a 'human-celestial hybrid' offspring. Likewise, whereas the Christ informed people to ask always in his name for anything or favor or protection from his Father and it will be granted. Indra is not written of as having planted nor as having needed such intercession. The short version is that Yahweh views Jesus with great favor and is responsive to him, whereas requests from others or that do not go through him might be ignored at best. Jesus perhaps warned humans to go only through him. Indra is not shown as having had any restrictions such as these, but there were specialists who performed ceremonies for him and left oblations and sacrifices to him.

In the poetic hymn entitled 'Parjana, The Bull,' there are direct references to the fear caused by thunder and lightning in this. The powers displayed in such violent storms are also closely associated with the divine. Parjana is described as being a 'destroyer of evil.' Finally, this same Parjana is called a gale wind, and a force of destruction when in this form.

The portions labeled in the table of contents under the segments entitled: Indra, Gods of the Storm & Solar Gods. As usual, there is far more in the text itself than what can be covered here. Dawn, Night, the Sun, and the Moon are all celestial beings that have been related to as sentient if only through the process or attitude known as anthropomorphism. Soma is found to be united with the Moon at least once. It is also mentioned during hymns of this section along with two new names: Atri and Surya. Both are closely associated with the Sun.



# Book 3, Cows of the Rig Veda : Chapter 2, Sky & Earth

## Book 3, Cows of the Rig Veda : Chapter 2, Sky & Earth Summary

The Sky and the Earth are viewed as two halves of one whole by those who wrote the Rig Veda. This remains true, although our sense for living on a rotating 'ball' in the midsts of outer space, allowed to live thanks to the combinations of atmosphere, water, the earth, distance from the Sun and so forth is closely connected but different. Heaven and Earth, Yin & Yang, these are other versions of this. The ancient Grecian gods and the Jews all refer to the distinction between Heaven and Earth. Both Yahweh and the Grecian god Zeus were known to have ordered a powerful subordinate down to Earth, to rule there. The realm governed by Haephestus the god of metal smithing and that reported to go temporarily to the control of Lucifer and his minions is not identical but in both cases the difference of opinion and struggle for power led to a division which caused a powerful loser to be granted full authority in some terrain. This is strangely similar to disgruntled adult offspring moving apart from their parents for the sole purpose of having territory within which they exert greater control. Often enough, this is a compromise: the one leaving has often either lost or respects the others power too much to usurp or overthrow but is strong enough to take over in some manner.

In The Rig Veda, however, the relationship between Heaven and Earth is generally construed as harmonious. These mutually honored halves of the one world were also anthropomorphised. The representation of the Sky here was named Varuna. This entity developed further into one who watched out for the well being of humanity. This same role has also been closely associated with Yahweh and it was with the Christ except that Jesus repeatedly warned that despite the incredible healing powers that he cheerfully displayed and his assurance that forgiveness of one another for sins is all that is really necessary for becoming whole that he had come to sow division rather than unity or peace amongst mankind but that he will preserve every worthy soul and raise each into an incorruptible resurrected form at some unspecified later time. Unspecified- this may not be true as the summary writer is not so well versed in Judaic laws and prophesies to actually know whether or not the exact time has been indicated, although it was written about in the Christian work Revelations which has also been translated into the English language. This is simply to observe that for those living in a modern Moslem or Christian reality, Yahweh & Allah also have reputations for being Celestial and sky connected deities that look out for the best interests of humanity.



## Book 3, Cows of the Rig Veda : Chapter 2, Sky & Earth Analysis

Here, as before readers find a very limited number of new names. Rudra & Visnu are two more that can be found. The arrival of Visnu will strike a cord to everyone who has been introduced to modern Hinduism, as this name is prominent in the current day. The religious differences are easier to gloss over when the context is purely historical, but the fact is that Visnu is regarded as a presently living deity: perhaps it is worth reminding readers that so is Jesus the Christ. The reason simply being that the crucifix-image suggests his death and does little or nothing to point out his complete recovery just a few days later. Neither has had his live personage captured and put onto the cover of an issue of Time magazine this year. The magazine has only depicted known mortals.

Rudra is known as the father of the Marut people. He was known for being a healer. He is closely associated with mortals. Rudra is also clearly depicted through The Rig Veda as being worthy of both affection and fear. Perhaps describing him as worthy to humans has it the wrong way 'round: there is a hymn translated as 'Have Mercy on us Rudra' which expresses hopes and wishes for the protection of Rudra while also exhibiting that there is fear of this entity- which may hinge on his ability to function as a protector.

