

The Rigveda

THE EARLIEST RELIGIOUS
POETRY OF INDIA

Translated by
Stephanie W. Jamison
and
Joel P. Brereton

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I.164 All Gods (Riddle Hymn)

Dīrghatamas Aucathya

52 verses: triṣṭubh, except jagatī 12, 15, 23, 29, 36, 41; prastārapaṅkti 42; anuṣṭubh 51

The Anukramaṇī assigns this hymn to a variety of gods: All the Gods (1–41), Speech (42a, 45), the Waters (42b), Dung-smoke (43a), Soma (43b), Agni, Sūrya, Vāyu (44), Sūrya (46, 47), the Wheel of the Seasons (48), Sarasvatī (49), the Sādhyas (50), Sūrya or Parjanya or Agni (51), Sarasvant or Sūrya (52). Such diversity creates the impression that this hymn is a fairly loose assemblage, although its thematic and structural programs indicate that the hymn, or the bulk of it, constitutes a coherent composition. Among the more recent and significant studies of the hymn are those of Brown (1968) and Houben (2000), which also discuss older interpretations and upon which we have drawn extensively and gratefully.

The hymn has continued to attract scholarly attention in part because it has continued to escape satisfying interpretation. One reason is that the hymn was composed to be enigmatic, to be never fully decipherable. But even if we will never be able to solve all its puzzles, we can appreciate how it functions as an enigma and perhaps why. Since the hymn makes both implicit and explicit reference to Vedic ritual, including rites other than the soma ritual, one way into the hymn is through its connections to ritual. Even though the later ritual application of Ṛgvedic hymns is not always a reliable guide to their original ritual contexts, it offers a place to start. According to Aitareya Āraṇyaka V.3.2, verses 1–41 are part of the Vaiśvadevaśāstra, a recitation at the midday offerings of the Mahāvratā ceremony, and Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka II.18 places the whole of the hymn in the Mahāvratā rite. This Mahāvratā rite is a variation of the Agniṣṭoma soma ritual that was performed on the next to last day of the year-long Gavāmayana rite. It may well be that the application of the hymn in the Mahāvratā rite is secondary (Houben 2000: 502), since there is no explicit reference to the Mahāvratā in the hymn and, for such a long hymn, little even to the soma sacrifice more generally. But there is a thematic connection between this hymn and the Mahāvratā. According to Kauṣītakī Brāhmaṇa XIX.3, the Mahāvratā fell on the winter solstice. Whatever else I.164 may be about, much of it concerns the sun in one way or another (e.g., vss. 2, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 25, 33, 44, 46, 48). The winter solstice, when the sun has halted its southward movement and is about to turn northward, would be a natural time to consider the sun and its appearance and therefore may provide the seasonal context for the hymn.

A second ritual context for the hymn is the Pravargya rite, which is an offering of heated milk and ghee to the Aśvins. In the classical Agniṣṭoma soma ritual, the Pravargya was performed twice daily on the three days leading up the soma-pressing day; originally, however, it may have been a rite independent of the soma ritual. The śrautasūtras (cf. van Buitenen 1968: 93, 96–98) prescribe the recitation of verses 26–28, 31 (=X.177.3), and 49 in the Pravargya, and at least verses 26–29 refer

directly to the Pravargya rite. Thus, as Houben (2000) has demonstrated, significant parts of this hymn are concerned with the Pravargya.

