

Two Poems from the Rig Veda

To AGNI

Rg Veda 1.1 (Oldenberg)

1. I magnify Agni, the Purohita, the divine ministrant of the sacrifice, the Hotr priest, the greatest bestower of treasures.
2. Agni, worthy to be magnified by the ancient rishis and by the present ones—may he conduct the gods hither.
3. May one obtain through Agni wealth and welfare day by day, which may bring glory and high bliss of valiant offspring.
4. Agni, whatever sacrifice and worship thou encompassest on every side, that indeed goes to the gods.
5. May Agni the thoughtful Hotr, he who is true and most splendidly renowned, may the god come hither with the gods.
6. Whatever good thou wilt do to thy worshipper, O Agni, that (work) verily is thine, O Angiras.
7. Thee, O Agni, we approach day by day, O (god) who shinest in the darkness; with our prayer, bringing adoration to thee—
8. Who art the king of all worship, the guardian of Rta, the shining one, increasing in thy own house.
9. Thus, O Agni, be easy of access to us, as a father is to his son. Stay with us for our happiness. (Radhakrishnan 1957:7, 8.)

PURUSA

Rg Veda 10.90 (Thomas)

1. Thousand-headed was the Purusa, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. He embraced the earth on all sides, and stood beyond the breadth of ten fingers.
2. The Purusa is this all, that which was and which shall be. He is Lord of immortality, which he grows beyond through (sacrificial) food.
3. Such is his greatness, and still greater than that is the Purusa. One fourth of him is all beings. The three fourths of him is the immortal in Heaven.
4. Three fourths on high rose the Purusa. One fourth of him arose again here (on the earth). Thence in all directions he spread abroad, as that which eats and that which eats not.
5. From him Viraj was born, from Viraj the Purusa. He when born reached beyond the earth behind as well as before.
6. When the Gods spread out the sacrifice with the Purusa as oblation, spring was its ghee, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation.

7. As the sacrifice on the strewn grass they besprinkled the Purusa, born in the beginning. With him the Gods sacrificed, the Sadhyas and the sages.
8. From that sacrifice completely offered was the sprinkled ghee collected. He made it the beasts of the air, of the forest, and those of the village.
9. From that sacrifice completely offered were born the Verses (Rg Veda) and the Saman-melodies (Sama Veda). The metres were born from it. From it was born the Sacrificial formula (Yajur Veda).
10. From it were born horses, and they that have two rows of teeth. Cattle were born from it. From it were born goats and sheep.
11. When they divided the Purusa, into how many parts did they arrange him? What was his mouth? What his two arms? What are his thighs and feet called?
12. The Brahmin was his mouth, his two arms were made the rajanya (warrior), his two thighs the vaisya (trader and agriculturist), from his feet the sudra (servile class) was born.
13. The moon was born from his spirit (manas), from his eye was born the sun, from his mouth Indra and Agni, from his breath Vayu (wind) was born.
14. From his navel arose the middle sky, from his head the heaven originated, from his feet the earth, the quarters from his ear. Thus did they fashion the worlds.
15. Seven were his sticks that enclose (the fire), thrice seven were made the faggots. When the Gods spread out the sacrifice, they bound the Purusa as a victim.
16. With the sacrifice the Gods sacrificed the sacrifice. These were the first ordinances. These great powers reached to the firmament, where are the ancient Sadhyas, the Gods. (Radhakrishnan and Moore 1957: 19-20)