Following these are a trio of hymns about Visnu. They consist mainly of praise. There are also numerous references to honey. This entity grows in importance, and becomes known as part of the trio consisting of Brahma, Visnu and Shiva. By the end of the works this will be clear. Brahma is not introduced but the next step from the 'breath of life' is made when priests are called Brahmins in a hymn called 'Frogs.'

There are a number of additional hymns based upon a set of themes. There is water: within Realia and a piece entitled 'Frogs' this vital constituent to earthly life is the center of attention. There is a hymn to Soma, another called 'To Arms' and then a 'Gambler's Lament.' There is one strong recommendation amongst these for people to value who and what they do have in their lives.

Those religious songs and chants that come under the pages of text covered by this summary chapter end with one called 'Lost in the Forest.' Here there is a personification of a forest, as a 'spirit of the place.'



# Book 4, Women & Magic : Chapter 1, Women

## Book 4, Women & Magic : Chapter 1, Women Summary

This sounds either fanciful or comic. In fact, it is two separate categories of poetic hymns. These are the final two in the entire Rig Veda. Readers should be aware of implications made by the fact that all the writings found in their translations here have been 'selected' by the editors. There are more. This is another good reason for people to check their editions for any differences.

The main attitude of The Rig Veda has been male oriented. While this was most likely not done for the purpose of offending women it may be promising for women to find a section that is female oriented. Women are best off figuring that men wrote The Rig Veda while the women were busy amongst themselves and often enough with the children.

In the initial hymns on this topic the matter of immortals cross breeding with mortals is handled. It seems strikingly similar to concerns about mating across societal, economic, racial or tribal-national boundaries. The 'difference is different' in this case. While in the face of drastic miracles and repeated events that openly defy what is now known as Newtonian mechanical law people might suspect they are dealing with an immortal. However, in the present skeptical age, if such a being can even vaguely resemble a normal human then this entity could easily ride the Subway in Chicago or London without anyone noticing anything so peculiar that he or she 'couldn't handle it.' If anything, many immortals might suffer from frustration that the cynical wouldn't know a real celestial visiting Earth in a special socially compatible form. One readily imagines a frustrated immortal, "I hated it; they thought I was just anyone. When I wanted to go unnoticed it was great but then when I showed them what I really am they just jabbered on about mass hysteria and how their TVs must have made them go funny in their own heads."

Nevertheless, The Rig Veda poets of this section implies that the distinction can be made with certainty. The next order of business is that the author/s provide a brief description of which types of crosses cause separation or togetherness. In what may seem a blow for women, the official doctrine is that an immortal woman mating with a mortal man will result in the physical separation of the two. There is no explanation as to why. The rest of the three types of interbreeding are identified as having a reasonable chance of resulting in unity. An immortal woman with an immortal man is OK; immortal and mortal men can achieve full unity with mortal women. The simplest explanation would be, that if readers take a hierarchical view then it would always be wrong for the immortal women to submit to the mortal men and therefore the traditional dynamic of a protective, more powerful man will not exist and therefore the two will separate. This will





also have to happen if the relationship needs to be between two equals. Either way, the immortal women will need immortal men. Since the mortals are viewing the immortals as superiors, then this system will work. Of course, if the mortals don't see the immortals as their betters, then the entire dynamics change considerably. Stories of the Tolkein novels and movies spring to mind where the immortal elvenkind, rather like relatively immortal trees (1,000 years is nowhere near the natural end of the lifespan of numerous species of trees), get pushed back by humans, and reduced in numbers.

## **Book 4, Women & Magic : Chapter 1, Women Analysis**

In this case, the analysis follows the summary as a continuation of the same thing. Here a taboo subject is taken up. Here, the characters of Yama and Yami converse. The male serves as the maintainer of moral order and sexual restraint in this model. The female is oriented towards sibling level incest within the hymn. The male is of course clearly against this. The male derides the female for her sexual wantonness beyond this desire to breach a powerful taboo. However, he also makes some vague reference to a time when relatives will treat each other as if they were not related. At first this seems to suggest that there will be some future time when incest is voluntarily practiced (in contrast to occurring as an aspect of sexual abuse). Upon reflection, it grows clear that the reference may be to something else. Readers will find this issue in the topics for discussion section. Cleopatra and Ptolemy were siblings who were married to one another in an attempt to consolidate power within Egypt and to maintain the family unity. It is safe to presume that the two had sex with people other than one another instead of with each other even during the politically oriented familial marriage contract. Ultimately, they struggled for power and Cleopatra won.

In The Rig Veda there are two further pairings of names. One is Agastya & Lopamudra: worthwhile effort is the 'gist' of the topic here. Pururavas & Urvashi also turn up together. In this case Urvashi rejects Pururavas. She makes a criticism of his sexual behavior that the sane people of contemporary culture would essentially agree with. These hymns are both done as dialogues.

