

Rig Veda. Selected and Translated by Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty. London: Penguin Books, 1981.

This text compiles, for non-Sanskrit readers, a selection of 108 of the *Rig Veda's* 1,028 hymns. The *Rig Veda* is the oldest of India's Vedic literature. Over hundreds of years, ancient Vedism developed into modern Hinduism, also called Brahmanism. The translator, a scholar then teaching at the University of Chicago, chose these 108 hymns to illuminate, if not represent, the whole body of the *Rig Veda*. The selection is not presented in the order of the *Rig Veda* but rather topically. These sacred Hindu hymns are intended to puzzle and challenge readers, and so cannot always be briefly corralled. As you read this epitome, if you are puzzled, then, perhaps, so too was I. You should, as with each of my epitomes, recognize my mind traversing a path mapped by another. My interpretations are well-intentioned, but equivocal.

To All the Gods (8.30) All thirty-three gods of Manu are great. Each deserves worship and praise. Keep us safe. Let us walk our father Manu's path. You gods belong to all men. Shelter us and our livestock.

CREATION

Creation Hymn (10.129) First, there was nothing, neither existence nor non-existence. What changed? First, there was neither death nor deathlessness. No day and night. Yet one breathed, self-contained. There was only that one. Darkness hid darkness. All was water. By heat, life force arose. Mind grew from desire of the one. Even now, poets find depths of reality in nothingness. Above and below were born, seed-placers above, impulses below. None knows of creation's inception. Even gods came later. So, creation exists, self-formed or not. Only the one knows, and maybe not even him.

The Unknown God, the Golden Embryo (10.121) The Golden Embryo was born at the beginning, and created all, dividing earth and sky. Whom shall we worship? All gods and men obey him. His shadow brings life unending and death. Whom shall we worship? He rules over men and animals. Whom shall we worship? He owns mountains, oceans, and rivers. Whom shall we worship? He made sky and earth and sun, as well as the middle space. Whom shall we worship? He and all were born from the embryo in high waters, even the gods. Whom shall we worship? He, first among gods, looked over the waters, pregnant with maleness, and sacrificed to create. Whom shall we worship? May he not harm us, he who created all. Whom shall we worship? May this god of births, who embraces all, give us what we ask, when we offer appropriate worship. Make us rich.

The Hymn of Man (10.90) The Man expanded beyond all earth and ruled immortality, the heavens and the earth. Woman was born from the Man, and the Man from the woman. Gods sacrificed the Man. The sacrifice became the substance of birds, forest animals, and men in villages. Ideas and art and song came of that sacrifice, as well as domestic animals. The Man's mouth became the Brahmin, arms the warrior, thighs the people, and feet the servants. The man's mind became the moon, his eye the sun, and his breath the wind. Normal space emerged from his navel, the sky from his head, the earth from his feet. His sacrifice gave the worlds order. The Man was the sacrifice. And yet, the sacrifice was made to the Man. All rituals recapitulate this sacrifice. Even the lesser gods must follow this pattern.

The Creation of the Sacrifice (10.130) The Man is sacrificed upon the loom of creation. The Man makes the fabric, and is the fabric. Vedic sacrifices recapitulate the Man's sacrifice. One cannot tell which came first. Ritual songs are weaver's shuttles transporting threads upon the loom of creation. These songs inspire wise men. The human mind can see Man's sacrifice. Human songs and ideas repeat in ritual Man's primordial sacrifice.

Cosmic Heat (10.190) From heat came reality in order, truth, night, and oceans. From oceans came time. The Arranger set all in their proper order. Sunlight was last.

The All-Maker (10.81-82) By sacrificial worship and prayer, All-Maker made worlds, then hid his act. Exactly how were worlds made? The one God made them with his fabulous body. What was the stuff from which All-Maker carved the worlds? Answer, deep thinkers! Help us see God's thoughts in the divine sacrifice. God is sacrifice and sacrificer. All-Maker, men ask you to sacrifice earth and sky. All-Maker created prayers; hear our prayers and be gentle to us. All-Maker created the sun. He pulled earth apart from sky. All-Maker has vast mind and strength. He made and ordered the worlds. He is reflected in them. Our prayers give God joy. We ask God the hard questions because he is superior to all things. From ancient times, wise men sacrificed to God, even before night and day were segregated. Before the gods, All-Maker placed a first embryo in waters. All-Maker was that embryo; on him all creatures rest. Priests, muttering nonsense, burning pointless sacrifices, utterly self-indulgent, now obscure All-Maker from worshippers.

Aditi and the Birth of the Gods (10.72) The birth of gods becomes visible in hymns. What exists proceeded from nothingness. Earth and sky were born from a goddess crouching, legs apart. Aditi and Daksa gave birth to one another. Aditi was Daksa's first daughter. Other divine siblings followed. They joined hands and primordial mist rose. Worlds blossomed, and gods drew the sun from ocean. Aditi traveled with seven sons; the eighth, the sun, she discarded. The sun, Martanda, made offspring and was to die young.

