

# THE RIGVEDA:

THE OLDEST LITERATURE OF THE INDIANS.

BY

ADOLF KAEGI,

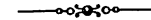
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*AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION WITH ADDITIONS  
TO THE NOTES*

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## TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

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THE translation of the present work was undertaken in order to place at the command of English readers interested in the study of the Veda a comprehensive and, at the same time, condensed manual of Vedic research. It has been the aim to make the translation as close as possible; especially in the metrical quotations the author's renderings have nearly always been adhered to, though with continual reference to the text of the hymns.

Since the second German edition appeared, in 1880, much work has been done in the study of the Veda, and many additions made to the literature. These PROFESSOR KAEGI kindly offered to incorporate in the Notes, and, to some extent, to remodel the latter, but was prevented from doing as much as he had intended by stress of work and ill-health. The translator has endeavored to complete the references to the literature to date, and has extended a number of the Notes in some particulars. All such additions are designated by brackets [ ]. The only addition to the text is the Frog Song on p. 81 f.

The thanks of the translator are due to DR. KAEGI for his ready consent and interest in the undertaking, to PROFESSORS WHITNEY and LANMAN for suggestions and material, and to DR. A. V. W. JACKSON, of Columbia College, for revising the portions of the Notes pertaining to the Avesta.

The references have been verified as far as practicable, and it is believed that a reasonable degree of accuracy has been attained. It is requested that the translator be notified of the discovery of any mistakes which may have been overlooked.

R. A.

RACINE COLLEGE,  
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beginning of all existent things, the original matter.<sup>369</sup> The solution of these problems is naturally, where not evidently from the first shown to lie outside of human wisdom, very varied in result,<sup>370</sup> and even the lines of development, if we may use the term, differ greatly.<sup>371</sup> Sometimes fire, sometimes the all-nourishing water is named as the original matter, as among the Greek philosophers; <sup>372</sup> in other passages an original germ is spoken of, which, on the other side of heaven and this earth and the living gods, the waters received into themselves, in which the gods all met.

Far out beyond this earth, beyond the heavens,  
Far, too, beyond the living gods and spirits,  
What earliest germ was hidden in the waters,  
In which the gods were all beheld together?

The waters held that earliest germ within them  
In which the living gods were all united.  
That One lay in the bosom of the unborn,  
And all created beings rested in it.

Him ye can never know who formed these creatures,  
Between yourselves and him lies yet another.  
With stammering tongue and all in mist enveloped,  
The singers go about in life rejoicing.<sup>373</sup> — 10. 82. 5-7.

Another prominent hymn praises Hiraṇyagarbha, the 'gold-germ,' as the kindly origin of all being, who existed even before the first breath of the gods, who alone is god among all the gods.

In the beginning rose Hiraṇyagarbha,  
Born as the only lord of all existence.  
This earth he settled firm and heaven established :  
What god shall we adore with our oblations?

Who gives us breath, who gives us strength, whose bidding  
All creatures must obey, the bright gods even ;

Whose shade is death, whose shadow life immortal :  
What god shall we adore with our oblations?

Who by his might alone became the monarch  
Of all that breathes, of all that wakes or slumbers,  
Of all, both man and beast, the lord eternal :  
What god shall we adore with our oblations?

Whose might and majesty these snowy mountains,  
The ocean and the distant stream exhibit ;  
Whose arms extended are these spreading regions :  
What god shall we adore with our oblations?

Who made the heavens bright, the earth enduring,  
Who fixed the firmament, the heaven of heavens ;  
Who measured out the air's extended spaces :  
What god shall we adore with our oblations?

To whom with trembling mind the two great armies  
Look up, by his eternal will supported ;  
On whom the sun sheds brightness in its rising :  
What god shall we adore with our oblations?

10. 121. 1-6.

The monotheistic conception lying at the foundation of this hymn (above, p. 34) appears more prominently, with the exception of some single verses in two hymns directed to Viṣvakarman, *i.e.*, the 'All-creator' of unrivalled power of mind and body, to him

Who is our father, our creator, maker,  
Who every place doth know and every creature,  
By whom alone to gods their names were given,  
To him all other creatures go, to ask him.<sup>374</sup> — 10. 82. 3.

By far the most important composition of this class in the whole Veda is the 'Song of Creation,' recognized even by Colebrooke.<sup>375</sup> In the beginning, when the contrasts of being and not-being, of death and immortality, of day and night, did not yet exist, only one thing hovered

over the empty waste, and this one came into life through the force of heat; there the first germ of mind showed itself; then the wise ones, the cosmogonic gods, were able to call forth being out of not-being, and to separate and divide the heretofore unordered masses. But in spite of this solution the whole creation and many single things in it remain a riddle to the poet.