There are a few additional poems within this section devoted to women. The first of these Apala and Indra. After that there is one called Indra & the Monkey. This is followed up with by one about a courtship and then the next one is about a marriage. Near the end there is one that many readers will feel 'touchiest' about: this one involves both the rape and the return of a wife. There is nothing in the actual hymn indicating rape, but the answer to why this is in the title may be found in the notes or elsewhere. The main messages in this poem are: 1) the woman was the wife of a priest, a Brahma; 2) such a woman referred to as 'dangerous;' 3) it is claimed that disruption is caused in heaven itself when such a wife is wrongly removed from 'office;' and 4) her return is a matter for just celebration. Following this there is one more marital hymn. This one is called Mudgala's Wife. Here the woman serves as the charioteer and the ultimate message is that she does this just fine. Her victory is described as profound, 'like that of a despised wife who regains her husband ('s love and favors)'. This is the final comment in the section on hymns about women.



# Book 4, Women & Magic : Chapter 2, Magic

## Book 4, Women & Magic : Chapter 2, Magic Summary

This is the final set of hymns assembled in this edition of The Rig Veda. The editors have interpreted what is written in this section as incantations- words devised to provide the mental focus and intention to achieve certain results. The scholars explain that this is actually viewed as one of the classics on the subject of magical spell casting. For most readers this will seem like a mixture of arcane but useful methodology that we have co-opted while separating it from 'magic' and the societal slough of a long outmoded means of achieving goals often called 'magic' that is associated with low levels of technology.

Those who read these will quickly discover a few things. The first simply informs and educates people and chants appreciation for the fundamental truth that plants have healing powers under the right conditions when applied the right way. Soma is far from the only plant that can do this. Those interested in herbalism or medicinal chemistry might find this relevant and a lovely chant. At the same time it is disappointing because it does not tell readers anything certain: such as, chamomile soothes when an infusion is made and the 'broth' is drunk. It does not inform curious readers what plant Soma is made from. It is the 'baby's first lesson in herbalism' incantation apparently and nothing more.

There is spell for peace of mind that includes a prayerful reference to Indra and to the Master of Thought in order to banish disturbing ideas from the mind. There is a 'sleep spell' that has more promise but in and of itself...how to say? Without any of that barely tangible force associated with prana, will power, psychic force and magical causal energy the spell would be as useful as any empty gesture.

There is one potent banishing spell for use against demons. The scariest thing about it for contemporary readers is that it brings up the suggestion that demons actually exist which is creepy whereas it is not frightening when they are nothing but old cobwebs in the dark.

The rest of the spells are for marriage and for the protection of pregnancy. There is more than one devoted to driving away and otherwise triumphing over rival women, even other wives. The rules on who gets to have multiple spouses and why vary through time and culture. Typically it is a sign of great wealth or profound emotional and possibly sexual force. The ways that it manifests for women having multiple husbands has not been universally the same as for men. Further inspection of other cultural evidence would be needed to fully understand what this describes. Either way, the effect is for one woman to exert the greatest control over her husband, and/or over the other women. In at least one of spells the explanation is that the spell caster must control her



man more than the other women do and it comes down to that. Some will like this while others will feel somewhat nauseated since this is not because of who he loves most but is simply which woman controls him the most effectively. That, to the summary writer, is sickening in both spirit and practice. At the same time, the truth is probably in between extremes and control does often go along with love in intimate relationships so maybe it is not so bad after all. Ideally, no control need be applied because he does love 'you' or 'me' best and is more powerful than the other women's efforts to control either of 'you' or 'us.'

The very last hymn in the entire Rig Veda is about death. The bird the dove is brought up. In this case, it is not the cheerful bird of peace. On the contrary this animal is closely linked with impending doom, much as the appearance of vultures in certain circumstances. In the cartoons and in many deserts, vultures only show up when there is impending death: this was the case with doves in the Rig Veda. In Indiana, however, humans are not typically the ones dying when turkey vultures glide so gracefully in the skies that newcomers mistake them for eagles or some other majestic bird of prey. The incantation is a prayerful cry to dismiss the whole spirit of death from the place. It is mainly a response to the fear of death that another death or severe illness can stir up.

## **Book 4, Women & Magic : Chapter 2, Magic Analysis**

The final portions of The Rig Veda are a break from what preceded it. The majority of the work shows a building up in complexity of the culture and a progression of the religion. The spells at the end are another element of the ritual hymns that appeared earlier in the work, most especially the Horse Sacrifice.

All together, The Rig Veda provides an inkling into the nature of the culture and religion of the time, close to 3,000 years ago. It is a bit of a shame for a few centuries to be treated the way that a few minutes within a given day might be by one living mortal, but that is what has occurred here. The exact year of the creation of this has been obscured because a few thousand is so much more and so much further away than last year.