DEATH

Yama and the Fathers (10.14) Yama, son of the sun, gathers men in death. Yama blazed the trail for dead men, a path all follow. Men strengthen gods and are themselves strengthened. Both rejoice in sacrificial acts, the real and the ritual. Yama, enjoy our sacrifices. We will pray to the sun, your father. Our own fathers, all godly, deserve sacrifice. When we die, we go as our ancestors, and see gods. Men of sacrifice and good deeds unite with Yama and their own fathers. In highest heaven, they get new bodies, without imperfections. Flee life when it is your time to die. Go to the place Yama has prepared. Run right past heaven's guard dogs, and feast with your fathers. Yama, give such well-being. Let the dogs give us happiness, here in the divine sun. Offer Yama divine drink, and proper sacrifices. Ask for long life by your sacrifices. Offer sacrifices with honey to Yama. Worship the sages now dead. Dead men wander three days throughout creation, all of which lies within Yama.

The Funeral Fire (10:16) Cook a dead person, making him ready as a sacrifice. The deceased person will be led by the gods. One's body returns to nature. The burning takes a decedent of good deeds to a good place. In that place, with his ancestors, let the deceased person have a new body. The god of fire will make the new body whole, whatever indignities it may have suffered from animals. Wrap corpses in leather and anoint them in fat. The fire will not consume them or their funeral goods, but rather transport them as offerings to the gods and ancestors. Ancestors eat the funeral offerings. The offertory fire revives the decedent. New life springs from death.

Burial Hymn (10.18) Death, we command you to leave, injuring none here. When mourners leave the funeral, forget death, live well, and gather children and wealth. The dead remain dead; we live on, and will again dance and laugh. May men live 100 years and cross into death and be buried. Let it be natural that the young support the old. Live long lives. Let women have sex with their men before they get old. Widows, rise from beside dead husbands. They are now gone. We take weapons from the dead hands of warriors, emulating their courage. If one makes ritual offerings, death comes easy. Earth enfolds the good dead warmly. Life builds itself upon the graves of the dead. Yama builds the house of the dead. Speak well, not ill. That will ease your death.

Funeral Hymn (10.154) Some deaths exceed others; go to good death. Ones who sacrifice have better deaths. Heroes and benefactors have better deaths. Men who create order have better deaths. Inspired poets, given to sacrificing by fire, will be reborn from death.

The Boy and the Chariot (10.135) A son's father died, so he traveled to where Yama drinks with gods. The son wanted his father alive again. The father told the son that he followed ritually as in a chariot or a ship. The songs, and chants reveal Yama's place, the gods' home.

A Spell to Turn Back the Departing Spirit (10.58) We speak to keep your soul with us, not with Yama. Be not in the sky, but with us. Be not in the earth, but alive with us. Be not in the distant sky, but dwell with us. Be not in the ocean, but alive with us. Be not in beams of light, but with us. Be not in plants or waters, but live with us. Be not in the sun or dawn, but with us. Be not in mountains, but dwell here. Disappear not into the universe; remain with us. Stay here and now, not beyond the beyond. Be not in past or future, but here with us.

THE ELEMENT OF SACRIFICE

The Origins of Sacred Speech (10.71) Speakers gave names and revealed love. In speaking, friends recognize one another. Speech emerges from sages. Speech reveals itself where there lies commitment, not to the casual seeker. To abandon a friend drives out speech and goodness. Friends differ in the depth of their insights. Those who speak and sacrifice badly leave a mess. Friends rejoice with one another when one is victorious. They assist one another's worship.

Speech (10.125) Speech dwells with gods, most worthy of sacrifice. Speech gives life and consciousness. Him whom speech loves is a sage. Speech is everywhere, even above gods. Speech exceeds existence.

Royal Consecration (10.173) The king emulates Indra, and with Indra's help upholds his kingdom steadfastly.

Lament of the Aged Priest (10.33) The gods make this singer sing, though he suffers and fails. The singer's beloved king has died. The singer sings to encourage the dead king's son. If the singer had power, the king would never die. But all die.

The Sacrificial Priests (10.101) Wake, my friend priests. Harmonize your thoughts. We are farmers of gods, sacrificing instead of plowing. Irrigate from the divine fountain. Protect the sacred values. Gods, give us your help. We sacrifice animals, as though having sex with gods.

In Praise of Generosity (10.117) Rich and poor alike die; so give to the poor. Do not refuse. The poor gave to the rich in the past. If a poor man asks, give and make that man a friend. If he refuses, find another friend. Give to any with need greater than your own. To hoard is to rob oneself, both now and in the future.

Faith (10.151) Faith kindles the offerings of the sacrifice. Gods honor faith and find their wealth in it. Faith creates faith.

