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Readings from the *Veda*

From Deepak Sharma, ed. *Hinduism: a Reader*. NY: Blackwell, 2008.

The *Vedas*

The *Vedas* (“wisdom” texts) are a body of orally transmitted texts that originated around 1500 BCE.¹ Their origins are ambiguous and a matter of great controversy as some scholars attribute them to the Indus-Valley civilization and others to the Indo-European “Aryans” (“noble-ones” in Sanskrit) who migrated into the Indus valley and either destroyed or merged with the inhabitants of the Indus Valley.² Historicity aside, the *Vedas* are held by some Hindus to be *apauruṣeya*, not of human authorship, and to have been received by *ṛṣi*, seers, whose number vary from seven, the so-called *saptarṣis*, to ten. The language of the revelation was Sanskrit, the “perfect” (“*samskr̥ta*”) language of the universe. According to some Hindus, their non-human origins makes these indisputably true texts the foundations for Hindu epistemology. Given their oral origins, they are also known as *śruti* (the “heard” texts). Often times, then, Hindu use the terms *śruti* and *Vedas* interchangeably.

The *Vedas* are largely concerned with rituals and *yajñas*, sacrifices (also known as *homās*), to propitiate *devas*, gods and goddesses, which were performed by *brāhmaṇas*, members of the priestly class. The *Vedas* include descriptions of *devas*, such as Indra, to whom sacrifices are to be made. The *homās*, sacrifices, were often of animals such as the horse and the bull, though milk, ghee (clarified butter) and the plant *soma*, were also offered into *agni* (the sacrificial fire). The *yajamāna* (patron of the sacrifice) paid for elaborate rituals that were enjoined in the *Vedas* to be performed by ritual virtuosos. They concurrently chanted Sanskrit *mantras* (liturgical verses) also found in the *śruti*. In some cases the rituals were homologies and linked the body and the universe with the sacrifice.

The *Vedas* are comprised of four traditions, *R̥g*, *Yajur*, *Sāma*, and *Atharva*. These are each further divided into four categories of texts: the *Samhitās*, *Brāhmaṇas*,³ *Āraṇyakas*, and *Upaniṣads*. This ordering, from *Samhitā* to *Upaniṣad*, also reflects the order in which they were composed. While the *Samhitās* were composed by about 1500 BCE, the *Upaniṣads* were not completed until about 400 BCE.⁴ The *R̥g Veda Samhitā* is the oldest of these and is comprised of ten *mandālas* (books) and 1,028 hymns. The *R̥g Samhitā* is filled with metrical *mantras*, characterizations of, and myths about, *devas*, invocations to the gods, rituals, and verses (*ṛc*) that pertain to the envisioned social world of the *Vedas*. The *Sāman Samhitā* is comprised of songs (*sāmans*) based on the *R̥g Veda* with rules for proper recitation (*gaṇa*). Given the centrality of Sanskrit, instruction was required to

nsure that the texts were recited and chanted properly. If they were not, then there could be unwanted consequences or, for that matter, none and all. The *Yajur Samhitā* contains ritual instructions and the accompanying *mantras* (*yajus*). The fourth *Samhitā*, the *Atharva*, is a collection of magical spells of the Atharvans and Aṅgiras.⁵ In it one finds a wide variety of incantations, from those that prevent disease, to those that cause one's enemy to become diseased, and from those that attract lovers, to those that cause ill to befall rival lovers.

The texts that follow the *Samhitās* are increasingly more abstract and reflective about the *Samhitās*. While *Brāhamaṇas* are texts that largely concern ritual exegesis and the rules and regulations for performing a proper *yajña*, the *Āraṇyakas* are texts about the interpretation of the ritual. The *Upaniṣads* continue the interpretive trajectory that began with the *Āraṇyakas* and offer interpretations that tie the rituals with cosmological and metaphysical matters. Taken as a whole, the *Vedas* helped to define the social, political, and religious world of early Hinduism. Though not accepted by all identified as Hindus, the *Vedas* nonetheless are an orientation point for them.

The passages included here are from the *R̥g Veda*. Many of the hymns from the *R̥g Veda* "were intended to be recited at the yearly Soma ritual, celebrated at the time of the New Year."⁶ The first few myths are creation myths. *Nāsadiya* 10.129, is filled with enigmatic paradoxes and concludes with a playful skepticism or humility. *The Unknown God, the Golden Embryo* 10.121, mixes a speculative creation myth with sacrificial obligation.

Puruṣa-Sūkta 10.90, arguably the most important hymn in all of the *Vedas*, is a theological justification for the entire Vedic social system. In it, the sacrificial world of the *Vedas* is described as born from a *yajña* of *puruṣa*, the "primal" man. The entire universe as well as the social system of the *Vedas* – namely, the four-fold *varṇa*, class system, of the *brāhmanas*, priestly class, *kṣatriyas*, warrior class, *vaiśyas*, merchant class, and *sūdras*, laboring class – is born from this cosmic sacrifice.

The theme of the creation of the *yajña* continues with hymn 10.130, *The Creation of the Sacrifice*, in which the one finds the universe characterized as a weaving loom. *Cosmic Heat*, hymn 10.190 is about the creation of *ṛta*, order, from *tapas*, heat generated from asceticism.

As already mentioned, the *Vedas* were composed in Sanskrit, regarded as the archetypal language. To this end, the next two hymns are both to *vāc*, speech or language, itself. *Vāc* is invoked as a goddess in 10.71, and in 10.125 praised and then characterized as the deity who is the mother of the universe.

The next set of passages provides examples of ritual hymns. *Rājasūya*, the *Royal Consecration*, 10.173 is indicative of the relationships between the *Vedas* and political power while hymns 1.162 and 1.163 concern *asvamedha*, the horse sacrifice. The *asvamedha* found here is a glorification of the horse, which was the vehicle of the Vedic people and may have been the means by which the Indo-Aryans entered South Asia.⁷ Following these hymns are a number of invocations and myths about *devas* and *devis* of the *Vedas* including Agni, the sacrificial fire, *soma*, the psychotropic drug (possibly *psilocybin* mushrooms)⁸ consumed by both sacrificers and *devas* of the *Vedas*, Indra, god of the thunderstorm, the *soma*-drinking, dragon-killing, *deva*-hero.

In *The Killing of Vṛtra* 1.32, Indra symbolically kills the dragon Vṛtra and with its body creates the world. Rudra, who has been speculated to be the precursor of the god Śiva is the subject of *Have Mercy on Us, Rudra* 1.114, and 10.10 *Yama and Yamī*, is another speculative creation myth centered upon incest.

Purūravas and Urvaśī 10.95 is a myth about the water nymph Urvaśī and her lover Purūravas. Continuing this theme of lovers, *The Marriage of Sūryā* 10.85 is the prototype of human marriages and a hymn of the marriage of Sūryā, the daughter of Sūrya, the sun, and *Soma*.