The work's authorship is not clear. Readers who are passionate scholars will have to look further and read more deeply if they want a better picture of how the hymns come across in their original. Has the translator created an artificial sense of unity of literary 'voice' within the pieces or is this natural? A definitive answer on this will explain whether or not there is one Anonymous author or multiple ones.

The hymns give an excellent introduction to archaic metaphysical speculation and pantheistic religion. In the beginning the uncertainty about the beginning of the world is acknowledged. Although Indra and Agni enter the situation first, by the end of the writings Brahma, Visnu and Shiva have all been introduced. For those who do not know, this is the 'trinity' of contemporary Hinduism. The first is the unity of all being, including the observable and sensory universe. This is also 'Creation' and 'the Creator.' Visnu is akin to the astrologer's 'fixed signs' meaning that this is the stable power of maintaining life and the world; whether people sticking with their jobs or spouses for decades, the



growth of Summer or the rainy season rather than the Spring start-up. This is also the powers that brings the waters of the planet ever striving for equilibrium. This is Visnu's 'province' of activity. Shiva is famed and feared as the Destroyer. All three members of this group are part of the monotheistic God, who covers all of these areas and more. This should not be confused as meaning that the Hindus view them as this Yahweh, or Allah or God or Jesus but that the monotheists' God does what Brahma and Visnu and Shiva do when taken as a group.

By the end readers have learned a little about ritual, and a touch about religion. The notes provide ample assistance to those in need, thus enabling the work to function as a textbook. Ultimately, anthropomorphism, is shared as a significant process that facilitates the relationship between humans and the world of which we are a part as well as being serviceable amongst ourselves as people. There will be some who find some of the material in this work to be a bit disconcerting. The reason being that some of their dearly held beliefs and ideas may be undermined: when it is shown that mankind created Indra, this is worse than finding out that Santa Claus was 'well, a lie' perpetrated by adults for the pleasure of their children but a fallacy to be outgrown. For others, it is disruptive because of what it implies about the state of the world into which the Christ emerged. It may cause questioning or fear within oneself about questioning- was Jesus the Christ actually just a typical spiritual leader in a polytheistic world? Were his hands on healings all too much like the reality that Ganesha statues began absorbing milk offerings in the 1990s? It is questions such as these that can make many faithful religious practitioners uncomfortable. Whether readers pursue these lines of questioning may be very much like whether or not they are going to vacuum under the beds and the sofa during the next routine domestic cleaning or not. That is up to the readers as individuals, but it does effect the total situation of their own lives how they handle this matter.

# Characters

## Ka

This is the first name used to indicate a divine being in The Rig Veda. In the first sections of poetic hymnal, entitled 'Creation' the first metaphysical questions are openly addressed. One of the most important of these is the question of origins of life and of the world itself.

Ka is the name given to the answer of this mystery. In this case, there is an air of intentional vagueness or even of deceit about Ka. The reason being that part of Ka's meaning is 'the unknown answer to this reasonable question.'

Ka is not an entity that preceded mankind in the sense that the name was developed by humans in response to metaphysical and ontological questioning. At the same time, Ka does refer to something that exists on the material plane as well as elsewhere. As such, Ka is, or appears real with respect to sensory awareness and perception.

Ka only appears early on in the writings of The Rig Veda. There is no 'personality' ever associated with it. This is the first indication of the recognition or formulation of a god put forth in the literature.

## Indra

This is the first god who is really named in The Rig Veda. This is 'the Creator.' Indra is also 'the knower of all creatures.' Indra is also 'the good fighter.' This same divine being, Indra, is also 'the terrible,' and 'the destroyer.'

Indra appears early in the work and reappears until the end. The first appearance is rather hesitant. As the hymns proceed, this initially amorphous name develops. A discernible character, disposition and temperament become part of the over all perception of Indra. While much of the entity lives in the imagination and speculative human mind, the sense of Indra as a real being increases with time and exposure.

There is a legitimate question regarding whether or not this confirms that Indra is an entirely real being. This will be further addressed during the topics for discussion question due to complexities well known to the contemporary mind as Superhero archetypes and other famous characters known to have no ordinary mortal life but to be so well known as fictional beings that is touch-and-go to deny that there is any 'reality' to them. "He's only a mental construct but is world famous as such," is a very qualitative and limited form of existence but to call that non-existence begins to seem as dubious as false claims that 'Bat Man is real' in the same sense as the readers of this book summary.



Indra is real, but how exactly, and what the god's true nature is remains rather unclear. Nevertheless he is a highly important figure in the Rig Veda and in the culture of his time and place. There is an entire section of hymns dedicated exclusively to Indra.

