

## Importance of R̥gveda

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1. The importance of the *R̥gveda* is first of all national, relating to India itself and then universal, relating to all humans. The RV saṃhitā tells us a lot about the origin and nature of the ancient Bhāratas. Moreover, all Indian culture, philosophical and religious traditions stem from the RV. Then it tells us a lot about the nature and aspirations of the human being.

The RV was not composed around 1500-1200 BCE, as is generally believed by mainstream scholars. In its vast main bulk of the 1020 hymns it was composed before the rise of the Mature Harappan and before 3100.

It was not composed by non-Aryans outside the Saptasindhu area and then was translated into Sanskrit, as some fanciful, politically motivated Indian writers claim. The Land of the 7 rivers is the region so named by the R̥gvedic poets themselves in what is today N-W India & Pakistan. As even Western mainstreamers like Witzel of Harvard and Keith and Max Müller before him affirmed, the RV was composed wholly by Sanskrit-speakers in the Saptasindhu area. This comprised the upper regions of Gaṅgā & Yamunā, Dṛṣadvatī & Śutudrī (Sutlej) which flowed into Sarasvatī, then Paruṣṇī (Ravi), Asiknī & Vitastā flowing into the Indus, and Gomati and few other minor ones.

The Saṃhitā is not a treatise or a minor encyclopedia of religion, philosophy, history or culture. The hymns have allusions to many of these aspects of human life but do not give full or even many details.

The RV is not a text of military engagements of the Aryans battling with the non-Aryan indigenous people and driving them south while at the same time sanskritising them!

Nor is it a wholly religious text with the sacrificial ritual as its main element.

Most of these aspects I have discussed in great detail in many articles or talks and most have been collected in my 3 books *Indo-Aryan Origins & Other Vedic Issues* (2009), *Vedic and Indo-European Studies* (the linguistic evidences for indigenism, 2015) and *In the Beginning* (2019) with the examination of the beginnings of Philosophy in India and Greece. Consequently, in a brief lecture like this I shall only advert to evidences and direct further investigation in my publications. I have made much use of Prof. M. Danino's paper *Demilitarising the RV* (2019).

Of course there is much sacrificial ritual in many hymns, especially that of Soma which is offered to Indra and Vāyu, Agni & Varuṇa and so on. And, of course, many parts of, or entire, hymns were later used in many rites not only with libations to divinities but also in the common human events of birth, marriage and funeral. I shall return to the ritual which, certainly with Soma, has an inner psychological aspect also, as is attested by several hymns.

But first let me dispose of the widespread misconceptions generated by the eurocentric, colonial and often christian missionary mindset of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Western scholars.

2. Despite many publications of Indian scholars from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> cent. and several Western ones like Poliakov L, Prof. Danino, David Frawley, Koenraad Elst, myself and some others, most Indians still adhere to the old model of the AIT (=Aryan Invasion / Immigration Theory). Why? Perhaps because the indigenists have not argued well their case? Is it due in part to laziness, because they do not read widely critically and impartially, and in large part because of political (mainly leftwing) concerns and religious bias with christian & muslim interests that want to see the Vedic Tradition belittled? Or perhaps all these reasons.

In 2012 or 2013 I gave a talk at the Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata (Sanskrit Dept.). This was published in the Series of the National Mission for Manuscripts *Tattvabodha* vol. 5 (2015) with the title *The Collapse of the Aryan Invasion / Immigration Theory & the Prevalence of Indigenism* (51 pages, including 7 pages of Bibliography). In that talk I examined the true origins of the AIT, disposed of all the arguments linguistic and others adduced in its favour, and gave all the counter evidence, archaeological, palaeoastronomical, genetical, linguistic and literary.

I start with some literary evidence.

*RV* 4.1.13 & 4. 2.16 the Angirases declare that their ancestors made sacrifices “here” *atra*, ie in Saptasindhu.

3.53.11 Sudās fought enemies *prāk* ‘east’, *apāk* ‘west’ and *udāk* ‘north’ only, but not south. So we have no Indoaryans coming from the north and driving natives southward.