Sleeping Spell 7.55, *Against Rival Wives* 10.145, *The Triumphant Wife* 10.159, and *For a Safe Pregnancy and Birth* 10.184, are each spells from the *Rg Veda* which, when chanted properly, were believed to bring about the desired effect. *To Protect the Embryo* 10.162 has been interpreted by some as a *Vedic* prohibition of abortion.

While these hymns are the mere tip of a proverbial iceberg they exemplify *Vedic* ritual, sacrifice, invocations, and spells.

Notes

- 1 Michael Witzel, “*Vedas and Upaniṣads*” in G. Flood (ed.), *A Blackwell Companion to Hinduism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003.
- 2 See Edwin Bryant and Laurie Patton (eds.), *The Indo-Aryan Controversy*. London: Routledge, 2005; and Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- 3 The text is spelled identically with the name of the class. I differentiate between the two by capitalizing the name of the text.
- 4 Witzel, “*Vedas and Upaniṣads*”, p. 68.
- 5 Axel Michaels, *Hinduism Past and Present*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004, p. 56.
- 6 Witzel, “*Vedas and Upaniṣads*”, p. 69.
- 7 Wendy Doniger O’Flaherty, *The Rig Veda*. London: Penguin Books, 1981, p. 85.
- 8 See R. Gordon Wasson, *Soma: Divine Mushroom of Immortality*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

Further reading

- Bryant, Edwin and Laurie Patton (eds.), *The Indo-Aryan Controversy*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- Bryant, Edwin, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
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The Rig Veda

10.129 Creation Hymn (Nāsadiya)

1. There was neither non-existence nor existence then; there was neither the realm of space nor the sky which is beyond. What stirred? Where? In whose protection? Was there water, bottomlessly deep?

2. There was neither death nor immortality then. There was no distinguishing sign of night nor of day. That one breathed, windless, by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing beyond.

3. Darkness was hidden by darkness in the beginning; with no distinguishing sign, all this was water. The life force that was covered with emptiness, that one arose through the power of heat.

4. Desire came upon that one in the beginning; that was the first seed of mind. Poets seeking in their heart with wisdom found the bond of existence in non-existence.

5. Their cord was extended across. Was there below? Was there above? There were seed-placers; there were powers. There was impulse beneath; there was giving-forth above.

6. Who really knows? Who will here proclaim it? Whence was it produced? Whence is this creation? The gods came afterwards, with the creation of this universe. Who then knows whence it has arisen?

7. Whence this creation has arisen – perhaps it formed itself, or perhaps it did not – the one who looks down on it, in the highest heaven, only he knows – or perhaps he does not know.

10.121 The Unknown God, the Golden Embryo

1. In the beginning the Golden Embryo arose. Once he was born, he was the one lord of creation. He held in place the earth and this

sky. Who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

2. He who gives life, who gives strength, whose command all the gods, his own, obey; his shadow is immortality – and death. Who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

3. He who by his greatness became the one king of the world that breathes and blinks, who rules over his two-footed and four-footed creatures – who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

4. He who through his power owns these snowy mountains, and the ocean together with the river Rasā, they say; who has the quarters of the sky as his two arms – who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

5. He by whom the awesome sky and the earth were made firm, by whom the dome of the sky was propped up, and the sun, who measured out the middle realm of space – who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

6. He to whom the two opposed masses looked with trembling in their hearts, supported by his help, on whom the rising sun shines down – who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

7. When the high waters came, pregnant with the embryo that is everything, bringing forth fire, he arose from that as the one life's breath of the gods. Who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

8. He who in his greatness looked over the waters, which were pregnant with Dakṣa, bringing forth the sacrifice, he who was the one god among all the gods – who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

9. Let him not harm us, he who fathered the earth and created the sky, whose laws are true, who created the high, shining waters. Who is the god whom we should worship with the oblation?

10. O Prajāpati, lord of progeny, no one but you embraces all these creatures. Grant us the desires for which we offer you oblation. Let us be lords of riches.

10.90 Puruṣa-Sūkta, or The Hymn of Man

1. The Man has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. He pervaded the earth on all sides and extended beyond it as far as ten fingers.

2. It is the Man who is all this, whatever has been and whatever is to be. He is the ruler of immortality, when he grows beyond everything through food.

3. Such is his greatness, and the Man is yet more than this. All creatures are a quarter of him; three quarters are what is immortal in heaven.

4. With three quarters the Man rose upwards, and one quarter of him still remains here. From this he spread out in all directions, into that which eats and that which does not eat.

5. From him Virāj was born, and from Virāj came the Man. When he was born, he ranged beyond the earth behind and before.

6. When the gods spread the sacrifice with the Man as the offering, spring was the clarified butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation.

7. They anointed the Man, the sacrifice born at the beginning, upon the sacred grass. With him the gods, Sādhyas, and sages sacrificed.

8. From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the melted fat was collected, and he made it into those beasts who live in the air, in the forest, and in villages.

9. From that sacrifice in which everything was offered, the verses and chants were born, the metres were born from it, and from it the formulas were born.

10. Horses were born from it, and those other animals that have two rows of teeth; cows were born from it, and from it goats and sheep were born.

11. When they divided the Man, into how many parts did they apportion him? What do

they call his mouth, his two arms and thighs and feet?

12. His mouth became the Brahmin; his arms were made into the Warrior, his thighs the People, and from his feet the Servants were born.

13. The moon was born from his mind; from his eye the sun was born. Indra and Agni came from his mouth, and from his vital breath the Wind was born.

14. From his navel the middle realm of space arose; from his head the sky evolved. From his two feet came the earth, and the quarters of the sky from his ear. Thus they set the worlds in order.

15. There were seven enclosing-sticks for him, and thrice seven fuel-sticks, when the gods, spreading the sacrifice, bound the Man as the sacrificial beast.

16. With the sacrifice the gods sacrificed to the sacrifice. These were the first ritual laws. These very powers reached the dome of the sky where dwell the Sādhyas, the ancient gods.

10.130 The Creation of the Sacrifice

1. The sacrifice that is spread out with threads on all sides, drawn tight with a hundred and one divine acts, is woven by these fathers as they come near: 'Weave forward, weave backward,' they say as they sit by the loom that is stretched tight.

2. The Man stretches the warp and draws the weft; the Man has spread it out upon this dome of the sky. These are the pegs, that are fastened in place; they made the melodies into the shuttles for weaving.

3. What was the original model, and what was the copy, and what was the connection between them? What was the butter, and what the enclosing wood? What was the metre, what was the invocation, and the chant, when all the gods sacrificed the god?

4. The Gāyatrī metre was the yoke-mate of Agni; Savitr joined with the Uṣṇi metre, and with the Anuṣṭubh metre was Soma that

reverberates with the chants. The *Br̥hātī* metre resonated in the voice of *Br̥haspati*.