The Riddle of the Sacrifice (1.164) An elder priest represents the highest god, whose seven sons ride an impossible symbolic chariot. The poet asks unanswerable questions about the divine. The poet asks other poets who is the unborn One. The poet asks him who knows to speak. An answer comes in dawn, which reverent worshippers praise. The sun's course through the sky inspires comment. Many, however, miss the import. The sun comes every day in a year, and leaves as well. Poets speculate. The sun drives all the heavenly motions, making months. Only one poet grasps the mysteries of the calendar. The birth of gods is mysterious; no man comprehends. What gods do endures, as do rituals. Men differ; some know of gods, others not. The sweet food belongs to him who knows gods. Immortality comes through ritual. Priestly hymns reach the heavens. Sunrise swells with divine import. As the sun expresses the divine, so too it nourishes mortal life. But also the sun sets and life expires. Men live between the divine and mortal, stretched. The ritual altar is the navel that connects things sacred and things of earth. Men wonder about themselves; when gods approach, they learn to speak. None grasp the divine and the mortal in one burst of insight. Gods dwell in the priestly songs; gods eat the sacrifices. The

divine cow grazes forever; from her spring all things. Ritual binds what is below to that above. Much of speech is hidden; men speak only a part of language. One describes the divine variously. In speech, men nourish themselves on suck of the divine breast. Gods themselves sacrifice, inducing men to follow suit. Call on the sacred for help.

THE HORSE SACRIFICE

Hymn to the Horse (1.163) The horse was born of waters, terrestrial and celestial. Gods made the horse from the sun, and bonded with it. Horses run as birds fly. Gods grant horses power. Gods feast on sacrifices in honor of horses. A sacrifice of horse gives the worshiper an advocate with the gods.

The Sacrifice of the Horse (1.162) Gods heed horse sacrifices. A goat is sacrificed first, announcing to gods the coming horse. Priests circle the horse thrice, carrying a stake with which to kill the sacrifice. Halter, reins, and all burn with the horse. Every bit of the horse burns. The sacrificed horse is cooked and boiled and dismembered ritually, keeping the limbs whole. One priest kills, two restrain the horse. The horse neither dies nor is harmed in sacrifice. The horse sacrificer is rewarded with cattle and horses, male heirs, and wealth. The horse sacrifice gives one power.

Requiem for a Horse (10.56) All have an earthly and a heavenly light. The sacrificed horse gets a heavenly body, gets breeding mares, and is happy. The sacrificed horse is majestic and fecund in many ways. The horse leaves behind offspring, who go on to exercise their sire's powers.

GODS OF THE SACRIFICE: AGNI AND SOMA

I Pray to Agni (1.1) Agni is the god of sacrifice, beckoning his divine companions to attend. Agni does what he wishes for those who sacrifice, granting wealth and health and heroic sons. The poet asks Agni to be easy to reach.

Agni and the Gods (1.26) The poet beckons Agni to his sacrifice. Men sacrifice for sons, comrades, friends. The poet asks for a good sacrificial fire that makes him beloved by the gods. Then prayers get answered as men praise gods and gods praise men.

The Birth of Agni (5.2) A mother hides her newborn from his father, who is king. The child left his home and was long absent. The boy should be brought home. Agni should return. Agni defeats evil. The poet writes for Agni, to induce Agni to heed the poet's sacrifice.

The Child of the Waters (2.35) The divine child of the waters hears the poet's song and enjoys it. The child of the waters creates all noble creatures. He blazes in his waters. The child of the waters suckles gods, and rewards his sacrificial worshippers. His clothes are lightning, gold his color. He eats butter. He self-generates. The child of the waters is Agni, of undarkened flames. Hear, Agni. Receive the sacrifices of the powerful.

The Gods Coax Agni out of the Waters (10.51) Agni hides in the primordial waters from which he was born (as child of the waters). There no kindling exists by which to kindle his fire, making him to serve sacrificial rituals. Agni hid to avoid this role. The gods answer that they have made Agni immortal and protected him from harm in burning sacrifices. The gods consent to some of Agni's conditions for service.

Indra Lures Agni from Vrtra (10.124) Agni hides with Vrtra, where there is no sacrifice. Soma, the king, returns to set things straight, and to kill Vrtra. The people follow their own nature, deserting Vrtra. Vrtra is vanquished.

The Mystery of Agni (4.5) How does one worship Agni? He supports the sky. He reveals inner meanings. Agni reveals mysteries about the deep meaning of sacrifices. Agni coalesces many

symbols from sacrificial rituals. The poet asks Agni for direction and protection to reach the goal. He also asks that lesser men fail in their efforts.

Agni and the Young Poet (6.9) Agni created day by driving back night. Agni connects heaven and earth by sacrifice. Agni is thereby the source of thought. The poet prays for Agni's assistance.

The Hidden Agni (10.5) Agni hides in the heavens, as poets hide the gods' most secret names. One learns truth by sacrificing, making Agni grow. Agni dwells with gods, supporting the good paths. There, existence and non-existence hide. Agni is the first-born of Truth.