The movement here is from east westward (*apāk*) and from south northward (*udāk*)!

M6.61.9,12: Sarasvatī, the Rivergoddess, spread all five tribes beyond the other seven sister-rivers as the sun spreads out the days – again, days and sunlight from the east!

7.6.3 Agni turned the unholy Dasyus from east to west –*pūrvas cakāra āparām!* Notice – NOT SOUTH (*avāk* or *nyāk*).

Confirmation comes from later *Baudhāyana Śrauta-Sūtra* 18.14 which mentions explicitly that Amāvasu migrated westward and his descendants are Gāndhārīs, Parśus and Arattas. There is uncertainty about Arattas (Ararat or Urartu?) but Gāndhārīs are plainly people of Gandhara and Parśus the Persians of Iran.

Also the *Avesta* (1<sup>st</sup> chapter of Vidēvdād) delineates the movement of the ancient Iranians from *Haptaḥēndu* northwestward into Iran through 16 locations and the river *Harax-vaitī*. Both names are transliterations - of *Saptasindhu* and *Sarasvatī*. But note there is no system of 7 rivers in southeastern Iran and **harax**– has no independent existence as a word! So, here again, the movement is out of India.

3. The Harappan culture which began to arise in Saptasindhu from the 7<sup>th</sup> millennium and mature c2800 has 12 common features that are not found in the rigvedic hymns.

1) ***iṣṭakā* ‘brick’**. Some translators give “fortresses of unbaked bricks” for RV 2.35.6. *āmāsu pūrṣu* (Geldner, O’ Flaherty 1981) whereas the phrase means simply “unwrought defences”. Unfortunately, *pur* acquired the meaning “citadel/fort”. (I shall return to this.) Bricks, raw or baked appear in Mature **Harappan** after 2800 BCE. This then should be the date of post-rigvedic Brāhmaṇa texts where the word first appears.

2) **Significant urbanisation**. This is totally absent in RV. No large buildings, baths, paved streets etc. There is mention of a “thousand pillared mansion in the sky” of Kings Mitra and Varuṇa (2.41.5; 5.62.6) but this must be the sun-rays breaking through the clouds or high boughs of tall trees. There were no such buildings even in Mature Harappan. Singh 1995, Bishī 1999 and Lal 2002, 2005 claimed “councils” for *sabhā* and *samiti*, kings, chiefs, overlords and streets and roads (*path-*) but Red Indians in North America and tribes in Africa had them without any hints of urbanisation.

3) **Fixed altars or hearths**. These are common in the Harappan cities and Brāhmaṇa texts. In RV the altar *vedi* is a shallow bed dug in the ground and covered with Kusha grass.

4) **Ruins or abandoned towns**. No such mention in the RV although plentiful in the decline of the Indus–Sarasvati culture after 1900 BCE. The hymn RV 1.133 with its *arma-ka* (of unknown meaning: perhaps “vortex”) gives a ghostly scene of frightful desolation with unfriendly fiends (*yātumātī*, *piśācī*, *rākṣas*) but no buildings, walls and no building materials – wood, stone, brick.

5) ***Karpāsa***. Cotton was plentiful in the Harappan agricultural domain (after 2500 BCE) and the word is found in the Sūtra literature but not before. Thus the start of the Sūtra period can be assigned roughly to this date, 2500 or 2400.

6) ***rajata* “silver”**. This too is plentiful in the I-S-Culture but not in RV, which does know *hiraṇya* “gold”. Once in the late 8.25.22. *rajata* describes a “shining white” “horse/chariot”.

7) ***vr̥thi* “rice”**. This too is totally absent in RV but appears in the Atharvaveda. Some writers think that preparations like *ap̥pa* and *odana*, which are now with rice, indicate knowledge of rice in the RV. But such preparations could have been made with any flour. “Barley” *yava* is mentioned repeatedly but not *vr̥thi* rice, nor wheat.