5. The *Virāj* metre was the privilege of *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*; the *Triṣṭubh* metre was part of the day of *Indra*. The *Jagatī* entered into all the gods. That was the model for the human sages.

6. That was the model for the human sages, our fathers, when the primeval sacrifice was born. With the eye that is mind, in thought I see those who were the first to offer this sacrifice.

7. The ritual repetitions harmonized with the chants and with the metres; the seven divine sages harmonized with the original models. When the wise men looked back along the path of those who went before, they took up the reins like charioteers.

10.190 Cosmic Heat

1. Order and truth were born from heat as it blazed up. From that was born night; from that heat was born the billowy ocean.

2. From the billowy ocean was born the year, that arranges days and nights, ruling over all that blinks its eyes.

3. The Arranger has set in their proper place the sun and moon, the sky and the earth, the middle realm of space, and finally the sunlight.

10.71 The Origins of Sacred Speech

1. *Br̥haspati*! When they set in motion the first beginning of speech, giving names, their most pure and perfectly guarded secret was revealed through love.

2. When the wise ones fashioned speech with their thought, sifting it as grain is sifted through a sieve, then friends recognized their friendships. A good sign was placed on their speech.

3. Through the sacrifice they traced the path of speech and found it inside the sages. They held it and portioned it out to many; together the seven singers praised it.

4. One who looked did not see speech, and another who listens does not hear it.

It reveals itself to someone as a loving wife, beautifully dressed, reveals her body to her husband.

5. One person, they said, has grown awkward and heavy in this friendship; they no longer urge him forward in the contests. He lives with falsehood like a milkless cow, for the speech that he has heard has no fruit no flower.

6. A man that abandons a friend who has learned with him no longer has a share in speech. What he does hear he hears in vain, for he does not know the path of good action.

7. Friends have eyes and ears, but their flashes of insight are not equal. Some are like ponds that reach only to the mouth or shoulder; others are like ponds that one could bathe in.

8. When the intuitions of the mind are shaped in the heart, when Brahmins perform sacrifices together as friends, some are left behind for lack of knowledge, while others surpass them with the power to praise.

9. Those who move neither near nor far, who are not real Brahmins nor pressers of the Soma; using speech in a bad way, they weave on a web of rags, without understanding.

10. All his friends rejoice in the friend who emerges with fame and victory in the contest. He saves them from error and gives them food. He is worthy to be pushed forward to win the prize.

11. One sits bringing to blossom the flower of the verses. Another sings a song in the *Śakvarī* metre. One, the Brahmin, proclaims the knowledge of the ancient ways. Another lays out the measure of the sacrifice.

10.125 Speech

1. I move with the Rudras, with the Vasus, with the *Ādityas* and all the gods. I carry both *Mitra* and *Varuṇa*, both *Indra* and *Agni*, and both of the *Aśvins*.

2. I carry the swelling Soma, and *Tvaṣṭr*, and *Pūṣan* and *Bhaga*. I bestow wealth on the pious sacrificer who presses the Soma and offers the oblation.

3. I am the queen, the confluence of riches, the skilful one who is first among

those worthy of sacrifice. The gods divided me up into various parts, for I dwell in many places and enter into many forms.

4. The one who eats food, who truly sees, who breathes, who hears what is said, does so through me. Though they do not realize it, they dwell in me. Listen, you whom they have heard: what I tell you should be heeded.

5. I am the one who says, by myself, what gives joy to gods and men. Whom I love I make awesome; I make him a sage, a wise man, a Brahmin.

6. I stretch the bow for Rudra so that his arrow will strike down the hater of prayer. I incite the contest among the people. I have pervaded sky and earth.

7. I gave birth to the father on the head of this world. My womb is in the waters, within the ocean. From there I spread out over all creatures and touch the very sky with the crown of my head.

8. I am the one who blows like the wind, embracing all creatures. Beyond the sky, beyond this earth, so much have I become in my greatness.

10.173 Royal Consecration

1. I have brought you here; remain among us. Stay steadfast and unwavering. Let all the people want you, and let the kingship never fall away from you.

2. Stay right here – do not slip away, but stay unwavering, like a mountain. Stand steadfast here, like Indra, and here uphold the kingdom.

3. Indra has supported him firmly with a firm oblation. Let Soma – and Brahmanaspati also – speak up for him.

4. Firm is the sky and firm the earth, and firm are these mountains. Firm is all this world, and firm is this king of all the people.

5. Steadfast let King Varuṇa, steadfast the god Bṛhaspati, steadfast let Indra and Agni maintain your steadfast kingship.

6. With a firm oblation we touch the firm Soma. Thus let Indra make all the people who bring tribute yours alone.

1.163 Hymn to the Horse

1. When you whinnied for the first time, as you were born coming forth from the ocean or from the celestial source, with the wings of an eagle and the forelegs of an antelope – that, Swift Runner, was your great and awesome birth.

2. Yama gave him and Trita harnessed him; Indra was the first to mount him, and the Gandharva grasped his reins. You gods fashioned the horse out of the sun.

3. Swift Runner, you are Yama; you are Āditya; you are Trita, through the hidden design. You are like and not like Soma. They say you have three bonds in the sky.

4. They say you have three bonds in the sky, three in the waters, and three within the ocean. And to me you appear, Swift Runner, like Varuṇa, that is said to be your highest birth.

5. These are the places where they rubbed you down when you were victorious; here are the marks where you put down your hooves. Here I saw your lucky reins, which the Guardians of the Order keep safely.

6. From afar, in my heart I recognized your soul, the bird flying below the sky. I saw your winged head snorting on the dustless paths easy to travel.

7. Here I saw your highest form eager for nourishment in the place of the cow. As soon as a mortal gets the food that you enjoy, the great devourer of plants awakens him.

8. The chariot follows you, Swift Runner; the young man follows, the cow follows, the love of young girls follows. The troops follow your friendship. The gods entrusted virile power to you.

9. His mane is golden; his feet are bronze. He is swift as thought, faster than Indra. The gods have come to eat the oblation of the one who was the first to mount the swift runner.

10. The celestial coursers, revelling in their strength, fly in a line like wild geese, the ends held back while the middle surges forward, when the horses reach the racecourse of the sky.

11. Your body flies, Swift Runner; your spirit rushes like wind. Your mane, spread in many directions, flickers and jumps about in the forests.

12. The racehorse has come to the slaughter, pondering with his heart turned to the gods. The goat, his kin, is led in front; behind come the poets, the singers.

13. The swift runner has come to the highest dwelling-place, to his father and mother. May he go to the gods today and be most welcome, and then ask for the things that the worshipper wishes for.

1.162 The Sacrifice of the Horse

1. Mitra, Varuṇa, Aryaman the Active, Indra the ruler of the Ṛbhus, and the Maruts – let them not fail to heed us when we proclaim in the assembly the heroic deeds of the racehorse who was born of the gods.