This Restless Soma (8.79) Soma is elusive. He heals. Soma protects his own from enemy evils. The poet seeks Soma's protections from evils, human and divine.

Soma Pressed in the Bowls (9.74) We seek shelter in Soma. He holds up the sky. Soma heartens the man who follows the right way. Soma grants sons and grandsons. Butter and ambrosia rain from the clouds. Soma, mixed with water, strained through wool sieves, Soma inspires divine insight.

The Pressing-Stones (10.94) Stones press Soma from stalks, making a divine sound, eating the divine meal. Those who drink shout to gods and dance. Praise those who mash the Soma. Praise the pressing stones themselves.

Butter (4.58) Soma mingles with ocean honey to become butter, the elixir of immortality. In consuming it, gods enter men. This butter flows to the human heart, there safe behind many fences. The heart issues words that express butter. Agni burns the butter, transporting it to the gods.

Soma and Indra and the Eagle (4.26) A drunken god boasts of his accomplishments. He made the eagle supreme among birds. The eagle seized a stalk of Soma and brought it to the people. Soma brings ecstasy. (4.27) Soma went willingly with the eagle. The eagle pillaged heaven for Soma. Now men and gods grow ecstatic on Soma.

The Soma-Drinker Praises Himself (10.119) Drinking Soma, a god praises himself. He will win livestock. All the tribes are a mere irritation; in fact, the whole world is as nothing. Even the sky and earth seem small by comparison. He organizes the universe to his liking. Huge, he flies in clouds. By drinking so much Soma, he becomes a messenger to gods.

The Ecstasy of Soma (9.113) May Indra drink Soma, then do great deeds. Indra speaks sacred words, and prays. From Soma comes wonders, makes the priest large. Soma brings immortality.

We Have Drunk the Soma (8.48). Soma inspires happy thoughts and joy and expansive feelings. Soma makes one immortal, protects from disease and injury, and makes a man thrive. If a priest breaks Soma's laws, he prays for mercy, to be made a better man. Soma is the immortal within a mortal. The priest prays for wealth and protection.

The Long-haired Ascetic (10.136) The ascetic taking a hallucinogen believes himself expansive and revelatory. Gods ride them. The ascetics sail on winds, and reads minds.

INDRA

The Birth and Childhood Deeds of Indra (4.18) Indra wishes to be born not through the birth canal, but out through his mother's side. The mother abandons Indra, who follows her to drink Soma. Indra freed bound waters held by a demon by killing the demon, who injured Indra's jaw nevertheless. Indra sought Visnu's help in killing the demon Vrtra. Indra's mother complains that Indra killed his own father. Indra objects that he had no alternative.

Indra Chastises His Son (10.28) The son's wife complains that Indra has not come to the sacrifice. The son argues with his father that the sacrifice is for him. Indra answers with a riddle, which his son complains he is too simple to grasp. The son pretends that he has accomplished Indra's great deeds. The son challenges his father, Indra. Indra warns his son that, though great, he is no match for Indra. The son acknowledges Indra's supremacy.

The Killing of Vrtra (1.32) With lightning bolts, heroic Indra killed the dragon Vrtra that dammed the waters. Indra drank Soma, and in killing the dragon, released sun, sky, and dawn. Vrtra resisted Indra with bad weather, but was dismembered and crushed. Indra killed Vrtra's mother as well. But, having done so, Indra feared. Still, he is king and rules all.

The Cows in the Cave (3.31) Indra released the cows. Agni honors him. Indra makes men successful in their raids when the sacrifice appropriately. Indra is all powerful. He gives birth to sun, dawn, motion, and fire. Priests ask for Indra's help and guidance. Indra helps worshippers kill enemies and gain riches.

Sarama and the Panis (10.108) Sarama, the dog of Indra, tracks down the Panis, who have stolen cows from the Vedic people. The Panis ask what Indra is like. Sarama answers that Indra cannot be tricked, and Indra will kill the Panis for their treachery. The Panis say they will defend themselves. To no avail, answers Sarama. The Panis attempt to bribe Sarama to join them. Sarama encourages the Panis to flee and let the cows go home.

Indra Beheads the Sacrifice (10.171) Indra beheads a Sacrifice and takes the severed head to Itat, who offered Soma. The poet asks Indra to perform great feats, such as making the sun run backwards.

If I were Like You, Indra (8.14) Indra should give his worshippers cows. One who uses Soma worships well, like milking livestock with full udders. Indra is generous. Sacrifices empower Indra. The poet seeks Indra's help. Indra rescues stolen cows, and emplaces the stars. The songs of worship make Indra strong, and the singer happy. Those who sacrifice have access. You drink Soma with the Soma-drinkers.

Who is Indra? (2.12) Indra is powerful. He created all. He defeated cow-stealing demons. Indra is a great warrior; he defeats his enemies utterly. Some doubt Indra. But he lives. He encourages the sick and weak, and drinks Soma. Indra commands horses and cows and bore the sun and dawn. All warriors seek Indra's support. Indra judges human actions, and disposes of the arrogant. Indra is a mighty bull, governing by lightning all things. Indra heeds those who drink Soma and sacrifice.