8) ***godhūma* “wheat”**. This too is unknown in RV though plentiful in the Harappan agriculture: *go-dhūma* “earth’s exhalation/smoke”: it appears in post-rigvedic texts.

9) **Literacy**. Too is unknown in RV and Vedic literature. It appears in the Sūtra-period in the words *lekha-na* and *lipi*.

10) **Iconography**. No reliefs, no sculptures, no paintings. RV 4.24.10 “who will buy this my Indra” obviously refers to the purchase of favour – no mention of any material, wood, stone, metal.

**11) Perforated pots** are mentioned in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (with nine or 100 holes *nava-vitr̥ṇna* and *śatavitr̥ṇna* 5.5.4.22; 12.7.2.13) but, again though common in Harappan remains, they are not mentioned in RV.

**12) Harappan seals** also are not mentioned at all.

Assigning the RV at 1200 or even 2000 BCE, as mainstream scholars do, is like reading a supposedly modern novel and not meeting motorcars, airplanes, mobile phones, laptops, refrigerators, television and the like. Thus the RV is pre Harappan i.e. pre 3000 BCE! This date is supported by palaeo-astronomical investigations (Achar 2003) and by the drying up, according to archaeologists, of the river Sarasvatī c3800 BCE (Possehl 1998); also the tradition itself which wants the arrangement of the RV to have taken place c3100 BCE.

4. There are certainly clashes and battles in plenty. Gods Indra, the Maruts, Agni and others, constantly swoop down to wipe out enemies and their citadels. But the enemies are demonic forces and the citadels occult, supernatural defences. All purs belong to demons – Cumuri, Dhunī, Pipru, Śambara, Śuṣṇa.

Nowhere in RV do we find a single *pur* constructed by humans or destroyed by them, though 6.45.9. mentions men's *dyḥhāni*; but these are created by *māyā* and Indra is to smash them. Indra has *māyā* too and uses it to put to sleep 30.000 Dāsas (6.30.12 and 21). For full details on *pur* see Kazanas (2009. Chapter 4)!

Yes, there are clashes between humans but they are inter-Aryan, internecine fights: In the famous daśarajña incident Indra and Varuṇa smite Dāsas and Aryas equally (7.83.1) while 7.18.14 refer to the tribes Anu, Bhṛgu, Puru etc., all Aryan! In 5.12.5 we find devotees, friends of Agni (sakhāyas... śivāsas) who become *āsivās* enemies!

Nowhere is it said “damn these indigenous barbarians, these native knaves”. No, not once, only *āsiknīh* tribes “of dark hue” who could be Aryans gone astray.

Much is made of the infamous “war-chariot” *rātha*, distinguished from the allegedly common carriage or cart *ānas*! But Uṣas the Dawn goddess has *ratha* in late 1.48.10 and early 3.61.2 but *anas* in early 4.30.11 and late 10.73.7. Even mighty lord of battle Indra himself is called *ānar-viś* “seated in a cart” in (late) 1.121.7! These vehicles with one or even seven wheels have little to do with the usual war chariots of Egypt, Greece and Urals, which are light 30 kg boxes, spaced for two, the driver and the warrior, at most. Here in RV we have *trivandhurá* “three-spaced” in 1.41.2. and 7.71.4 and *aṣṭavandhurá* (a kind of bus?) in 10.53.7. It is described as *pr̥thú* “broad” (1.123.1.), *bṛhát* “tall, large” (6.61.13) and *variṣṭha* “most wide” (6.44.9). And it is fashioned of native wood from the trees *khadirá*, *simśápā* (3.53.19), and *śālmali* (10.85.20). No, the cars were not brought from the Urals and the Pontic steppes! Now, the only 7 cakras we know of are the Yogic cakras in later texts! Did the Rigvedic people know of them and presented them and the body in symbolic fashion in the image of a carriage, anticipating the *Kaṭha* Upanishad? Frankly I don't find it at all impossible.