2. When they lead the firmly grasped offering in front of the horse that is covered with cloths and heirlooms, the dappled goat goes bleating straight to the dear dwelling of Indra and Pūṣan.

3. This goat for all the gods is led forward with the racehorse as the share for Pūṣan. When they lead forth the welcome offering with the charger, Tvaṣṭṛ urges him on to great fame.

4. 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 Pūṣan goes first, announcing the sacrifice to the gods.

5. The Invoker, the officiating priest, the atoner, the fire-kindler, the holder of the pressing-stones, the reciter, the priest who prays – fill your bellies with this well-prepared, well-sacrificed sacrifice.

6. The hewers of the sacrificial stake and those who carry it, and those who carve the knob for the horse's sacrificial stake, and those who gather together the things to cook the charger – let their approval encourage us.

7. The horse with his smooth back went forth into the fields of the gods, just when I made my

prayer. The inspired sages exult in him. We have made him a welcome companion at the banquet of the gods.

8. The charger's rope and halter, the reins and bridle on his head, and even the grass that has been brought up to his mouth – let all of that stay with you even among the gods.

9. Whatever of the horse's flesh the fly has eaten, or whatever stays stuck to the stake or the axe, or to the hands or nails of the slaughterer – let all of that stay with you even among the gods.

10. Whatever food remains in his stomach, sending forth gas, or whatever smell there is from his raw flesh – let the slaughterers make that well done; let them cook the sacrificial animal until he is perfectly cooked.

11. Whatever runs off your body when it has been placed on the spit and roasted by the fire, let it not lie there in the earth or on the grass, but let it be given to the gods who long for it.

12. Those who see that the racehorse is cooked, who say, 'It smells good! Take it away!', and who wait for the doling out of the flesh of the charger – let their approval encourage us.

13. The testing fork for the cauldron that cooks the flesh, the pots for pouring the broth, the cover of the bowls to keep it warm, the hooks, the dishes – all these attend the horse.

14. The place where he walks, where he rests, where he rolls, and the fetters on the horse's feet, and what he has drunk and the fodder he has eaten – let all of that stay with you even among the gods.

15. 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, worshipped, consecrated, and sanctified with the cry of 'Vaṣat!'

16. The cloth that they spread beneath the horse, the upper covering, the golden trappings on him, the halter and the fetters on his feet – let these things that are his own bind the horse among the gods.

17. If someone riding you has struck you too hard with heel or whip when you

shied, I make all these things well again for you with prayer, as they do with the oblation's ladle in sacrifices.

18. The axe cuts through the thirty-four ribs of the racehorse who is the companion of the gods. Keep the limbs undamaged and place them in the proper pattern. Cut them apart, calling out piece by piece.

19. One is the slaughterer of the horse of Tvastṛ; two restrain him. This is the rule. As many of your limbs as I set out, according to the rules, so many balls I offer into the fire.

20. Let not your dear soul burn you as you go away. Let not the axe do lasting harm to your body. Let no greedy, clumsy slaughterer hack in the wrong place and damage your limbs with his knife.

21. You do not really die through this, nor are you harmed. You go to the gods on paths pleasant to go on. The two bay stallions, the two roan mares are now your chariot mates. The racehorse has been set in the donkey's yoke.

22. Let this racehorse bring us good cattle and good horses, male children and all-nourishing wealth. Let Aditi make us free from sin. Let the horse with our offerings achieve sovereign power for us.

1.1 I Pray to Agni

1. I pray to Agni, the household priest who is the god of the sacrifice, the one who chants and invokes and brings most treasure.

2. Agni earned the prayers of the ancient sages, and of those of the present, too; he will bring the gods here.

3. Through Agni one may win wealth, and growth from day to day, glorious and most abounding in heroic sons.

4. Agni, the sacrificial ritual that you encompass on all sides – only that one goes to the gods.

5. Agni, the priest with the sharp sight of a poet, the true and most brilliant, the god will come with the gods.

6. Whatever good you wish to do for the one who worships you, Agni, through you, O Angiras, that comes true.

7. To you, Agni, who shine upon darkness, we come day after day, bringing our thoughts and homage

8. to you, the king over sacrifices, the shining guardian of the Order, growing in your own house.

9. Be easy for us to reach, like a father to his son. Abide with us, Agni, for our happiness.

1.26 Agni and the Gods

1. Now get dressed in your robes, lord of powers and master of the sacrificial food, and offer this sacrifice for us.

2. Young Agni, take your place as our favourite priest with inspirations and shining speech.

3. The father sacrifices for his son, the comrade for his comrade, the favourite friend for his friend.

4. May Varuṇa, Mitra and Aryaman, proud of their powers, sit upon our sacred grass, as upon Manu's.

5. You who were the first to invoke, rejoice in our friendship and hear only these songs.

6. When we offer sacrifice to this god or that god, in the full line of order, it is to you alone that the oblation is offered.

7. Let him be a beloved lord of tribes for us, a favourite, kindly invoker; let us have a good fire and be beloved.

8. For when the gods have a good fire, they bring us what we wish for. Let us pray with a good fire.

9. So let praises flow back and forth between the two, between us who are mortals and you, the immortal.

10. Agni, young spawn of strength, with all the fires take pleasure in this sacrifice and in this speech.

8.79 This Restless Soma

1. This restless Soma – you try to grab him but he breaks away and overpowers everything. He is a sage and a seer inspired by poetry.

2. He covers the naked and heals all who are sick. The blind man sees; the lame man steps forth.

3. Soma, you are a broad defence against those who hate us, both enemies we have made ourselves and those made by others.

4. Through your knowledge and skills, rushing forward you drive out of the sky and the earth the evil deed of the enemy.

5. Let those who seek find what they seek: let them receive the treasure given by the generous and stop the greedy from getting what they want.

6. Let him find what was lost before; let him push forward the man of truth. Let him stretch out the life-span that has not yet crossed its span.

7. Be kind and merciful to us, Soma; be good to our heart, without confusing our powers in your whirlwind.

8. King Soma, do not enrage us; do not terrify us; do not wound our heart with dazzling light.

9. Give help, when you see the evil plans of the gods in your own house. Generous king, keep away hatreds, keep away failures.

9.74 Soma Pressed in the Bowls

1. Like a new-born child he bellows in the wood, the tawny racehorse straining to win the sun. He unites with the sky's seed that grows great with milk. With kind thoughts we pray to him for far-reaching shelter.

2. He who is the pillar of the sky, the well-adorned support, the full stalk that encircles all around, he is the one who by tradition sacrifices to these two great world-halves. The poet holds together the conjoined pair, and the refreshing foods.

3. The honey of Soma is a great feast; the wide pasture of Aditi is for the man who follows the right way. Child of dawn, the bull who rules over the rain here, leader of the waters, worthy of hymns, he is the one who brings help here.

