

Rig Veda Samhitā:

Tenth Maṇḍala

(All the 1754 mantrās due to 190 Rīṣhis)
(Text in Devanāgarī, Translation and Notes)

- **Titles and Deities of 191 Sūktās**
- **191 Sūktās or Chapters: Text & Translation**
- **Appendices including Subject Index**

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Anuvāka 11: Sūktās (129-151)**129: Creation****Riṣhi: Prajāpati Parameṣṭhī****10.129.1: Waters****10.129.2: Breathed by self-law****10.129.3: One was born****10.129.4: Heart****10.129.5: Impelled by self-law****10.129.6: Wonder about creation****10.129.7: The creator****[Metre: Triṣṭup (11, 4)]**

[The Rig Veda treats the topic of creation in a very original way in several sūktās titled as *bhāvavṛttam*, a crisp metaphysical thought about the beginning of creation. These hymns are (10.129), (10.154) and (10.190) and others. In the entire Rig Veda, the most famous philosophical hymn is (10.129), due to the Riṣhi Prajāpati Parameṣṭhī. It has seven mantrās. The first-two mantrās refer to various viewpoints about the beginning of creation, this sūkta is not concerned with these views. The sūkta does not have any criticisms. Riṣhi is giving his revelation. The first half of the first mantra mentions *sat* (existence), *asat* (non existence), *rajas* (principle of movement), *vyoman* (the Empyrean or ether). It asserts that it is not concerned with them. Recall that (10.72.2) asserts that *sat* (beings or existence) was born of *asat* (non- existence). (10.5.7) asserts:

He is the being (*sat*) and the non-being (*asat*) in the supreme ether (*parame vyoman*) (1), in the birth of the understanding (*dakṣha*), in the lap of the indivisible mother (aditi) (2).⁺

What we call the ultimate or absolute, which is indicated by *tat* is beyond the concepts of existence (*sat*) or non-existence (*asat*). Note that in the Hindu philosophical thinking, *sat* and *asat* are not antithetical concepts. It mentions the **One** (*ekam*) which existed by its own power (*svadhā*).

⁺ *asat cha sat cha parame vyoman* (1),

dakṣhasya janman aditer upasthe (2). (RV 10.5.7)

Synopsis

The seven mantrās fall into 3 groups namely mantrās 1 and 2, mantrās 3, 4 and 5, and the mantrās 6 and 7. The whole sūkta deals with the beginning of the creation. The question posed is, 'what is the beginning of creation?' In mantrās 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 ābhu 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 (*svadhā*) 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.

⁺ 'A New Approach to Vedās', Luzac & Co, London, 1933.

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 (*āvarīvar*) and where (3), or what was any resting-place (*sharman*) (4)? What were the waters (*ambhaḥ*) (5)? Fathomless abyss (*gahanam gabhīram*) (6).¹

[*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 (*antarikṣha*). 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 guṇās of Sāṅkhya namely *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva*. *sattva* is not mentioned, but its cognates are there.

vyoma: it is *ākāsha* or space. Regarding the phrase '*parame vyoman*', see (10.123.5).

avarīvaḥ: what covered over? In the Upaniṣhad and the Veda, the world is perceived as covering the ultimate reality. Recall RV (5.62.1) (*ṛtena ṛtam apihitam*, truth covered by truth). Also *apāvṛṇu* in Īsha 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 (*ambhaḥ*).]

10.129.2: Then was neither death (*mṛtyu*) nor life (*amṛta*) (1), nor any sign (*praketa*) of night or day (2). That One breathless (*avāta*) breathed (*ānīt*) by intrinsic-power (*svadhā*) (3). None other was, nor aught there beyond (4).²

¹ नासदासीन्नो सदासीत् तदानीं (1), नासीद्रजो नो व्योमा परो यत् (2), किमावरीवः कुह (3), कस्य शर्मन् (4), अम्भः किमासीत् (5), गहनं गभीरम् (6)

² न मृत्युरासीदमृतं न तर्हि (1), न रात्र्या अहं आसीत् प्रकेतः (2), आनीदवातं स्वधया तदेकं (3), तस्मात् ह अन्यन्न परः किं चनासं (4)

[*amṛta* and *mṛtyu*: The two concepts are intimately related and not mutually exclusive. SB (10.5.2.4) states, 'Amṛta exists in *mṛtyu* and *mṛtyu* exists in *amṛta*'. 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 Mārtāṇḍa. According to SB (10.5.1.4), Sūrya is the sign of demarcation between *amṛta* and *mṛtyu*, separating the realm of immortality from the realm of death.