For a more detailed examination of the entire chariot affair and the demilitarization of the Saṃhitā one should read Danino's paper. One new and splendid insight he offers

is that *ásva*, the common word for horse may mean speed, energy, strength, while *go* the common word for cow means, as is well known and noted in Dictionaries, “light” in many different contexts.

5. We can bypass the fairly recent claims of some passionate Indian scholars (and I don’t think there are Westerners involved in this) who interpret passages of the hymns as formulations of modern scientific ideas, mainly nuclear physics (Rajaram 1999) or metallurgy advances. It must have been in the 1970’s that I saw a publication claiming that some passages in Buddha’s homilies outlined the same modern nuclear physics. And this year I saw an article on the Internet by a devout Muslim claiming that the Quran had foreseen the advances in modern Physics.

Of greater interest is the aspect of sacrificial ritual. Many scholars in the West and many more in India take it for granted that the main subject in the Saṃhitā is the sacrifice and especially the soma ritual, followed by the *asvamedha*, the horse-sacrifice. Some aspects of the horse-sacrifice are found in the Hittite, Greek, Roman, Celtic and Scandinavian cultures. But this rite is not so common in RV as that concerning soma.

Thousands and thousands of pages have been written about this aspect, some useful but most of them now discarded. Sāyaṇācarya in the 14<sup>th</sup> century commented on almost all parts of the Veda and gave many useful pieces of information on the RV. But as a devout Brahmin he also emphasised the ritualistic, sacrificial aspect and this cast a very dark shadow over the approach to the hymns.

Undoubtedly, like the battles, the sacrifices are often described or alluded to in many hymns. Hymn 1.162 gives many details of the immolation of the horse and the cooking of the animal. *devébhyas tād usádbhyo rātám astu* “let that be offered to the longing gods” (1.162.11); and sure enough *iṣtám vītám váṣaṭ-kr̥tam tād devāsaḥ prāti gr̥bhñanti-ásvam* “the gods receive the racer which is desired, pleasing, welcome and sanctified by hymns and in fire” (15). Thus *kṣatrám no ásvo vanatām haviṣmān* “may the horse with oblations win for us lordship” (22)!

In the 9<sup>th</sup> Maṇḍala we find several descriptions of the soma ritual. The purifiers (*pávitāras*: 9.4.3) press the plant(s) with ten fingers to the strainer or crush it with stone (*ádri*, *grávan*) or by mortar and pestle (1.28.1-4) and after the filter/sieve the juice (*rása/mádhu*) flows into the wooden vats (*dróṇa*, *kalása*). Thereafter it may be mixed with water or milk or honey and/or barley. The admixture is termed a garment/robe (9.14.5, 70.7 etc.). This rite would normally take place three times a day.

6. But the sacrifice has apart from the external ritual an inner psychological aspect rarely noted – except by some few neglected scholars. But before I deal with this, which is a most significant element in my thesis, we need to examine, however briefly, the poetry itself of the hymns. I mentioned just before how the poets frequently dress the admixture of water, milk and/or barley with the image of a robe. The Russian scholar Prof (Mrs.) T. Elizarenkara dealt very extensively and analytically with the language and style of the Vedic poets (1995).

There is absolutely nothing of fine poetry, epic, lyric, satirical, elegiac, and whatever else, in Greek, Roman, Celtic and world poetry, that will not be found in the RV. Epic epithets identifying particular figures in the other poetries, are also found in the RV applying mainly to gods, like *daívyā* of Savitar, *ugrá* of Rudra, *ṛtávan* of Mitra and Varuṇa, *somapá* of Indra and so on. Then we find similes of many kinds: simple like “[Rudra] kills like a terrifying beast” (2.33.11); satirical like “[Frogs are] like brahmins at the overnight sacrifice, speaking around as it were a full lake” (7.103.7) *brahmaṇáso atiratré ná sóme sáro ná pūrṇám abhíto vādantaḥ*; the lyrical and elegiac one in “As a mother covers her son with a robe, so shroud thou, o Earth, this [dead] man” (10.18.11); and one from *sóma* “like the rays of the sun that make men hasten, exhilarate then sleep, so flow forth together [soma’s] swift effusions” (9.69.6).