4. Butter and milk are milked from the living cloud; the navel of Order, the ambrosia is born. Together those who bring fine gifts satisfy him; the swollen men piss down the fluid set in motion.

5. The stalk roared as it united with the wave; for man he swells the skin that attracts the gods. He places in the lap of Aditi the seed by which we win sons and grandsons.

6. Relentlessly they flow down into the filter of a thousand streams; let them have offspring in the third realm of the world. Four hidden springs pouring forth butter carry down from the sky the ambrosia that is the oblation.

7. He takes on a white colour when he strains to win; Soma, the generous Asura, knows the whole world. He clings to inspired thought and ritual action as he goes forth; let him hurl down from the sky the cask full of water.

8. Now he has gone to the white pot coated by cows; the racehorse has reached the winning line and has won a hundred cows for Kakṣīvat, the man of a hundred winters. Longing for the gods in their heart, they hasten forth.

9. Clarifying Soma, when you are sated with waters your juice runs through the sieve made of wool. Polished by the poets, Soma who brings supreme ecstasy, be sweet for Indra to drink.

4.26-7 Soma and Indra and the Eagle

4.26

1. [*Indra:*] 'I was Manu and I was the Sun; I am Kakṣīvat, the wise sage. I surpassed Kutsa the son of Arjuna; I am the inspired Uśanas – look at me!

2. 'I gave the earth to the Āryan; I gave rain to the mortal who made an offering. I led forth the roaring water; the gods followed after my wish.

3. 'Ecstatic with Soma I shattered the nine and ninety fortresses of Śambara all at once, finishing off the inhabitant as the hundredth, as I gave aid to Divodāsa Atithigva.

4. 'O Maruts, the bird shall be supreme above all birds, the swift-flying eagle above all eagles, since by his own driving power that needs no chariot wheels, with his powerful wings he brought to man the oblation loved by the gods.'

5. Fluttering as he brought it down, the bird swift as thought shot forth on the wide path; swiftly the eagle came with the honey of Soma and won fame for that.

6. Stretching out in flight, holding the stem, the eagle brought the exhilarating and intoxicating drink from the distance. Accompanied by the gods, the bird clutched the Soma tightly after he took it from that highest heaven.

7. When the eagle had taken the Soma, he brought it for a thousand and ten thousand pressings at once. The bringer of abundance left his enemies behind there; ecstatic with Soma, the wise one left the fools.

4.27

1. [*The eagle:*] 'While still in the womb, I knew all the generations of these gods. A hundred iron fortresses guarded me, but I, the eagle, swiftly flew away.'

2. [*Soma:*] 'He did not drag me out against my will, for I surpassed him in energy and manly strength. In a flash, the bringer of abundance left his enemies behind as he outran the winds, swelling with power.'

3. As the eagle came shrieking down from heaven, and as they led the bringer of abundance down from there like the wind, as the archer Kṛśānu, reacting quickly, aimed down at him and let loose his bowstring,

4. the eagle bearing Indra brought him down like Bhujyu from the summits of heaven, stretching out in swift flight. Then a wing feather fell in mid-air from the bird as he swooped on the path of flight.

5. The white goblet overflowing with cows' milk, the finest honey, the clear juice offered by the priests – now let the generous Indra raise it to drink until ecstatic with Soma; let the hero raise it to drink until ecstatic with Soma.

1.32 The Killing of Vṛtra

1. Let me now sing the heroic deeds of Indra, the first that the thunderbolt-wielder

performed. He killed the dragon and pierced an opening for the waters; he split open the bellies of mountains.

2. He killed the dragon who lay upon the mountain; Tvaṣṭṛ fashioned the roaring thunderbolt for him. Like lowing cows, the flowing waters rushed straight down to the sea.

3. Wildly excited like a bull, he took the Soma for himself and drank the extract from the three bowls in the three-day Soma ceremony. Indra the Generous seized his thunderbolt to hurl it as a weapon; he killed the first-born of dragons.

4. Indra, when you killed the first-born of dragons and overcame by your own magic the magic of the magicians, at that very moment you brought forth the sun, the sky, and dawn. Since then you have found no enemy to conquer you.

5. With his great weapon, the thunderbolt, Indra killed the shoulderless Vṛtra, his greatest enemy. Like the trunk of a tree whose branches have been lopped off by an axe, the dragon lies flat upon the ground.

6. For, muddled by drunkenness like one who is no soldier, Vṛtra challenged the great hero who had overcome the mighty and who drank Soma to the dregs. Unable to withstand the onslaught of his weapons, he found Indra an enemy to conquer him and was shattered, his nose crushed.

7. Without feet or hands he fought against Indra, who struck him on the nape of the neck with his thunderbolt. The steer who wished to become the equal of the bull bursting with seed, Vṛtra lay broken in many places.

8. Over him as he lay there like a broken reed the swelling waters flowed for man. Those waters that Vṛtra had enclosed with his power – the dragon now lay at their feet.

9. The vital energy of Vṛtra's mother ebbed away, for Indra had hurled his deadly weapon at her. Above was the mother, below was the son; Dānu lay down like a cow with her calf.

10. In the midst of the channels of the waters which never stood still or rested, the body was hidden. The waters flow over Vṛtra's

secret place; he who found Indra an enemy to conquer him sank into long darkness.

11. The waters who had the Dāsa for their husband, the dragon for their protector, were imprisoned like the cows imprisoned by the Paṇis. When he killed Vṛtra he split open the outlet of the waters that had been closed.

12. Indra, you became a hair of a horse's tail when Vṛtra struck you on the corner of the mouth. You, the one god, the brave one, you won the cows; you won the Soma; you released the seven streams so that they could flow.

13. No use was the lightning and thunder, fog and hail that he had scattered about, when the dragon and Indra fought. Indra the Generous remained victorious for all time to come.

14. What avenger of the dragon did you see, Indra, that fear entered your heart when you had killed him? Then you crossed the ninety-nine streams like the frightened eagle crossing the realms of earth and air.

15. Indra, who wields the thunderbolt in his hand, is the king of that which moves and that which rests, of the tame and of the horned. He rules the people as their king, encircling all this as a rim encircles spokes.

2.12 'Who is Indra?'

1. The god who had insight the moment he was born, the first who protected the gods with his power of thought, before whose hot breath the two world-halves tremble at the greatness of his manly powers – he, my people, is Indra.

2. He who made fast the tottering earth, who made still the quaking mountains, who measured out and extended the expanse of the air, who propped up the sky – he, my people, is Indra.

3. He who killed the serpent and loosed the seven rivers, who drove out the cows that had been pent up by Vala, who gave birth to fire between two stones, the winner of booty in combats – he, my people, is Indra.

4. He by whom all these changes were rung, who drove the race of Dāsas down into obscurity, who took away the flourishing

wealth of the enemy as a winning gambler takes the stake – he, my people, is Indra.