## Rudra

Rudra is a major figure in a small number of hymns later in the Penguin edition of the book. The entity is an adult male.

This being is prayed to, or cried out to. There are a few characteristics of this that are akin to what has also been observed with Indra and Agni. Agni will be described next. Rudra is able to serve as a source of protection. Rudra is also feared. This is rather natural, since, if he were not intimidating how would he be sought out for protection?

He is called the father of a group of people, who might be a tribe or nation of people. Those people are the Maruts.

## Agni

This is another of the first deific figures mentioned. He occurs in many hymns and is associated with Indra. In some moments he replaces Indra, but in other cases, he is a powerful subordinate to Indra.

The scholar advises to readers that Agni takes on many roles. These range from priest, to receiver of oblations, to someone who attends to sacrifices and circumstances in order to prepare them for Indra, or who serves as a go-between for Indra and humanity.

## Yama

Yama is a name provided early on. He emerges near to Ka, as part of first endeavors to understand the world and origins.

He is sometimes referred to as the King of Death, when the notion of another world, an afterlife or an underworld are proposed. This brings up a number of issues ranging from whether or not there is any kind of 'soul' that is able to exist independently of the living physical body to what another world might be like if it does exist.

For modern readers, the term 'underworld' borders on the inappropriate since it has become so strongly associated with the criminal realms of daily life—at once hidden and suppressed but nevertheless real and around us.



## Dawn

This is one example of the features of the perceivable natural world that were interpreted by the earliest Hindus as a deity. In this case, the deity is a goddess rather than a god.

## Vtrya

This figure is mentioned later in the hymns. The value is placed upon Vtrya as having been an adversary. The conflict and defeat of Vtrya led to Indra being confirmed as a great fighter and active destroyer of evil. As this made him a killer beyond any question, Indra also acquires the roles as 'the terrible' and 'the destroyer.'

## Immortals

This is the divine type of being. There are times when there is no human being form of one. However, they are often believed to have the ability to take on many forms. This includes human, male or female forms.

There are characters in The Rig Veda who are clearly immortal, such as Indra and Rudra and the goddesses of the waters of life and of the dawn. However, there are parts of the hymns where the method for distinguishing them or finding them in the walking around world as people is not revealed.

This being the case, the immortals are a category or class of entities. At times there is no difficulty perceiving them, but amongst human kind there may be confusing cases: is that an immortal, or a mortal or a blend of the two?

## Mortals

These are presented as one category of entity, including humans. There is some suggestion that there are humans who are not mortal: that some are celestial/human crossbreeds; these normally turn up as demigods. For better or worse, or both, the truth is that Jesus the Christ of the Jews was known to be a demigod- a 'half celestial,' 'half-human.' For the purposes of this piece, the relevant point is that in The Rig Veda, that figure turns out simply to appear to be one of the demigods that has been known amongst mankind in cultures where there are special gods dedicated to a group of people- a tribe for example or a nation of people.

Mortals are humans who are born of Earth- including the two halves of earth and sky, and who are going to die from old age or disease or as a consequence of their own sins or lack of forgiveness in themselves or from others.



Mortals can mate with immortals and in some cases the relationship may even remain in union. The only type of combination that is 'doomed to separation' is the immortal woman with a mortal man kind. Marriage does not always result.

## **The Poet**

This being has no name. However, in a small number of the hymns, this is a speaking part of a dialog. The role is important within its context.

## **Agastya**

This is a powerful character who turns up in a small number of hymns of The Rig Veda. He turns up as a speaker.

## **Parjanya**

This individual turns up in the middle of the text. He is the recipient of a number of prayerful addresses and requests. He is presented as heroic and benevolent.

The scholars inform readers that he is a rain-cloud, and that he often appears in the guise of animals.





# Objects/Places

## two-halves of the whole

Here is Earth & Sky and how it was viewed by the authors of The Rig Veda. This is as it appears to be.

## Thunder & Lightning with rain

This type of storm, often found with lots of rain, was as at least as awesome for those who created The Rig Veda as it is for readers of today. The feelings this inspires was a probable cause for the identification or intimate association of gods and these storms. If the storm and the god did not have one identity then both were typically viewed as weapons of a particular god. Science shows up that the lightning together with the rain is a powerful fertilizer of the Earth. Lightning actually reaches up from the ground and down from the sky. At this time meteorologists believe that the thunder is a result of consolidated sections of air of like temperature moving in a specific vector crashing into another one going another way, or being of a different temperature. There may be more to it than that, but this combination still "WOW"s the masses.

## sacrifice

There are a number of these described in the writings. They are done as part of religious ritual. The most dramatic and prominent one written of in The Rig Veda is 'the Horse Ritual.'