GODS OF THE STORM

The Maruts (1.85) The Maruts, the wind-gods, make the world, conceived as Soma-crushing stones, strong. They drink Soma. The Maruts serve Indra, and are the children of cows. The Maruts defeat attackers and are worshipped. They bring rain and fertility. The poet bids the winds to come sit with him and drink Soma. The Maruts helped Visnu assist Indra in fighting demons. Maruts fight well beside Indra, who defeated Vrtra with lightning and freed the waters. They make gifts to men, being intoxicated with Soma, as they gave a fountain of water to thirsty Gotama. Inspire heroic action, the poet prays.

Indra, the Maruts, and Agastya (1.165, 1.170, 1.171) How, Indra asks, does one make the winds stop and take notice? The Maruts ask what Indra wants. Indra anticipates sacrifice and Soma. The Maruts interpose that they have always had an independent streak. Indra objects that the Maruts were no help when he fought the dragon, Vrtra. The Maruts object that Indra has accomplished much with their help. Indra objects that he alone killed Vrtra. The Maruts acknowledge Indra's unmatched powers. Indra appreciates their praise. The poet anticipates a great sacrifice to the Maruts.

Agastya and the Maruts (1.170) Agastya, the sage priest, apologizes for wrong intention, blaming another. The Maruts complain to Indra that he destroys them by taking the sage's sacrifices and leaving the Maruts none. Agastya promises another sacrifice to Indra, but asks him to appease the Maruts.

Agastya Prays to Indra and the Maruts (1.171) Agastya prays to the Maruts. Agastya asks for mercy, for he sacrificed to Indra out of fear. Forgive, please. Agastya asks Indra to overpower the Maruts, who have angered toward the sacrificers.

Parjanya, the Bull (5.83) Parjanya is powerful and fecund. He slaughters demons with lightning. He frightens even sinless people. Parjanya makes plants and animals prolific. The poet asks the Maruts to send copious rain. Parjanya kills evil doers. Parjanya holds back rain when it is sufficient. He inspires poetry and food and growth.

Parjanya, the Cow (7.101) Parjanya makes human life rich with light, water, and plants. Let him rejoice in this hymn, and make Soma grow. Parjanya brings life and fecundity. May he protect us.

The Gale Wind (10.168) Gales destroy and blow dust. Rainstorms follow gales. He keeps divine law, and travels wherever he pleases. Worship him with sacrifices.

SOLAR GODS

Dawn and the Asvins (1.92) Dawn gods deliver the morning sun and its spiritual wealth. They reward men who do generous deeds, who sacrifice and offer Soma. The Dawns dance seductively, creating many-colored light. Give us children and heroes, cattle and strong men. She inspires poets and receives their worship. Dawn makes men age, winning from them their longevity. Dawn makes men fertile and deliver good fortune. The Asvins, twin sons of the Sun, come with Dawns. Give strength. May many drink Soma to the Asvins.

The Deeds of the Asvins (1.116) Asvins rectify problems among divinities. They rescued Bhujyu from shipwreck. They make some poor people rich, and rescue them from certain death. The Asvins brought rain to end drought. They rejuvenated old Cyavana, and gave him daughters anew. The Asvins give the impotent children, save the weak from the powerful, and grant visions to seers. They gave a racing mare an iron leg to replace her broken one, and eyes for a blinded man. The Asvins love beauty. They travel freely over land and water; their bull is yoked with a dolphin. The Asvins grant improbable victories. They resuscitated Rebha, who was killed and mutilated. The poet notes his praise of the Asvins, and asks for cattle, sons, and long happy life.

The Rescue of Atri (5.78) The poet invokes the Asvins with Soma. The poet recalls the Asvins' rescue of Atri, whom they loosed to have sexual relations with his wife. The poet prays for timely, successful births.

Atri and the Lost Sun (5.40) The poet invokes Indra with Soma. Sunlight, by day's end, consumes the Sun (or the Sun is eclipsed). The priest seeks Indra's help to restore the Sun. Atri, high priest, pressed Soma, and the Sun was restored. No other priests could do so much.

The Sun, Surya (1.50) The Sun, Surya, make vision possible, driving away stars and night. The sunlight makes gods see the sacrifices of men. The Sun's seven daughters pull his chariot through the sky. The Sun is the highest of gods. The makes sick men well. The poet prays to defeat enemies, and not be defeated.

Vena (10.123) Vena marks out the boundaries of space, recalled as priests invoke him with Soma. The god acts in response to Soma, which is the divine womb of all humanity. Soma grants access

to divine events and knowledge. Through Soma, Vena and the Sun and the heavens are related and known.

The Bird (10.177) Sages see what is invisible to others, the secrets of gods, their activities. Poets guard this knowledge, these mysteries.