Then there was neither being nor not-being.  
The atmosphere was not, nor sky above it.  
What covered all? and where? by what protected?  
Was there the fathomless abyss of waters?

Then neither death nor deathlessness existed;  
Of day and night there was yet no distinction.  
Alone that One breathed calmly, self-supported,  
Other than It was none, nor aught above It.

Darkness there was at first in darkness hidden;  
This universe was undistinguished water.  
That which in void and emptiness lay hidden  
Alone by power of fervor was developed.

Then for the first time there arose desire,  
Which was the primal germ of mind, within it.  
And sages, searching in their heart, discovered  
In Nothing the connecting bond of Being.

And straight across their cord was then extended:  
What then was there above? or what beneath it?  
Life giving principles and powers existed;  
Below the origin, — the striving upward.

Who is it knows? Who here can tell us surely  
From what and how this universe has risen?  
And whether not till after it the gods lived?  
Who then can know from what it has arisen?

The source from which this universe has risen  
And whether it was made, or uncreated,

He only knows, who from the highest heaven  
Rules, the all-seeing lord, — or does not He know?

10. 129.

We stand at the end of our survey. From it we ought to recognize that we have in the Rigveda a literature which well deserves 'at least in extracts to be known to every student and lover of antiquity,' to every one who would have the poet's words, *Homo sum; humanum nihil a me alienum puto*, applied to himself. The chief importance of the Veda is not indeed for the history of literature, but it lies elsewhere; it lies, as the following commentary seeks to show, in the very extraordinary fullness of disclosures which this unique book gives to the student of philology and the history of civilization. In this, no other literature is to be compared with it, and though the aesthetic value of this relic of long-vanished times has sometimes been exaggerated, yet its historical importance, its value for the history of mankind, cannot easily be overrated.

370. 10, 149, 2 f.: "Where once the firmly founded sea sprang forth, that Savitar alone knows (so we need inquire no further concerning it; see 5, 48, 5 and 10, 12, 8, in Note 357); then from it the world and the realm of air arose, from thence heaven and earth spread forth; on it came into being Savitar's revered bird, with beautiful wings in the heaven" (the sun; Notes 215, 226).

371. According to 10, 72, 2. 6. 7, in the time of the first race of gods, existence was born from non-existence; then Brahmanaspati welded the world together, like a blacksmith; the gods stood in the flood; dust rose from them as from dancers. They lifted forth the sun, lying hidden in the sea, and caused the earth to swell.—10, 81, 3: "Everywhere present, Viçvakarman creating welds earth and heaven together."—10, 149, 2 f. in Note 370; 10, 190, 1 f. in Note 372.

372. 10, 190, 1 f.: "Law and Truth arose from kindled fire (*tapas*: perhaps 'penance' ?); thence night was born, thence the surging sea (of air?); dividing day and night, he rules all that close the eyes. Sun and moon the creator formed in turn; heaven and earth, the air-space and the realm of light."—To this I refer 1, 161, 9 (118): of the Ṛbhus who, full of wisdom, entertain each other at work with sayings (4, 33, 10: 122), one holds water for the most important thing (*bhūyīṣṭha*), another considers fire the most essential.

It was stated (p. 13) that the waters are praised very loudly on account of their healing and refreshing powers; cf. (together with Notes 241 and 245) 1, 23, 16-23; 7, 47; 10, 9 and 7, 49 (125). They are often called "motherly," or, "most motherly, very motherly"; cf. 6, 50, 7 (127): "O ye waters, friendly to man, grant us unending favor, prosperity for child and grandchild. For ye, most motherly, are our physicians, ye bear all things, animate and inanimate." Water appears in the Brāhmaṇas, more often than in the Rig, as the starting-point of all animal creation (see Weber, *ISt.* 9, 2, n. 2 and 9, 74). In the Taitt-Sanh. 7, 1, 5, 1 (*ISt.* 12, 245) it is stated that "in the beginning was the expanse of water, and upon it Prajāpati moved (p. 76\*) in the form of a wind, of a breath," which recalls the *rūchm* of Genesis 1, 2.

373. Translated by Müller, *OGR.* 300 f.; the following verses translated by Müller, *OGR.* 301 f.; Muir, *OST.* 4, 16; Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 23. (Müller, v. 6, reads *rodasi*, "heaven and earth," instead of *krandasi*, "the two armies.") V. 7 seems not to have belonged originally to the hymn. That v. 10: "Prajāpati, no other than thou is lord over all these created things: may we obtain that, through desire of which we have sacrificed; may we become masters of riches," appears to have been incorporated into the Rig

text later, only after the formation of the Pada text, was remarked in Note 79.

From the beginning of the refrain *Kāsmāi devāya* (*cui deo, to what god*) the native tradition evolved at an early period a special highest unknown god, *Ka* (*Quo, Quis*), a new illustration of the degree to which the understanding of the texts had been lost: above p. 10\*.

