Rig Veda Samhitā: Tenth Maṇḍala
(All the 1754 mantras due to 190 Rishi)
(Text in Devanāgarī, Translation and Notes)

- Titles and Deities of 191 Sūktās
- 191 Sūktās or Chapters: Text & Translation
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**Synopsis**

The seven mantras fall into 3 groups namely mantras 1 and 2, mantras 3, 4 and 5, and the mantras 6 and 7. The whole sūkta deals with the beginning of the creation. The question posed is, ‘what is the beginning of creation?’ In mantras 1 and 2, it excludes several possibilities. The first step is not asat (non-existence), sat (existence), rajas (the principle of movement), vyoman (the supreme station). Verse 3 specifically states that the world as we see it has come out of the darkness concealed in darkness; it has come out of the deep and abysmal flood or ocean (the inconscient ocean, apraketam salilam) that covered all things. Everything is hidden in this formless being owing to the fragmentation (tuchchhyena abhu apihitam). Note that it is understood though not explicitly stated that the higher and self-luminous power descends into this ocean; it raises again out of this ocean to reconstitute in the conscient its vast unity. This One (ekam) mentioned in verse 3 brings to birth this world by its own greatness (tan mihinā ajāyata). In that non-existence the seers have found by desire in the heart and the thought in the mind that which builds up the existence. This non-existence (asat) is the first aspect to emerge from the inconscient ocean. This darkness is the Vedic night mentioned in RV (1.35.1) which holds within it all the world and all her unrevealed potentialities in her obscure bosom. Above this ocean is the goal (prayati), below is the intrinsic power (svadha) which draws upward. The last 2 verses pose the question about the nature of the supreme being. The usual translation of the last line is, ‘He knows, or he knows not’.

Such scepticism is out of place in the entire Veda. It is common knowledge in logic, that ‘or’ does not always mean ‘exclusive or’. It can be inclusive also. Hence A.K. Coomaraswamy* (A.K.C.) translates the phrase appropriately, ‘He knows and he knows not’.

We will explain about this later.

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10.129.1: Non-existence (asat) then was not, nor Existence (sat) (1); neither the principle of movement (rajAs), nor Empyrean (vyoman) there beyond (2). What covered over all (avarivA) and where (3), or what was any resting-place (sharman) (4)? What were the waters (ambhah) (5)? Fathomless abyss (gahanam gabhiram) (6).  

[sat and asat: Note that the mantra 4 states that the existence (sat) was formed from the non-existence (asat). Recall (10.5.7) quoted earlier.

rajAs: usually it is translated as the midworld (antariksha). However it is the principle of movement (gati) caused by the chit (consciousness force). According to A.K.C. here is the earliest mention of the 3 gunAs of SAnkhya namely tamas, rajAs and sattva.

tva is not mentioned, but its cognates are there.

vyoma: it is akasha or space. Regarding the phrase ‘parame vyoman’, see (10.123.5).

avarivAh: what covered over? In the Upanishad and the Veda, the world is perceived as covering the ultimate reality. Recall RV (5.62.1) (rtna rtam apihitam, truth covered by truth). Also apavrnu in Isha U. (15).

sharman: it is related to charma in Shatapatha Br. (3.2.1.8). It means the resting place. Just as the skin covers and shelters the bones and muscles, the question is, ‘what shelters the reality’. Sharman is that which offers shelter.

Finally the mantra states that the first step in the creation is the waters (ambhah).]

10.129.2: Then was neither death (mrtyu) nor life (amrta) (1), nor any sign (praketa) of night or day (2). That One breathless (avA) breathed (anit) by intrinsic-power (svadhA) (3). None other was, nor aught there beyond (4).

[amrta and mrtyu: The two concepts are intimately related and not mutually exclusive. SB (10.5.2.4) states, ‘Amrta exists in mrtyu and mrtyu exists in amrta’. Examples of such couplets are energy, matter; divine, human; beyond time and space, conditioned by time-space; principle of rest, principle of motion [Ojha].’ See also 10.72 regarding Aditi and Martsanda. According to SB (10.5.1.4), Surya is the sign of demarcation between amrta and mrtyu, separating the realm of immortality from the realm of death.

aborata: Day and night. Here the key idea is time (kaal). RV states that the first step in the creation is also not time. For the metaphysics of time, see AV (19.53.14).

ekam: finally the mantra mentions that the chief agent is that One, ekam. He breathes without breath. Note that the breathing involves movement. There is no concept of movement yet. Yet the life energy is there. Hence the phrase ‘He breathes’. How can one do this? Is it possible? The Upanishad states that the One does it by its intrinsic power or the power of self-arranging (svadhA). Apart from this One, there is nothing.]

10.129.3: Darkness hidden by darkness in the beginning was this all (1). This all was an ocean without mental consciousness (apraekta) (2). All is hidden (apihitam) in the formless being (abhu) owing to the fragmentation of consciousness (tuchchhyena) (3). Out of it, One was born by the greatness of its energy (4).

[tama: darkness; guhah: hidden; mahi: greatness; ajaya: born]

This mantra describes the beginning of creation. asat is that which is continuously changing without any order. The reason is that the consciousness is in fragments as it were (tuchchhyena). Note that in the asat, there is only the action of prana, but no power

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2 न मुनिपुरीर्द्विद्वं न तत्ति (1), न राज्य अर्थ अस्तित्र प्रक्रेत: (2), आनीद्रायं स्वधया तदेकं (3), तस्मात्तु ह अन्त्यम परः किं चुनासं (4)
of mind which gives the order. Everything is hidden. Now by its own might, the supreme one is born.

The first line is also in Maitrāyana U.

**10.129.4:** In the beginning, desire (kāma) arose (samavartat) therein (1). The primal seed (retas) of mind (manas), that was the first (2). The masters of wisdom (kavayāḥ) found out in the non-existent (asat) that which builds up (bandhum) the existence (3). In the heart they found it by purposeful impulsion (pratīṣṭhā) and by the thought-mind (manishā) (4).

[The mantra states that the seers or rishis found in the non-existence the inconscient ocean, that which builds (bandhum) the sat. Usually bandhu is translated as kin. But translating it as 'to build' is much better. The idea of sat being born of asat is elsewhere in the Veda. They found that power in the heart as the impulsion (ishā) and in the mind as the thought (manishā). The Vedic triplet (hrādā, manasā, manishā) occurs in RV (1.61.2) and Kaṭha U. (2.3.9).]

**10.129.5:** Their ray (rashmi) was extended horizontally (1). There was something above (2), there was something below (3). Seed (retas) was, all-might (mahimānaḥ) was (4); intrinsic-power (svadhā) below, purpose (prayati) above (5).

[svadhā: intrinsic power; power of self-arranging;

Note that the creation is impelled by the intrinsic power from below; the goal of creation (prayati) in the station above pulls up the consciousness levels to manifest and establish the truth everywhere.]

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4 कामस्तव्य समर्थताधि (1), मनसो रेत: प्रथम यदासीत (2), सतो बन्धुसाति निरंकिन्त्य (3), हुदि प्रतीष्ठा कथयो मनीषा (4)
5 तिरीकोनो बितीतो रसिम: (1), एमापथ्य स्विदसीत (2), उदयो बिदासीत (3), रेतोधा आंसन महिमार्य आसन (4),

तवथा अवस्तायो प्रयति: पुरस्तान्त (5)