All the elements of good poetry are present: strict metre, alliteration, rhyme in some verses; all the types of imagery, metaphor, personification, similes as just mentioned, hyperbole etc.

I take out of many one of Vāmadeva’s passages praising the horse *Dadhīkrā(-van)* which becomes a cosmic symbol. In Maṇḍala 4, three hymns, 38, 39 and 40, have the horse as their subject. It is exquisite poetry as in the final stanza of 4.38.10 *ā dadhīkrāḥ sávasā páñca kṛṣṭīḥ sūrya iva jyótiṣāpás tatāna*. Now imagine the horse stretching, extending over the five Aryan peoples with his enormous force, like the sun over waters with his radiant light. In both cases a comparatively limited material figure attracts, spreads over, enfolds and holds a much vaster area, the horse with speed and power, the sun with radiance and light. But it is the superb last stanza of the third hymn in this sequence that impresses, 4.40.5: *haṃsáḥ śuciśád vásur antarikṣasád, dhótā vediśád átithir duroṇasád / nṛṣád varasád ṛtasád vyomasád abjā gojá ṛtajá adrijá ṛtám*. Hear now the latest translation by Prof. (Mrs.) S. Jamison and J. Brereton (OUP 2014): “A goose setting in the gleaming (waters), a good one sitting in the midspace, a Hotar sitting at the vedi, a guest sitting in the dwelling; sitting among men, sitting in the choice place, sitting in truth, sitting in high heaven, water-born, cow-born, truth-born, stone-born -Truth.” An abominably literal, most ugly translation. Of course –*sad* means literally “sitting”; of course *vasur* means “good one”, of course *go* means “cow” and *adri* “stone”. But just as according to the sound and context, vowels and consonants change acquiring new quality as in sandhi, so words change in their core meaning acquiring fresh nuances according to context – and this especially in poetry.

**(Read/repeat again sanskrit verse:)** Now listen to a different rendering, my own = “The swan in pure brightness, the Vasu in midsky, the summoner Hotr at the altar, the guest in the house; what is in men, what is in excellence, what is in Natural Order, what is in highest heaven; what are born of waters, of light, of the Cosmic Order, of the Unbreakable (or, of rock) - that is the Law of Truth”. The first pāda gives us the descending order from high (pure brightness *śuci-*) down to the inside of the house; the other three give us an ascending order culminating in *ṛta* which expresses the Will of the Creative Principle. I derive *á-dri* from (a-) *dṛ* = “(not-) break”.

If we take *adri* as ‘rock, stone’ then the 4<sup>th</sup> pāda first ascends then descends abruptly to the lowest level of matter. Or both together in a *śleṣa* of meanings.

But the literal translations and mistranslations are very common even in this latest and heavily scholarly work of Jamison and Brereton. Entirely hypnotised by the mainstream scholarship which they must follow with as little change as possible they miss almost all opportunities to make even obvious necessary innovations. Thus *dhātā yathāpūrvām akalpayat* in 10.190.3 is translated as “The Ordainer arranged, according to their proper order” - sun, moon, heaven, earth, midspace and sunlight.

Now why is the adverb *yathāpūrvām* translated here, in the RV only, as “according to their proper order? Elsewhere in the vast corpus of ancient Indic literature it is translated as “as before, according to former manner”. And what is the proper order in these items – - *sūrya–candramás, div–pṛthivī* and *antárikṣa–svar*?

And so by this venerable mistranslation mainstreamers deny the idea of repetition or re-creation of the cosmos, which is so obvious here: “as in former time [so now]...”!

7. What scholars have done with the poetry, i.e. demeaning it, they have done also with the philosophy of the RV. They have debased it or ignored some most obvious aspects of it. One such obvious aspect is the esoteric psychological subtle process of the sacrifice. I dealt extensively with this in a paper in 2003 “Philosophy and Self-realisation in the Rigveda”.