5. He about whom they ask, 'Where is he?', or they say of him, the terrible one, 'He does not exist', he who diminishes the flourishing wealth of the enemy as gambling does – believe in him! He, my people, is Indra.

6. He who encourages the weary and the sick, and the poor priest who is in need, who helps the man who harnesses the stones to press Soma, he who has lips fine for drinking – he, my people, is Indra.

7. He under whose command are horses and cows and villages and all chariots, who gave birth to the sun and the dawn and led out the waters, he, my people, is Indra.

8. He who is invoked by both of two armies, enemies locked in combat, on this side and that side, he who is even invoked separately by each of two men standing on the very same chariot, he, my people, is Indra.

9. He without whom people do not conquer, he whom they call on for help when they are fighting, who became the image of everything, who shakes the unshakeable – he, my people, is Indra.

10. He who killed with his weapon all those who had committed a great sin, even when they did not know it, he who does not pardon the arrogant man for his arrogance, who is the slayer of the Dasyus, he, my people, is Indra.

11. He who in the fortieth autumn discovered Śambara living in the mountains, who killed the violent serpent, the Dānu, as he lay there, he, my people, is Indra.

12. He, the mighty bull who with his seven reins let loose the seven rivers to flow, who with his thunderbolt in his hand hurled down Rauhiṇa as he was climbing up to the sky, he, my people, is Indra.

13. Even the sky and the earth bow low before him, and the mountains are terrified of his hot breath; he who is known as the Soma-drinker, with the thunderbolt in his hand, with the thunderbolt in his palm, he, my people, is Indra.

14. He who helps with his favour the one who presses and the one who cooks, the

praiser and the preparer, he for whom prayer is nourishment, for whom Soma is the special gift, he, my people, is Indra.

15. You who furiously grasp the prize for the one who presses and the one who cooks, you are truly real. Let us be dear to you, Indra, all our days, and let us speak as men of power in the sacrificial gathering.

1.114 Have Mercy on Us, Rudra

1. We bring these thoughts to the mighty Rudra, the god with braided hair, who rules over heroes, so that it will be well with our two-footed and four-footed creatures, and in this village all will flourish unharmed.

2. Have mercy on us, Rudra, and give us life-force. We wish to bow low in service to you who rule over heroes. Whatever happiness and health Manu the father won by sacrifice, we wish to gain that with you to lead us forth.

3. We wish to gain your kindness, Rudra, through sacrifice to the gods, for you are generous. O ruler over heroes, come to our families with kindness. Let us offer the oblation to you with our heroes free from injury.

4. We call down for help the dreaded Rudra who completes the sacrifice, the sage who flies. Let him repel far from us the anger of the gods; it is his kindness that we choose to have.

5. Tawny boar of the sky, dreaded form with braided hair, we call you down and we bow low. Holding in his hand the healing medicines that we long for, let him grant us protection, shelter, refuge.

6. These words are spoken for Rudra, the father of the Maruts, words sweeter than sweet, to strengthen him. And grant us, O immortal, the food for mortals. Have mercy on us, and on our children and grandchildren.

7. Do not slaughter the great one among us or the small one among us, nor the growing or the grown. Rudra, do not kill our father or our mother, nor harm the bodies dear to us.

8. Do not harm us in our children or grandchildren, nor in our life-span, nor in our cows or in our horses. Rudra, do not in fury

slaughter our heroes. With oblations we call you here for ever.

9. I have driven these praises to you as the herdsman drives his cattle. Grant us kindness, father of the Maruts, for your kindness brings blessings most merciful, and so it is your help that we choose to have.

10. Keep far away from us your cow-killing and man-killing power, O ruler of heroes. Have mercy on us and speak for us, O god, and grant us double protection.

11. Seeking help, we have spoken in homage to him. Let Rudra with the Maruts hear our call. Let Mitra, Varuṇa, Aditi, Sindhu, Earth and Sky grant this to us.

10.10 Yama and Yamī

1. [*Yamī*.:] 'Would that I might draw my friend into intimate friendship, now that he has gone far across the ocean. A man of foresight should receive a grandson from the father, thinking of what lies ahead on earth.'

2. [*Yama*.:] 'Your friend does not desire this friendship, in which a woman of his kind would behave like a stranger. The heroes, the sons of the great spirit, supporters of the sky, see far and wide.'

3. [*Yamī*.:] 'The immortals desire this, that offspring should be left by the one mortal. Let your mind unite with my mind; as a husband, enter the body of your wife.'

4. [*Yama*.:] 'Shall we do now what we have not done before? Shall we who spoke truth out loud now whisper falsehood? The divine youth in the waters and the woman of the waters – such is our source, our highest birth.'

5. [*Yamī*.:] 'The god Tvaṣṭr, the creator and impeller, shaper of all forms, made us man and wife even when we were still in the womb. No one disobeys his commands; earth and sky are our witnesses for this.'

6. [*Yamā*.:] 'Who was witness of that first day? Who has seen it? Who can proclaim it here? The law of Mitra and Varuṇa is high. Yet what will you say to men, wanton woman, to seduce them?'

7. [*Yamī:*] ‘Desire for Yama has come upon me, Yamī, the desire to lie with him upon the same bed. Let me open my body to him as a wife to her husband. Let us roll about together like the two wheels of a chariot.’

8. [*Yama:*] ‘These spies of the gods, who wander about here below, do not stand still, nor do they blink their eyes. Wanton woman, go away fast with another man, not with me. Roll about with him like the two wheels of a chariot.’

9. [*Yamī:*] ‘She would do what he wished in the nights and in the days; she would deceive the eye of the sun for the instant of the blink of an eye. We twins are related in the same way as sky and earth. Let Yamī behave toward Yama as if she were not his sister.’

10. [*Yama:*] ‘Later ages will come, indeed, when blood relatives will act as if they were not related. Make a pillow of your arm for some bull of a man. Seek another husband, lovely lady, not me.’

11. [*Yamī:*] ‘What good is a brother, when there is no protector? What good is a sister, when destruction breaks out? Overcome with desire, I whisper this again and again: mingle your body with my body.’

12. [*Yama:*] ‘Never will I mingle my body with your body. They call a man who unites with his sister a sinner. Arrange your lustful pleasures with some other man, not with me, lovely lady. Your brother does not want this.’

13. [*Yamī:*] ‘Dammit, Yama, how feeble you are. I have not been able to find any mind or heart in you. Some other woman will surely embrace you like a girth embracing a harnessed stallion or a creeper embracing a tree.’

14. [*Yama:*] ‘You too, Yamī, will surely embrace another man, and he will embrace you, as a creeper embraces a tree. Seek *his* mind, and let him seek yours. Join with him in proper harmony.’