Pusan on the Road (1.42) The poet asks Pusan, the travel god, to keep the poet's travel safe. Drive off wolves, robbers, and slanderers. Bring luck, riches, ease, understanding, food, and health. The poet prays rightly, in well-worded songs, to win these benefits.

Pusan, Child of the Unharnessing (6.55) The poet invokes Pusan, seeking riches. He praises Pusan, with goats for horses drawing his chariot, who is his sister's and mother's incestuous lover.

Savitr at Sunset (2.38) Savitr [god of rising and setting sun] goads men to work, and rewards sacrificers with happiness. He brings night; all cease labors. Everyone settles at their homes. People eat. Even gods obey Savitr's command to cease. The poet asks for bounty and happiness in exchange for the praise the poet lavishes.

Savitr at Night (1.35) The poet invokes Savitr as Night to drive away evils. Savitr controls sky and earth. The third world, that of the dead, belongs to Yama. Savitr routs demons and brings blessing.

Night (10.127) The goddess Night shines many lights in darkness. When she comes, people go home to rest. Keep far from the poet wolves and thieves and troubles.

SKY AND EARTH

Sky and Earth (1.160) Between Sky-and-Earth, the sun moves as nature prescribes. The two protect all things. The creator god clarifies the universe, and gave birth to Sky-and-Earth. The poet seeks fame and power over people for ruling them potently.

Guard Us from the Monstrous Abyss (1.185) Sky-and-Earth contain all creatures; they protect us from the terrifying abyss. Gods are their sons, and they help the weak. Sky-and-Earth bring luck and expel evil. The poet apologizes for wrongs, to gods, to friends, to welcoming strangers. Let god and man get drunk on Soma. Give the poet good reputation and favors.

The Two Full of Butter (6.70) Sky-and-Earth brim with ritual butter. They benefit doers of good deeds. He who worships well is reborn through his children. The dual gods gorge on sacrificial butter, stream with honey. The poet asks the two to make gods rich, and him famous, victorious, and virile.

VARUNA

The Deeds of Varuna (5.85) Varuna, the sky god, created all things. Varuna does magic, unlike any other. The poet asks Varuna to forgive him for offending friends and for cheating in games.

Varuna Provoked to Anger (7.86) Varuna created, but is now angry with the poet. The poet praises Varuna to no avail. The poet will abandon his sin, if only he knows what it is. The poet speculates where his sin lies: in the acts of ancestors, in wine, anger, gambling, or carelessness? The poet asks for blessing.

Varuna the Friend of Vasistha (7.88) The poet asks Vasistha to make a poem for Varuna. Vasistha imagines that he and Varuna sail on the sea; Varuna inspires his friend. But now that friendship has vanished. Vasistha seeks forgiveness and protection.

The House of Clay (7.89) The poet prays to avoid death. The poet stumbles; may Varuna forgive. The poet may have sinned unwittingly; may Varuna be merciful. The poet thirsts unquenchably, despite standing amidst waters. If humans have sinned or acted carelessly, please forgive, Varuna.

Varuna (2.28) The poet seeks to write a hymn exceeding all others to Varuna. The poet seeks happiness because of his daily sacrifices, and protection. The poet seeks to remove sin as though a sash. The poet seeks courage. The poet knows that Varuna wounds sinners, but asks that his own failures be loosed and forgiven. Abolish the poet's moral debts. Protect the poet from all evils. The poet promises to continue sacrificing.

RUDRA AND VISNU

Rudra, Father of the Maruts (2.33) The poet prays for Rudra's forbearance, seeking long life free of anguish and disease. The poet asks Rudra to raise up heroes from among the sick; Rudra is praised without others. Rudra's homage comes with dread, for Rudra is all-powerful. The poet seeks healing medicines, and to avoid Rudra's malevolence. The poet asks not to be killed.

Have Mercy on Us, Rudra (1.114) The poet offers sacrifice to Rudra to protect his village and herds. Rudra rules heroes. Despite Rudra's fierceness, the poet seeks his kindness. The poet prays that he and his family and the village heroes not be slaughtered. The poet seeks protection from the wrath of gods and marauders. He invokes other gods to the same purposes.

The Three Strides of Visnu (1.154) In three steps, Visnu propped up the heavens and divided from it the earth. All creatures dwell in those three strides. The poet asks to reach Visnu's place of refuge, where men who love gods rejoice.

REALIA

The Waters of Life (10.9) Water brings life. Let us drink and be well. After drinking Soma, the poet recognizes that water cures every illness; in it hides Agni. The poet prays that waters should cure his deceptions and lies, flooding the worshipper with splendor.

The Waters, Who are Goddesses (7.49) Earthly waters flow from celestial waters, released by Indra. The waters themselves are goddesses, whom the poet invokes. All waters flow to the oceans. Let them help the poet now. Waters drip divinity and nourish gods. The poet seeks their help.