## oblation

This is another religious behavior. An oblation is typically more like an offering made without an attendant sacrifice. They are referred to very frequently throughout the text.

## Bull

This is an incredibly important sacred animal. This creature is often used as a metaphor for a god. "Indra the bull" for example. Strength, power, vigor, possibly virility and great wealth are also indicated by 'the bull' within the context of The Rig Veda.

## Cow

This is another sacred animal. These are also used as symbols of gods and goddesses in the Rig Veda. Indra the cow. Power and wealth and of course the feminine to the



bull's masculine energy is also indicated. The use of the cow as symbol in The Rig Veda is drastically unlike the use of 'cow' as a derogatory term indicative of a woman being fat, probably stupid and rather lazy. In contrast, the cows of Indra are fantastic creatures.

## **sage**

In the book, this is a rather well educated, and wise member of the society who shares this type of wealth with others in a helpful way.

## **golden necklace**

This item is found in the first hymn of Rudra. It appears within the context of the anonymous speaker praising Rudra.

## **arrows & bow**

This weapon also turns up in the hymn to Rudra. It is mentioned as a highly valued item.

## **chariot**

This object has approximately the same value as the car in contemporary American society. It is not used in exactly the same manner, however, neither in the daily life nor symbolically.

Chariots are often used as symbols in The Rig Veda. The motions of the Sun & the Moon with respect to how they seem from the ground of Earth- which we now are well aware is not the truth about how it works, are normally referred to as being or being caused by the chariots. The Sun is pulled through the day by a chariot. This symbolism typifies the time and culture.

## **Abyss**

This only comes up once in The Rig Veda. There is an entire hymn with abyss in the title. There is an accurate sense of the situation of the planet's importance to mankind within the solar system despite the shortage of scientific knowledge. This shows rapidly, as the hymn expresses gratitude and fear together, thanking the planet's two-halves, earth & sky for guarding our lives from the abyss. In this case, the destructive powers of 'outer space' without the protection of the planet's earthly and heavenly forces.

## **frogs**

There is one hymn in which these animals figure largely. It comes midway through The Rig Veda.



# Themes

## The Development of Hinduism

The Rig Veda begins with questioning into the origin of the world. Ka becomes a sound, a name that serves as the pat answer to a question of the beginning of the world.

During the hymns, there is what appears to be a progression. There is an increase in the gods. At first there is no god, nor goddess, but there is observation of the world. Then there is the first naming of a god.

Soon after there are rituals. The rites are, like the names, efforts to relate to these divine forces. There is an entire set designed to express ways in which humans strive to relate with these forces. One of these ways is to make sacrifices. The major sacrifice explained in The Rig Veda is called 'the Horse Sacrifice.' Another means of displaying desires to relate with the gods are the oblations. These can also be called offerings. Unlike sacrifices, most of the time nothing is killed in some special manner. Oblations can be of food but can also be prayers or other techniques. Prayers and hymns can also be viewed as oblations.

Over time, through the stories that are glimpsed through the translated hymns, other prominent players come to the fore to readers minds. There are more gods introduced during the course of the writings. Readers may have a variety of feelings about this. Indra and Agni are examples of the first deities. Goddesses such as the Dawn and the Waters of Life are mentioned midway through the book. Later on, in the work, Varuna, Visnu and Brahma are all brought in. By the end, the three central deities of contemporary Hinduism have been presented to the readers.

### Brahma Visnu and Shiva

Brahma is 'the One' that contains all differences and that is the source of all. Brahma is also the unifying powers and the unity of all things. In the beginning of this same text, the brahmin is the breathe of life, literally. Midway through the work, there are priests called brahmins. They seem to be derived more from Agni, who is a sort of priest-deity. By the end, there is the god Brahma. Visnu is the maintaining powers of creation, and really this includes destruction as well. This is the midsts of the day or night rather than dawn or dusk. This is the middle of growing season, or the depths of winter rather than the most transitional periods. Shiva is the god of destruction. This is the destroyer, the terrible: by the end of these Vedic hymns, readers have clearly seen how this aspect of the god reliably reappears. The monotheists of the world worship the one who is all of these and more. The 'true god' that was not created by mankind, but of whom mankind is one development. It is important to admit that there is a significant distinction between the monotheists of today and the Hindus. There is a further difficulty created when the Hindus can claim that Brahma covers the differential between the monotheism and the



polytheistic view. Thanks to the diversity and progressive nature of the hymns, the growth of Hinduism over time is encapsulated in The Rig Veda.

## Nature & the Gods

The classical work of literature known as The Rig Veda opens with an exploration of the world. The amazing aspects of life are noticed and some considerations are made of the real needs and conditions. The beginnings are inquired into.