10.95 Purūravas and Urvaśī

1. [*Purūravas:*] ‘My wife, turn your heart and mind to me. Stay here, dangerous woman, and

let us exchange words. If we do not speak out these thoughts of ours they will bring us no joy, even on the most distant day.’

2. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘What use to me are these words of yours? I have left you, like the first of the dawns. Go home again, Purūravas. I am hard to catch and hold, like the wind . . .’

3. [*Purūravas:*] ‘. . . or like an arrow shot from the quiver for a prize, or like a racehorse that wins cattle, that wins hundreds. As if there was no man with power there, they made the lightning flash and in their frenzy thought to bleat like sheep.’

4. ‘She brought to her husband’s father nourishing riches, and whenever her lover desired her she came to his home across from her dwelling-place and took her pleasure in him, pierced by his rod day and night.’

5. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘Indeed, you pierced me with your rod three times a day, and filled me even when I had no desire. I followed your will, Purūravas; you were my man, king of my body.’

6. [*Purūravas:*] ‘Sujūrṇi, Śreṇi, Sumnaāpi, and Hradecakṣus, Granthinī, Caranyu – they have all slipped away like the red colours of dawn, lowing one louder than the other, like milk cows.’

7. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘When he was born, the goddesses encircled him and the rivers that sing their own praises raised him, since the gods raised you, Purūravas, for the great battle, for the killing of enemies.’

8. [*Purūravas:*] ‘When I, a mortal man, courted these immortal women who had laid aside their veils, they shied away from me like excited gazelles, like horses grazed by the chariot.’

9. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘When a mortal man, wooing these immortal women, unites with their group as they wish, make your bodies beautiful, like water birds, like horses biting in their love-play.’

10. [*Purūravas:*] ‘She of the waters flashed lightning like a falling lightning-bolt and brought me the pleasures of love. From the water was born a noble, manly son. Let Urvaśī lengthen the span of his life.’

11. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘You who were born to protect, Purūravas, have turned that force against me. I warned you on that very day, for I knew, but you did not listen to me. Why do you talk in vain?’

12. [*Purūravas:*] ‘When will the son born of me seek his father? He will shed tears, sobbing, when he learns. Who would separate a man and wife who are of one heart, when the fire still blazes in the house of the husband’s parents?’

13. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘I will answer: he will shed tears, crying, sobbing, longing for tender care. I will send you what I have of yours. Go home; you will never have me, you fool.’

14. [*Purūravas:*] ‘What if your lover should vanish today, never to return, going to the farthest distance? Or if he should lie in the lap of Destruction, or if the ferocious wolves should eat him?’

15. [*Urvaśī:*] ‘Purūravas, do not die; do not vanish; do not let the vicious wolves eat you. There are no friendships with women; they have the hearts of jackals.’

16. ‘When I wandered among mortals in another form, and spent the nights with you for four years, once each day I swallowed a drop of butter, and even now I am sated with that.’

17. [*Purūravas:*] ‘I, the lover of Urvaśī, long to draw her to me, though she fills the air and measures the middle realm of space. Return and reap the reward for a good deed. Fire consumes my heart.’

18. [*The poet:*] This is what these gods say to you, son of Ilā: ‘Since you are a kinsman of death, your descendants will sacrifice to the gods with the oblation, but you shall taste joy in heaven.’

10.85 The Marriage of Sūryā

1. The earth is propped up by truth; the sky is propped up by the sun. Through the Law the Ādityas stand firm and Soma is placed in the sky.

2. Through Soma the Ādityas are mighty; through Soma the earth is great. And in the lap of these constellations Soma has been set.

3. One thinks he has drunk Soma when they press the plant. But the Soma that the Brahmins know – no one ever eats that.

4. Hidden by those charged with veiling you, protected by those who live on high, O Soma, you stand listening to the pressing-stones. No earthling eats you.

5. When they drink you who are a god, then you are filled up again. Vāyu is the guardian of Soma; the moon is the one that shapes the years.

6. The Raibhī metre was the woman who gave her away; the Nārāśāṃśī metre was the girl who accompanied her. The fine dress of Sūryā was adorned by the songs.

7. Intelligence was the pillow; sight was the balm. Heaven and Earth were the hope-chest when Sūryā went to her husband.

8. The hymns of praise were the shafts and metre was the diadem and coiffure. The Āśvins were the suitors of Sūryā, and Agni was the one who went in front.

9. Soma became the bridegroom and the two Āśvins were the suitors, as Savitṛ gave Sūryā to her husband and she said ‘Yes’ in her heart.

10. Thought was her chariot and the sky was its canopy. The two luminaries were the two carriage animals when Sūryā went to the house.

11. Your two cattle, yoked with the verse and the chant, went with the same accord. You had hearing for your two wheels. In the sky the path stretched on and on.

12. The two luminaries were your wheels as you journeyed; the outward breath was made into the axle. Sūryā mounted a chariot made of thought as she went to her husband.

13. The wedding procession of Sūryā went forward as Savitṛ sent it off. When the sun is in Aghā they kill the cattle, and when it is in Arjunī she is brought home.

14. When you Āśvins came to the wedding in your three-wheeled chariot, asking for Sūryā for yourselves, all the gods gave you their consent, and Pūṣan, the son, chose you as his two fathers.

15. When you two husbands of beauty came as suitors for Sūryā, where was your single wheel? Where did you two stand to point the way?

16. Your two wheels, Sūryā, the Brahmins know in their measured rounds. But the one wheel that is hidden, only the inspired know that.

17. To Sūryā, to the gods, to Mitra and Varuṇa, who are provident for all creation, to them I have bowed down.

18. These two change places through their power of illusion, now forward, now backward. Like two children at play they circle the sacrificial ground. The one gazes upon all creatures, and the other is born again and again marking the order of the seasons.

19. He becomes new and again new as he is born, going in front of the dawns as the banner of the days. As he arrives he apportions to the gods their share. The moon stretches out the long span of life.

20. Mount the world of immortality, O Sūryā, that is adorned with red flowers and made of fragrant wood, carved with many forms and painted with gold, rolling smoothly on its fine wheels. Prepare an exquisite wedding voyage for your husband.

21. 'Go away from here! For this woman has a husband.' Thus I implore Viśvāvasu with words of praise as I bow to him. 'Look for another girl who is ripe and still lives in her father's house. That is your birthright; find it.

22. 'Go away from here, Viśvāvasu, we implore you as we bow. Look for another girl, willing and ready. Leave the wife to unite with her husband.'

23. May the roads be straight and thornless on which our friends go courting. May Aryaman and Bhaga united lead us together. O Gods, may the united household be easy to manage.

24. I free you from Varuṇa's snare, with which the gentle Savitṛ bound you. In the seat of the Law, in the world of good action, I place you unharmed with your husband.

25. I free her from here, but not from there. I have bound her firmly there, so that through

the grace of Indra she will have fine sons and be fortunate in her husband's love.