The Frogs (7.103) Priests and frogs keep similar vows of silence, which they break when storm rains arrive. They croak and pray; they ask to be soaked. Different frogs intone various voices into the symphony. Frogs gather around a pool, priests around Soma. Each acknowledges the change of season, the priests making life long with their many pressings of Soma.

Human Diversity: A Hymn to Soma (9.112) Men seek various occupations. Though diverse in activities and desires, all seek wealth and ask the gods for it, using Soma.

To Arms (6.75) May armor keep the warrior safe, and the bow bring victory. Horse and chariot carry the warrior. Horses fight too. Sacrifice to the gods for good results. Pray for assistance. The whip drives the horses to battle. May the gods protect warriors. As armor defends man from mortal wounds, let gods protect and grant victory. Prayer is a kind of armor.

The Gambler's Lament (10.34) To the gambler, dice are like Soma, intoxicating. The gambler alienated his wife and mother by his vice. Winners fondle the loser's wife; the family ejects him from its life. The gambler forswears the game, but cannot resist. Chance rules all, even gods and kings. Dice sear the heart. Savitr the god advises, give up dice, plow your fields, and savor your wife and cattle. The gambler asks to be released from the grip of dice, to have another man take his place.

Lost in the Forest (10.146) A lost poet asks the forest spirit, who hides, for guidance. The forest sounds imitate men, but are not men. Imagination runs amok. The forest intends no harm. The poet praises her.

WOMEN

Yama and Yami (10.10) Yami seeks Yama's sexual attentions, since grandsons are expected. Yama declines. Yami insists on husbandly obligations from Yama. The procreation god united Yama and Yami as husband and wife from the womb, though brother and sister. Yami again implores; Yama again rebuffs, telling Yami to seek another virile man. Yami begs. But Yama is adamant; he shuns his sister. Yami curses, and complains that another woman will have Yama. Yama notes that Yami too will have sex with another.

Agastya and Lopamudra (1.179) Asceticism leads nowhere, says a wife to her husband; make a child with me. He answers, his reticence is encouraged by gods. Each should follow a path that seems right, and eventually they will have sex. She responds that she burns with desire; he capitulates and she sucks him dry. The husband prays for forgiveness, drinking Soma. The gods forgive. Agastya finds celestial fulfillment, and has children as well.

Pururavas and Urvasi (10.95) The husband, Pururavas, seeks his wife's, Urvasi's, attention. She declines arguing that she cannot be captured, like the winds. Others (gods) have intervened to alienate her. The husband objects that she once sought sex constantly. The wife says she had sex often, but not with pleasure, rather from honor. Nymph friends come for Urvasi. She says her husband lives to defend her from demons. The husband says he seduced her nymph friends. Urvasi bore him a son; let him live long. The wife objects that her husband should not pressure her. The wife refuses her husband and sends him off with his things. The husband fears he will die without her. She objects that he self-deludes, since women have no friends. The husband's heart burns for his wife. Urvasi tells him to sacrifice to the gods, and he will have what he wants in heaven.

Apala and Indra (8.91) A maiden finds Soma and presses it with her teeth, offering the drink to Indra. Her husband hates her, so she turns to Indra for rescue. She seeks hair for her father, fertile fields, and pubic hair. Indra answers with a threefold purification.

Indra and the Monkey (10.86) Indrani (wife of Indra) notes that some no longer think Indra a god or offer him sacrifice. Indra asks his wife what Vrsakapi [a fertile monkey] has done to her to so alienate her. Indrani says Vrsakapi defiled her sexually. Vrsakapi responds that even now, she makes him hard. Indra asks Indrani again why she attacks Vrsakapi. Indrani complains that Vrsakapi treats her as though she had no spouse, despite her marriage to Indra. Vrsakapi explains that once Indra went about with public respect. The wife of Vrsakapi praises Indrani's fortune for having a husband who will never die. Indra notes that Vrsakapi's ritual offerings make Indra happy. Vrsakapi tells his wife to sacrifice to Indra, and Indra accepts her rich offering of bulls. Vrsakapi's wife says she makes a pleasant sacrifice of cattle. Indrani criticizes that one of the bulls has a limp penis. Vrsakapi's wife dissents; Vrsakapi has sacrificed with the implements of a man who broke a vow of chastity. Indra vows he seeks good sacrificers; he invites Vrsakapi back to the village. Indrani also asks Vrsakapi to return in repentance. The poet praises the first mother, and inquires about Vrsakapi's hiding in the north from Indra.

The Courtship of Ghosa (10.40) The poet asks if the Asvin gods are coming to the people's houses? Are the Asvins having sex with women? House after house sacrifices and the Asvins come. Ghosa, a princess, sacrifices to the Asvins at dusk and dawn. She seeks power to have a fertile and attentive husband. Ghosa's husband lacks virility; she prays the Asvins grant him some. Grant her sons and wealth. Where are the Asvins?