Hymn 9.113 The last but one hymn, from the Soma-Maṇḍala is the invocation and wish and hope of ṛṣi Kaśyapa Mārica – “Make me immortal in the undecaying realm, in the sun’s world in highest heaven where shines light perpetual and all desires are consummated”. (7-11). This may refer to the afterlife. But there is the affirmation in 8.48.3:

*āpāma sómam-ámṛtā abhūma, áganma jyótir avidāma deván;*

*kiṃ nūnám asmán kṛṇavad-áratih kím u dhūrtír amṛta mártiyasya.*

“We drank soma, we became immortal; we went to the light, found the gods. How could now affect us misery, O immortal One, how mortals’ malevolence ?”

This is not in the afterlife. Moreover, it is the actual drinking of the potion, not the ritual, the recitation and singing and the pressing and the admixing of the soma drink.

But 9.73.8 says explicitly, not in metaphor or symbol: *trí sá pavítrā hṛdí-antár ā dadhe*: “he placed three filters within [our/my/the] heart.” It gives thus the esoteric aspect. We find three filters again in 3.26.8 where god Agni “has purged with three filters the singer *arká* disclosing inspiration and light within [his] heart.” Some translate *arka* “chant”, others as “sun/sunlight”. But it is talking about *māti* “inspiration, thought”. However, these three filters make no sense within a song or the sun but they do make sense within the singer or within any man.

Then, in 10.67.1-2 (a hymn by Ayāsyā Āngirasa) we find that there is a lofty seven-headed insight/intelligence *dhī* born of truth or Cosmic Order *ṛtāprajātā* which was discovered by our father. “The fourth one indeed Ayāsyā [Āngirasa] generated/manifested and this belongs to all people even as a solemn address to Indra. [Then] declaring the Law-of Truth *ṛta*, reflecting aright, the sons of heaven, the

heroes of the Lord, the Angirases establishing the inspired word [or, holding the rank of sages] meditated out the first foundation of sacrifice”. The forth can only relate to the four levels of speech (1.164.45): *catvāri vāk párimitā padāni tñi vidur brāhmaṇā ye manīṣiṇaḥ; gūhā trīni nihitā néngayanti, turīyaṃ vācō manuṣyā vadanti*.

But since this process holds true for speech then it must hold true for all actions – starting at the deepest level of Oneself, passing through the causal, then the mental or subtle level and finally manifesting in the fourth which is the field of common affairs. So the sacrifice too has the common external action but also the subtle esoteric process through the four levels mentioned here.

The sacrificial process also is said to have 4 stages of preparation – pressing, filtering, pouring, drinking, but, as mentioned above (9.73.8), it is also esoteric: the filtering is in the heart. And in 9.113.2 Soma flows with right word *ṛtavākéna*, truth *satyéna*, faith *śraddháyā* and power of transformation *tápasā*. In 9.96.16-20 soma strives to reach the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage or domain *trītyaṃ dhāma* (18) and reaches the 4<sup>th</sup> one *turīyaṃ dhāma*. The adjectives used here *ṛṣimanās* “having a seer’s mind”, *ṛṣikṛt* “seer-maker”, *svarṣāḥ* “light/sun-winner” again suggest an esoteric process. Thus here too we ascend through four levels.

This inner aspect of the sacrificial ritual resulting in a higher state of consciousness was examined by Coomaraswami in *Ātmayajña* (1942).

8. It is not only god Soma that resides in man, of course. All deities and the very Source of them reside in man. Dīrghatamas Aucathya, who gave us hymns 140 to 164 in the 1<sup>st</sup> Maṇḍala composed the two hymns 162,163 for the glorious *aśva* and the enigmatic 164 *asyā vāmāsya palitāsya hótus* “of this noble gray Summoner”. In this, in stanza 21, the poet says that “the mighty Herdsman of the whole world *sá mā dhīraḥ pákam átra á viveśa* he, the wise one, entered here into me, the naive one”. The humility of this seer seems very genuine when he says *ácikivāñ cikitúṣas cid atra kavīn prichāmi vidmāne ná vidvān* (st. 6) “Not having realised [the Truth], I ask some wise poets who have realised here, in order to know since I don’t know....” Yet he is aware of the four levels of speech and of the mighty Guardian of the universe being within him. So these fellows were not ignorant nomads but wise in their simplicity and capable of using well this complex Old Sanskrit language. The gods are within.