26. Let Pūṣan lead you from here, taking you by the hand; let the Aśvins carry you in their chariot. Go home to be mistress of the house with the right to speak commands to the gathered people.

27. May happiness be fated for you here through your progeny. Watch over this house as mistress of the house. Mingle your body with that of your husband, and even when you are grey with age you will have the right to speak to the gathered people.

28. The purple and red appears, a magic spirit; the stain is imprinted. Her family prospers, and her husband is bound in the bonds.

29. Throw away the gown, and distribute wealth to the priests. It becomes a magic spirit walking on feet, and like the wife it draws near the husband.

30. The body becomes ugly and sinisterly pale, if the husband with evil desire covers his sexual limb with his wife's robe.

31. The diseases that come from her own people and follow after the glorious bridal procession, may the gods who receive sacrifices lead them back whence they have come.

32. Let no highwaymen, lying in ambush, fall upon the wedding couple. Let the two of them on good paths avoid the dangerous path. Let all demonic powers run away.

33. This bride has auspicious signs; come and look at her. Wish her the good fortune of her husband's love, and depart, each to your own house.

34. It burns, it bites, and it has claws, as dangerous as poison is to eat. Only the priest who knows the Sūryā hymn is able to receive the bridal gown.

35. Cutting, carving, and chopping into pieces – see the colours of Sūryā, which the priest alone purifies.

36. I take your hand for good fortune, so that with me as your husband you will attain a ripe old age. Bhaga, Aryaman, Savitṛ, Purandhi – the gods have given you to me to be mistress of the house.

37. Pūṣan, rouse her to be most eager to please, the woman in whom men sow their seed, so that she will spread her thighs in her desire for us and we, in our desire, will plant our penis in her.

38. To you first of all they led Sūryā, circling with the bridal procession. Give her back to her husbands, Agni, now as a wife with progeny.

39. Agni has given the wife back again, together with long life and beauty. Let her have a long life-span, and let her husband live for a hundred autumns.

40. Soma first possessed her, and the Gandharva possessed her second. Agni was your third husband, and the fourth was the son of a man.

41. Soma gave her to the Gandharva, and the Gandharva gave her to Agni. Agni gave me wealth and sons – and her.

42. Stay here and do not separate. Enjoy your whole life-span playing with sons and grandsons and rejoicing in your own home.

43. Let Prajāpati create progeny for us; let Aryaman anoint us into old age. Free from evil signs, enter the world of your husband. Be good luck for our two-legged creatures and good luck for our four-legged creatures.

44. Have no evil eye; do not be a husband-killer. Be friendly to animals, good-tempered and glowing with beauty. Bringing forth strong sons, prosper as one beloved of the gods and eager to please. Be good luck for our two-legged creatures and good luck for our four-legged creatures.

45. Generous Indra, give this woman fine sons and the good fortune of her husband's love. Place ten sons in her and make her husband the eleventh.

46. Be an empress over your husband's father, an empress over your husband's mother; be an empress over your husband's sister and an empress over your husband's brothers.

47. Let all the gods and the waters together anoint our two hearts together. Let Mātariśvan together with the Creator and together with her who shows the way join the two of us together.

7.55 Sleeping Spell

1. Lord of the House, you who drive away diseases and permeate all forms, be a gentle friend to us.

2. White and tawny son of Saramā, when you bare your teeth they gleam like spears in your snapping jaws. Fall fast asleep!

3. Bark at the thief or at the marauder, as you run up and back again, O son of Saramā. But you are barking at those who sing Indra's praises; why do you threaten us? Fall fast asleep!

4. Tear apart the wild boar, for he would tear you apart. But you are barking at those who sing Indra's praises; why do you threaten us? Fall fast asleep!

5. Let the mother sleep; let the father sleep; let the dog sleep; let the master of the house sleep. Let all the kinsmen sleep; let our people all around sleep.

6. The one who rests and the one who moves, and whoever sees us – we close their eyes tightly as we close up this house.

7. The bull with a thousand horns, who rises up out of the sea – with the help of that powerful one we put the people to sleep.

8. The women lying on benches or lying in chairs or lying in beds, the wives who smell good – we put all of them to sleep.

10.145 Against Rival Wives

1. I dig up this plant, the most powerful thing that grows, with which one drives out the rival wife and wins the husband entirely for oneself.

2. Broad-leaved plant sent by the gods to bring happiness and the power to triumph, blow my rival wife away and make my husband mine alone.

3. O highest one, I am the highest one, higher than all the highest women, and my rival wife is lower than the lowest women.

4. I will not even take her name into my mouth; he takes no pleasure in this person. Far, far into the distance we make the rival wife go.

5. I have emerged triumphant, and you also have triumphed. The two of us, full of the power to triumph, will triumph over my rival wife.

6. I have placed the plant of triumph on you, and grasped you with my power to triumph. Let your heart run after me like a cow after a calf, like water running in its own bed.

10.159 The Triumphant Wife

1. There the sun has risen, and here my good fortune has risen. Being a clever woman, and able to triumph, I have triumphed over my husband.

2. I am the banner; I am the head. I am the formidable one who has the deciding word. My husband will obey my will alone, as I emerge triumphant.

3. My sons kill their enemies and my daughter is an empress, and I am completely victorious. My voice is supreme in my husband's ears.

4. The oblation that Indra made and so became glorious and supreme, this is what I have made for you, O gods. I have become truly without rival wives.

5. Without rival wives, killer of rival wives, victorious and pre-eminent, I have grabbed for myself the attraction of the other women as if it were the wealth of flighty women.

6. I have conquered and become pre-eminent over these rival wives, so that I may rule as empress over this hero and over the people.

10.184 For a Safe Pregnancy and Birth

1. Let Viṣṇu prepare the womb; let Tvaṣṭṛ shape the forms. Let Prajāpati shed the seed; let Dhātṛ place the embryo in you.

2. Place the embryo, Sinīvalī; place the embryo, Sarasvatī. Let the twin Aśvins, the lotus-garlanded gods, place the embryo in you.

3. With golden kindling woods the Aśvins churn out fire. We invoke that embryo for you to bring forth in the tenth month.

10.162 To Protect the Embryo

1. Let Agni the killer of demons unite with this prayer and expel from here the one whose name is evil, who lies with disease upon your embryo, your womb.

2. The one whose name is evil, who lies with disease upon your embryo, your womb, the flesh-eater – Agni has driven him away with prayer.

3. The one who kills the embryo as it settles, as it rests, as it stirs, who wishes to kill it when it is born – we will drive him away from here.

4. The one who spreads apart your two thighs, who lies between the married pair, who licks the inside of your womb – we will drive him away from here.

5. The one who by changing into your brother, or your husband, or your lover lies with you, who wishes to kill your offspring – we will drive him away from here.

6. The one who bewitches you with sleep or darkness and lies with you – we will drive him away from here.