The Marriage of Surya (10.85) Eternal truths keep sun and moon in place. Soma empowers gods and adorns the heavens. Some disregard the deep meaning of Soma, thinking it a drink. Not so the Brahmins. They know that none eats Soma, no matter what they drink. Surya marries with songs, a celestial wedding. Her father gave Surya away, as the Asvins, failed suitors, stood by. The heavens were Surya's chapel. All were made of thought and intelligence. The Asvins had hidden powers, known only to initiates. Sun and moon circle the wedding place. May those who deflower brides stay from this ceremony. Make the marriage easy and its household simple. Take marriage in law and good action. May the marriage have love and sons. Govern your household. Have sex, even into old age. Right sacrifice binds a husband to his wife. Avoiding sex poisons the marriage. Keep the marriage safe from man and demons. Bless the wedding couple, then the guests go home. Cut up the bridal gown in the proper ritual. The husband blesses his bride, paying she will be sexually welcoming. He prays for children and beauty and long life. The wife has belonged to gods, only now to a man. The newlyweds are commanded to stay together and enjoy their offspring. May the gods make them prosper. May gods give them many sons. Let the wife rule over her husband's family. May the gods join the marital partners' hearts.

The Rape and Return of the Brahmin's Wife (10.109) Soma raped the Brahmin's wife, then returned her. Gods helped her find her way back. Brhaspati, her husband, helped her get back. Sages and gods warn that stealing Brahmins' wives is dangerous practice, sowing disorder. Brhaspati won the gods' help because of his faithful service. Kings who take wives to rape should similarly return them; gods will be pleased and grant vast realms.

Mugdala's Wife and the Bull in the Chariot (10.102) A transforming chariot races with Mugdala's wife the charioteer. She prays to Indra for protection during her cattle raid. A potent bull fights against her, but loses the battle when it must urinate. His feces strike Mugdala's wife. The bull was yoked to the chariot. The bull lusted after cows and performed mightily, alongside a yoked wooden club. Mugdala's wife wins the competition, and becomes like a newborn's mother. Indra is the mighty yoked bull.

INCANTATIONS AND SPELLS

The Healing Plants (10.97) The poet praises medicinal plants, and asks them to heal his patient. Some plants are goddesses. Plants bring divine blessings and health. Medicinal plants mediate the conflict between a body and its diseases. Plants work in harmony with one another. Diseases emerge from curses, divine injuries, and offense of the gods. Plants intercede on man's behalf in relation to all. Soma is king of plants. Plants cooperate with priests to bring health.

Against Bad Dreams and Sins (10.164) The poet prays that the god "master of thought" will depart. That god finds thoughts diverse. People dwell on what makes them happy. Let human misdeeds depart to the distance. Protect us from punishments for our offenses. Let our evil intent now pester our opponents.

Sleeping Spell (7.55) May the house god befriend us. May the snapping dog gods fall asleep. The dog gods may bark at thieves or pillagers, but not at Indra's worshippers. The dog gods kill the boar, but not Indra's worshippers. Let the family sleep. Let everyone sleep, with the help of a powerful god.

Against Rival Wives (10.145) A wife drives out rival wives with a magical plant, leaving her husband to her alone. She prays to the plant. She disparages rival wives. May they travel to distant places and remain there. She imagines that her husband triumphs when she prevails over rival wives. May the husband now frolic and pursue the remaining true wife.

The Triumphant Wife (10.159) A wife rejoices that she has defeated her husband. She is preeminent among his wives. Her children prevail, and she alone her husband hears. She praises and sacrifices to Indra. Rival wives disappear. She steals their beauty for herself. Now she rules over rival wives as an empress.

For a Safe Pregnancy and Birth (10.184) May the gods of begetting make you a good pregnancy. As the gods made your sexual relations, may you bear in the tenth month.

To Protect the Embryo (10.162) May Agni drive demons from the womb. A woman's prayers drive off gods who would kill the baby. We drive away sexual partners who conceal evil gods seeking to kill the baby.

The Demons in Hell (7.104) The poet asks Indra and Soma to kill evil doers. Send them to a bottomless pit of darkness. Use lightning to destroy them. The poet meditates so that Indra and Soma will do as he asks. Let no one who seeks to injure the poet prosper. Let him who disparages the poet be nothing, like water held in a fist. Let Soma destroy those who make a good man bad. May gods parch the glory of detractors of the poet. Kill the man who speaks falsely. Destroy those who utter hatred. The poet prays to be himself killed if he acts falsely. Let Indra strike to the deepest depth his who calls the poet a sorcerer of evil. Kill those demons of night. Strike them with lightning. Kill all sorcerers. The poet prays to be safe from demons and sorcerers. Let Indra kill with his thunderbolts.

The Dove of Death (10.165) The poet prays that the dove of death depart, taking no one from his household or livestock. He offers sacrifice that the dove will be kind. The poet honors death, who sent the dove, but asks that the dove be driven out. Leave the poet's household with strength to go on living.