The first inspiration for Vedic gods is nature as beheld by humans. The forms of nature can even be taken as gods themselves in many cases. This was true of the Sun, sometimes of the Moon and often of the storms and rainclouds and special times of the day. Readers may respond to this in diverse ways; emotional reactions might be disparaging- this proves that there is no such thing as a real god that is not either a material part of nature or the creation of the human mind. They may take this quite well- this shows the wonder of nature. It may be interpreted in another way- the truth of the gods shows in many ways, one of these is through the beauty of nature. Therefore, humanity discovered the gods through insight into the awesome powers the world. Adepts have shown how much these forces can be controlled by humans without the use of technology to do so, whereas for most prayers and supplications to forces more powerful than themselves bring the hope of relief.

Regardless whether readers like it or not the forces and forms of nature provide examples of energies that the most ancient Hindus referred to as gods. Whether it was the pillars that hold the sky and earth apart even while they remain together, or the energy of thunder and lightning storm, the forces of nature led human beings to find or to create the gods. In the event that there is some marriage of truth to human vision in this, then the process of anthropomorphism, is a means of uniting the two powers.

## Classical Poetry & Literature

The Rig Veda is undoubtedly a classic of world literature. Many cite the archaic Indians as the 'Indo' root of European languages and cultures. As such, even for those who are not particularly interested in religion or philosophy, the Rig Veda remains important. This may bear provision of some explanation.

The writings of The Rig Veda are some of the oldest writings currently available to mankind, at least from the region of the globe where they were first created. The truth is that people of today are fortunate that the ancients of the region had troubled to concoct a written language. Sanskrit houses these works into a transferable format. There is not sufficient history within the helpful notes from the scholars in the Penguin edition to determine whether or not the hymns found here were written down soon after their creation or whether this was the first opportunity this culture had to preserve any of their important word-related endeavors into the written format.



The Rig Veda also gives readers some knowledge of another poetic verse form. In this case, the scholars are calling this a hymn. The ancient world relied heavily upon poetic verses. These permitted a systematic way for people to entertain one another and themselves but also to categorize knowledge. The song lyric and the hymn had their roles. Of course there were a great many others; this was because the use of rhyme to get across reason, along with meter and rhythm cannot be overrated.

Thanks to the significance of these means of preserving and transmitting knowledge in the ancient world, the hymns of The Rig Veda have made it into Sanskrit and from there, through the careful work of generations of scholars, is available to you today, at quite a sensible price.



# Style

## Point of View

The point of view for this book is multiple. There are two ways in which scholars make contributions to The Rig Veda. There are preambles to every section. These contain brief interpretations of the text that follows. These are written objectively, from a third person perspective. They are designed to go along with the book's translations and can help to make the work functional as a textbook or accessible to younger people.

There are also notes that follow after each of hymns in the work. Here, some of the translator's decisions and choices have been clarified. This is beneficial for readers who are intense scholars themselves or very particular about the puzzles and delicacies pertaining to translations. These are also written objectively. However, they automatically include the reality that absolute objectivity is hard to come by and therefore the very way that the works have been translated is scrutinized. It is a well known fact that many translations, once they are centuries old, have an easy-to-perceive bias that may have been insurmountable or even invisible at the time that the work was originally done. As such, in the present case the translator has made some effort to show how the work has been done in an effort to improve 'fairness'.

## Setting

The setting of the hymns of The Rig Veda is apart in time. The distance in this sense is greater than that across the globe. If it is assumed that the readers are mainly in the Americas, then the location of the poems can be lumped together as 'over in India.' In fact, India is a very sizable nation in terms of land in addition to population and so it must be confessed that the locations of the individual hymns can only be known to in depth scholars. On the surface, their locations have been heaped into a pile as if they were in one place. This is the vagueness of it. As long as this is acknowledged, there will be minimal trouble.

The place is occasionally specified in the hymns but not always in the way that one might have predicted. In this case, it might be 'Sarama and the Panis' where the former has traveled to the location of the latter. Therefore, there has been a change in the geographical position. In reality, very little information is provided through the poetry that would help a stranger to be able to recognize either location on an actual map. It is most likely that with enough study of the area and history surrounding the hymns of The Rig Veda that some of these mysteries can be very truthfully cleared up.

One matter is clear. While pointless at the time this is being written, the simple fact that anyone who has ever lived on the planet Earth will immediately recognize the numerous references to it built into the text. It is unlikely that this book summary will survive millenium to be culled for facts just as the hymns of The Rig Veda are, but if it were to



occur, those who know this planet will recognize her instantly, throughout the work. The skies, the Sun and the Moon; the quality of their shared prominence. The nature of the unique relationship between the oceans of Earth and the Moon. The especial distance of the planet from the Sun. The rotation of light-dark-light and the set of relationships between those changes and growing seasons on the surface. All of these ordinary facts of the planet's nature - at least during the time of humanity, make it plain to any stellar traveling: "You are Here: This is planet Earth."