The idea is often repeated. Agni who encompasses all gods (5.3.1.etc.) and knows all (3.1.17 etc.) is the light and source of all inspiration *kratu* placed in man’s heart *hṛdaya áhita* (6.9.6; see also 1.67.2-4). This luminous power is perceived through mind *mánasā nicay* – (3.26.1). Indra also is internalized in 4.26.1 when he declares that he is the Sungod Sūrya but also the ṛṣi Kakṣīvan and the wise poet Uśanā: he was embodied in those seers. In 3.53.8 he Maghavan takes on every form employing the power of *māyā*. Hymn 6.75 praises the weapons and opens with *varman* “armour” in st 1. Final stanza 19 closes with *varman* stating clearly *brāhma várma mamántaram* “the brahma-power [spirit or prayer] is my inmost armour”.

Of course, it is a hymn in *Atharvaveda* that states explicitly that all deities are within man as cattle in a pen (11.8.32): the *puruṣa* is *brahman* and in him *sarvā hy asmin devatā gavo goṣṭha iva-āsate*. This being so, it follows that the demons and friends



(Namuci, Śambara etc.) whom Indra, Agni and other gods destroy together with their defences *purs*, are also within man. These battles are then internal, psychological clashes between good and evil forces within man. The good forces mostly win in RV!

Certain attributes or qualities, recognizable in man, are presented as deities. Thus we have *devī prāmāti*- goddess foresight (1.53.5) or *devī tāviṣī* goddess strength/vigour (1.56.4) and so on. Also the ‘holy-power’ *bráhma* inherent in prayer, faith, worship and ritual, is often the means whereby great seers performed their miraculous deeds. Thus Vasiṣṭha helped king Sudās defeat the 10 hostile kings *daśarajña* in 7.33.3. Atri rehabilitated the sun with this same inner power, the fourth [state of] *bráhma* through Indra, who destroyed the revolving *māyās* of the demon Svarbhānu (5.40.6).

So, many centuries before Socrates in Athens (and his follower Plato), who sought definitions for the “good” or “beautiful”, for “courage” or “friendship” etc, the Vedic seers established definitions of essential ideas or universals. Consider here the refrain in 3.55 one of the earliest family Maṇḍalas repeating after all 22 stanzas of this hymn to Viśve Devās (by Viśvāmitra): *mahād devānām asuratvām ékam* “Single and great is the lordly-power of the gods.” The gods are gods by participating in the *asuratvá* or, elsewhere, *devatvá*, which is great and One. It is a universal power.

9. This brings me now to the Vedic seers’ one great contribution to mankind. They established and seem to have known in experience the One, the supreme, unknown Power, from which evolved the multiplicity of world phenomena in creation. In the same early family Maṇḍala 3, hymn 54.8, postulates the One that is All: The One which is all governs all - what moves and what is at rest, what walks and what flies, this multifarious manifest creation *éjad dhruvām patyate viśvam ékam cárat patatrí viśuṇam ví jātám*. (3.54.8).

Other hymns in other Maṇḍalas express the same idea in different formulations. Thus 1.164.46 says “the sages give many names to what is One – Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni”; here the One may be the Sun but, nonetheless, we have the One and the Many. This is repeated in 10.114.5 where “The wise poets figure out in words the good-winged One in many ways”. Then 8.58.2 says *ékam vā idám ví babhūva sáravam* “Being One it became variously (vi) this All”.