ahorātra: Day and night. Here the key idea is time (*kāla*). 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 Upaniṣhad states that the One does it by its intrinsic power or the power of self-arranging (*svadhā*). 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 (*apraketam*) (2). All is hidden (*apihitam*) in the formless being (*ābhu*) owing to the fragmentation of consciousness (*tuchchhyena*) (3). Out of it, One was born by the greatness of its energy (4).³

[*tama*: darkness; *gūḷham*: hidden; *mahi*: greatness; *ajāyata*: 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 prāṇa, but no power

* The book, 'Hymn of Creation' by Vasudev S. Agrawala, published by Prithivi Prakāshana, Varanasi in 1983 contains 4 translations of the Hymn RV (10.129) by eminent indologists and the commentary of Sāyaṇa. This book gives interesting excerpts from the work of Pandit Ojha entitled 'dashavāda-rahasya'. The ten doctrines are outlined in the referenced book.

³ तम आसीत् तमसा गूळहमग्रे (1), अप्रकेतं संलिलं सर्वमा इदम् (2), तुच्छेनाभ्वपिहितं (3), यदासीत् तपसस्तन्महिनाजायत एकम् (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 Maitrāyaṇa 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 (*kavayaḥ*) found out in the non-existent (*asat*) that which builds up (*bandhum*) the existence (3). In the heart they found it by purposeful impulsion (*pratīṣhyā*) and by the thought-mind (*manīshā*) (4).⁴

[The mantra states that the seers or rīṣhis found in the non-existence or the unconscious 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 (*iṣha*) and in the mind as the thought (*manīshā*). The Vedic triplet (*hr̥dā, manasā, manīshā*) 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).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.]

⁴ कामस्तदग्रे समवर्तताधि (1), मनसो रेतः प्रथमं यदासीत् (2), सतो बन्धुमसति निरविन्दन् (3), हृदि प्रतीष्या कवयो मनीषा (4)

⁵ तिरश्चीनो विततो रश्मिः (1), एषामधः स्विदासीत् (2), उदुपरि स्विदासीत् (3), रेतोधा आसन् महिमानं आसन् (4), त्वधा अवस्तात् प्रयतिः परस्तात् (5)

10.129.6: Who knows it aright (1)? Who can here set it forth (2)? Whence was it born (*ājātā*), whence poured forth (*visṛṣṭih*) (3).

These gods (*devāḥ*) are from its pouring-forth (*visarjana*) (4), whence then it came-to-be (*ābabhūva*), who knows (5)?⁶

[This mantra and the next are viewed by some translators as indicating scepticism since they pose the question beginning with who. As A.K.C. points out, these questions indicate only wonder. This creation is so wondrous that we cannot even think about the One (or Supreme) who made it possible.]

10.129.7: From what source did this creation (or discharge) (*visṛṣṭih*) came into being (1)? or whether one appointed (*dadhe*) it or not (2). He who is over-eye thereof in Supreme Ether (3), he knows indeed, or knows not (in advance) (4).⁷

[The parts (3) and (4) are very interesting. The usual translation done by Indologists is 'he knows indeed or he knows not'. They are happy to note that even the creator does not know all. The sole exception is A.K.C. He translates it 'He knows and he knows not'. The idea is that in every act, the outcome is not really fixed at all till the last second. The grace can act at the last minute. There is no limitation.

adhyakṣha: over-eye, over-seer;

parame vyoman: the infinity of the superconscious being; Empryeen; 'Ether' in old translations. See (10.123.5).

We have heard of the adage that 'not a blade of grass moves without His consent'. It is true. But this statement does not state that everything is planned in advance. In every action, there are so many possibilities for its termination. Only the Creator decides which possibility will prevail. The Creator does not need to plan ahead. Thus both the statements 'he knows' and 'he knows not in advance' are true. He does not specify the way of conclusion of an action in advance, since such a specification limits his Own Power. See (10.131.3). By definition, the Supreme Person has no limitations.]

⁶ को अद्वा वैद (1), क इह प्र वोचत् (2), कुत आजाता कुत इयं विसृष्टिः (3), अवाग्देवा अस्य विसर्जनेनोऽथा (4), को वैद यत आबभूव (5)

⁷ इयं विसृष्टिर्यत आबभूव (1), यदि वा दधे यदि वा न (2), यो अस्यार्ध्यक्षः परमे व्योमन् (3), त्सो अद्वा वैद यदि वा न वैद (4)