## Language and Meaning

The Rig Veda has an internal rhythm. Within it there are words and phrases that are not apt to be found other contexts. Whether the names fall under this category is not known by the summary writer due to extreme limitations regarding Hindu culture and language.

'Knower of all creatures' is one example of a phrase that holds meaning within The Rig Veda. This can be transferred with the meaning preserved; however 'Horse Sacrifice' or 'killer of Vrtra' are both, well, unclear when taken out of context.

The language used is expressive but there is the possibility that it errs on the side of simplicity. Clarity is most helpful, but there are those who will sorely feel the loss of more beatific language.

## Structure

The work has been arranged in a way that belies its status as a piece of classical literature. The hymns themselves have been arranged by a balanced approach with sensitivity to chronology and subject matter.

The book has been devised and presented so that it can function as a high quality textbook for literature classes in advanced high school students or universities. Younger people can read it, but may do well to review the information again later when greater experience allows them to reflect upon it in a new way and to absorb additional insights into what was there all along.

There is a straightforward introduction. This is followed by a regular pattern in which a scholar provides readers with a literary 'debriefing.' This is followed by the translations. Some will feel like they are finally being allowed to get to the real stuff. The effect is not expected to be uniform for all readers. After the hymn, there is a set of notes. Again, this pattern is consistent. The book is completed by a full set of appendices and indices which enable it to serve academic and other scholarly standards of research.





## Quotes

"Moreover, the breath (often identified with the soul in the Upanishads, and here called the atman, the word that came to designate the transmigrating soul) is here said to disperse separately into the wind." (p. 48)

"And Soma, the healer, is asked to assist Agni in cleansing and healing the body." (v. 6 / p. 49)

"Drinking at the vat that has Soma-vats for buckets, a pressing-stone for its wheel, a consecrated goblet for its casing; this is the fountain where men drink." (p. 66)

"That man is no friend who does not give of his own nourishment to his friend, the companion at his side. Let the friend turn away from him; this is not his dwelling-place. Let him find another man who gives freely, even it be from a stranger." (p. 69)

"When, as the ritual law ordains, the men circle three times, leading the horse that is to be the oblation on the path to the gods, the goat who is the share for Pusan goes first, announcing the sacrifice to the gods." (p. 90)

"Let not the fire that reeks of smoke darken you, nor the red-hot cauldron split into pieces. The gods receive the horse who has been sacrificed, worshiped, consecrated and sanctified with the cry of Vasat!" (p. 91)

"I pray to Agni, the household priest who is the god of sacrifice, the one who chants and invokes and brings most treasure." (p. 99)

"Moreover, the Sun, like the child of the waters, is born in the waters." (p. 107)

"They follow his supreme Indra - power; he resides in those who rejoice in their own nature." (p. 110)

" [Sky & Earth] These divinities, referred to in the dual, are alternately characterized as male and female, parents of the Sun or as two sisters." (p. 203)

"Abolish the debts for the things I have done, O King, and do not make me pay for what has yet been done by others. So many more dawns have not yet risen, Varuna; make sure that we will live through them." (p. 213)

"The spirit of the forest does not kill - not if no one else approaches. She eats sweet fruit and lies down where she pleases." (p. 242)

"She argues that a brother should protect his sister, even if this involves incest to keep her from going unsatisfied and unfertilized. Ironically, it is the brother who should find her a husband and avenge her if she is rejected." (p. 250)

"He found fulfillment of his real hopes amongst the gods." (p. 251)



## Topics for Discussion

Describe what knowledge there is about preparing Soma.

What is Soma?

Why would Soma also be used to symbolize the Moon?

Who is Varuna?

What does it mean when Varuna says that he felt like a foreigner when he first transformed into an immortal and lived in their reality with them?

Given your personal experience with both thunder storms and religion, do you believe that in this day and age the God or a deity of some kind uses this type of storm for punitive purposes amongst mankind?

Do you believe that there even the slightest chance that the Sun has some kind of sentience, and therefore can be related to along anthropomorphic lines? Explain your answer.

Differentiate between immortals and mortals as clearly as you can based upon The Rig Veda. Provide definitions as needed.

Do you think that the contents of this book, The Rig Veda, is a threat to Christianity or Islam, or even Judaism? Briefly describe why or why not.

Do you like that the book begins with questions relating to origins of life? Defend your answer.

Agree or disagree that Sky and Earth make two halves of a whole. Explain why or why not.