The *nāsadīya* hymn 10.129 also affirms the One which is at the beginning, before anything exists. Stanza 2 says “That One breathed without air, by its own power” *ánīd avatám svadháyā tād ékam*. There was nothing else, other than That One.

That One is postulated by the RV many centuries before the monotheism of the Jews, Christians and Muslims. It may be two or three millennia. Yes, knowledge of the One was present but, as K. Werner observed (1989), this was confined to few, whereas the majority preferred the worship of the many gods or specific one(s) out of the many.

10. Before Werner, at the beginning of the 20th century, Shri Aurobindo had turned his attention to this more genuine spiritual aspect of the RV and even interpreted some of the divine phenomena as symbolic of elements in man’s psychology and possibility of inner development. He saw e.g. god Agni as a symbol of consciousness that could be refined in man and expanded from the material to a higher spiritual level.

More recently Jeanine Miller (1985, 1974) and David Frawley (1995, 1992) turned in the same direction and so have done several others.

A basic idea that runs explicitly through many hymns is man's divinisation that is man's involution to a higher state of being and consciousness, with the gods and beyond them – as will become very apparent in the Upanishads. And this not in the afterlife, in some future ghostly state, but while still living in this world.

I mentioned earlier (section §6) the state of the fortunate ones who became immortal like the gods, after drinking Soma and found the light and thus became impervious to misery and man's malignity (8.48.3). This is not isolated.

After all, if the mighty Herdsman of the entire universe *inó víśvasya bhúvanasya gopāḥ* has entered into man (1.164.21) then it is only a matter of realizing this state, of becoming fully conscious of it. Drinking Soma was one method. But some hymns in the 9<sup>th</sup> Maṇḍala, the Soma-hymn collection, say that not everybody will have this exhilarating experience. “A man may think he has drunk the soma when the plant has been crushed, but no one tastes of the soma [true] brahmins know” (10.85.3). Then, 9.73.6 says that *ṛtásya pánthām ná taranti duṣkṛtaḥ*, “evil-doers do not travel by the path of truth and Natural Order”. And stanzas 8-9 assert that the insightful ones attain the thread of truth, created by Varuṇa's *māyá* “mystic power”, while the faithless and powerless are cast into the pit. Then, young Apālā finds the soma-plant on her way to the river and chews it for Indra, who then grants her her triple wish (8.91). I would hazard here that Indra symbolizes the mighty force of insight and inspiration that frees the mind opening new vistas and paths helping it to succeed in its endeavours.

There were other ways, other practices, whereby the faithful could reach a higher state. These practices are, as is amply elucidated in the hymns, simply developing the virtues of every culture - truthfulness, frugality, devotion, generosity, self-restraint, courage, meditation/reflection and so on. Thus “the wise poets harness their mind and reflections” *yuñjáte mána utá yuñjáte dhiyo víprāḥ* (5.81.1). Or “they found the spacious light as they were reflecting” *urú jyótir vividur dídhyanāḥ* (7.90.4). Many times the light is invoked for the purification of prayer (7.13.3; 9.67.19-26) so that they can reach the *ácittam bráhma* “the holy-power beyond conception” (1.152.5), known to brahmins who have comprehension” (1.164.45).

Vāmadeva has acquired from his father Gotama the power to destroy mighty enemies by means of speech *vacóbhī* (4,4,11). The culmination of this divinisation process is seen in seer Kaṇva's second birth, when he states in 8.6.10 “Having received from my father the essential knowledge (medhā-) of the Cosmic Order (ṛtá) I was (re-)born like the sun”.

And here we see already formed the later tradition whereby the father (or grandfather) teaches the son (or grandson) and the teacher the pupil. Moreover, we must not ignore that this process and all other miracles are performed or brought to success by the help of one of the deities Indra, Agni, Soma and so on, to whom the aspirant or seer addresses his hymns - all of whom are within man.

Thus we see that the entire stream of spirituality in India has its beginnings in the RV. And this is the biggest boon to mankind also, the one certain means for true salvation.

Satyam vai jayate; ayam ātmā brahma!

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