374. Single verses; 1, 164, 46: "Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, they call him, and then he is that celestial, well-winged bird; that which is one they call by different names: they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariçvan" (a verse with which the Brāhmans seek to invalidate the accusation of polytheism); 10, 114, 5: "Inspired singers represent under many forms the well-winged, who is one" (although he is but one).

To Viçvakarman: 10, 81 and 10, 82; often made use of above: Notes 367, 368, and 371; pp. 88 and 89. — Indra is called *viçvakarman*, 8, 87, 2.

375. *GKR.* 165 f.; Müller, *ASL.* 559; Muir, *OST.* 4, 3 f.; 5, 356 f.; *MTr.* 188; Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, p. 22 (I abandon the theory of a hiatus between verses 4 and 5 (with Bergaigne, *Rev. Crit.* 1875, II. 393), and refer *eṣām* to *kavayas*). [On this hymn see Whitney, *Am. Or. Soc. Proc.*, May 1882. "The general character and value of the hymn are very clear. It is of the highest historical interest as the earliest known beginning of such speculation in India, or probably anywhere among Indo-European races. The attitude of its author and the audacity of his attempt are exceedingly noteworthy. But nothing can be said in absolute commendation of the success of the attempt. On the contrary, it exhibits the characteristic weaknesses of all Hindu theosophy; a disposition to deal with words as if they were things, to put forth paradox and insoluble contradiction as profundity. . . . The unlimited praises which have been bestowed upon it, as philosophy and poetry, are well-nigh nauseating." — Verse 2: "Whether 'fervor' (*tapas*) means physical heat or devotional ardor, penance, according to the later prevalent meaning of the word, admits of a question; but it is doubtless to be understood in the latter sense. For no such element as heat plays any part in the Hindu cosmogonies, while penance, the practice of religious austerities, is a constant factor in their theories." — Verse 5: "But the next verse is still more unintelligible; no one has ever succeeded in putting any sense into it, and it seems so unconnected with the rest of the hymn that its absence is heartily to be wished. 'Crosswise [was] stretched out the ray [line] of them: was it, forsooth, below? was it, forsooth, above? impregnators were, greatnesses were; *svadhā* below, offering beyond.' The word rendered 'offering' is literally 'forth-

reaching,' and, as sometimes also, as perhaps here, the signification 'straining, intentness.' . . . Who the 'they' are, unless the sages of the preceding verse, it is hard to guess" (Whitney, l.c.). Brunnhofer, *Geist der Indischen Lyrik*, p. 16, translates v. 5a: "And to these sages a ray of light appeared"; Ludwig: "From one to another was drawn the bond of these"; Muir: "The ray [or cord] which stretched across these [worlds]."]

Finally, we may mention:

a. The song to the twins Yama and Yamī, the first human beings, 10, 10, GKR. 142. [Muir, OST. 5, 288.]

b. The so-called Song of Wisdom, 10, 71, GKR. 162 (cf. above p. 85 and Note 348).

c. The hymn to the Goddess of Speech, Vāc (*voc-s*) 10, 125, GKR. 136 f.; on *vāc* and λόγος (in St. John), cf. Weber, *IST.* 9, 473-480; Schlottman and Weber, *IST.* 10, 444 f., point out Biblical parallels.

d. The hymn to the Genius of the House, Vāstoṣpati, 7, 54 GKR. 135, to be recited, according to Pāraskara, *Gṛhyas.* 3, 4 (with 7, 55, 1), after the entrance into the house.

e. The modern, pantheistic Puruṣa-sūkta, 10, 90, 'the Magna Charta of Brahmanism' (Haug), which tries to explain and justify the already existing division of the state into the four castes (v. 11 f.: "When they divided the original creature, Puruṣa (*i.e.* 'man'), the Brāhman was his mouth, the Rājanya became his arms, the Vaiçya was his thighs, from his feet sprang the Çudra"); see Weber, *IST.* 9, 1-10; Muir, OST. 1, 7-15; 2, 454 ff.; 5, 367 ff.; Zimmer, *AIL.* 217 f.

f. And finally, the Dialogue of Purūravas and Urvāçi, 10, 95; see Roth, *Erl. zum Nirukta*, p. 153 ff., 230; Müller, *Chips*, 2, 98 ff.; Hehn, *Herabkunft*, p. 78 f., 85 f.

#### Müller's LSL.

Note 141,	English Edition,	2, 430.
" 149,	" "	2, 462.
" 172,	" "	2, 495.
" 187,	" "	2, 506.
" 193,	" "	2, 462, 498.
" 269,	" "	2, 510.
" 274 a,	" "	2, 478.

## I.

### INDEX OF MATTERS, NAMES, AND WORDS.

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- Abodes of the Vedic people, 11 f.; Indo-Germ., 11, N. 36.
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