These two rituals, the Mahāvratā and the Pravargya, have one thing in common: they are the principal subjects of Āraṇyaka texts. The Āraṇyakas or “forest” books are later Vedic works that explored rituals and the interpretations of rituals thought to be too dangerous to be taught within the village. The Ṛgvedic Āraṇyakas concern especially the Mahāvratā rite, and the Yajurvedic Āraṇyakas, the Pravargya. In our view this hymn was not primarily composed for recitation in a particular rite, although to be sure some of its mantras were ritually employed. Rather, this poem is an early example of Āraṇyaka-like interpretation. Its function is to disclose the meaning of the rites, particularly the Mahāvratā and Pravargya rites. It might seem odd that a Ṛgvedic hymn could anticipate the later Āraṇyaka literature. However, according to the Śāṅkhāyana Gṛhya Sūtra II.11.13, once a student has learned the saṃhitā, his teacher may guide him through the *rahasya*, the secret teaching, which the sūtra defines as the Āraṇyaka (cf. Oldenberg 1888: 291). Even if, as Oldenberg (293) argues, study of the *rahasya* meant the recitation of the mantras of the Mahāvratā, not study of the interpretation of the rite, the sūtra still points toward a direct pathway between the Ṛgveda and the study that eventually came to constitute the Ṛgvedic Āraṇyakas.

Key to grasping the meaning of the ritual is understanding the links between ritual acts and both the cosmos and the person. The complexity of the hymn derives especially from the multiplicity of reference of its verses, which connect ritual, cosmos, and person. Thus, the verses frequently refer simultaneously to the ritual (*adhiyajñam*) and to the world (*adhidevatam*), especially to the sun, and sometimes also to the human body or the human being (*adhyātmam*). There is no unproblematic verse in this hymn, but as an example, consider the possibilities of the first verse. Lines abc of that verse describe three brothers: the gray Hotar, the ravenous middle brother, and the brother with ghee-smeared back. Scholars have offered a variety of identifications for the brothers: the sun, wind, and fire (*Sāyaṇa*); the *Āhavanīya* or offering fire, the *Dakṣiṇa* or southern fire, and the *Gārhapatya* or household fire (Geldner); the original form of Agni, lightning, and the terrestrial Agni (Brown); and the sun, lightning, and the fire heating the Pravargya pot (Houben). It is likely that ancient hearers of the hymn made not one but several of these sets of identifications. In our view the verse has both a ritual (*adhiyajñam*) and a cosmic (*adhidevatam*) meaning. On the one hand, the three brothers can be a triad of ritual fires—either the three that Geldner sees or perhaps three phases of the sacrificial fire (gray embers, flaming fire, and fire flaring as it receives ghee). But they can also be a triad of cosmic fires (perhaps the sun, moon, and earthly fire, which correspond to the three ritual fires, or another of the identifications proposed above). In 1d the clanlord and his seven sons refer primarily to the sacrificer and the seven priests (cf. II.1.2). But the sacrificer might also be embodied in the Sun and the seven priests in Agni, or the clanlord might be the Sun and his seven sons, the stars of the constellation of the Seven Seers, Ursa Major. We will never know which of

these or what other interpretations the poet intended, but it is likely that the verse operates on several levels that connect ritual and cosmos.

The brief exegetical possibilities we have provided in the translation at best suggest primary referents, even though other secondary identifications may also be implied. So, for example, verses 2 and 3 move back and forth between *adhiyajñam* and *adhidevatam* meanings. The “seven” in 2a appear to be the “seven” of 1d, who are primarily priests (an *adhiyajñam* interpretation). However, the “single wheel” in 2a suggests the sun (*adhidevatam*) more than the ritual fire. This interpretation is supported by verse 48, since there the single wheel is the disk of the sun, which is drawn by the “single horse,” *Etaśa*, the horse that pulls the Sun’s chariot. In verse 3 the poet foregrounds ritual referents: the seven may again be priests, and, as is often the case, the chariot has now become a symbol of the sacrifice itself.

Another characteristic of this hymn, and another reason for its obscurity, is its frequent use of word play. The poet favors words that are not etymologically or semantically related but that sound as if they ought to be. For example, in verse 13d *sanād* “from of old” is echoed by *sānābhiḥ* “along with its nave” and in 14a *sānemi* “along with its felly.” Or again, in 14a *vī vāvṛta* “has turned away” anticipates 14c *āvṛtam* “covered over.” In verse 5 *ajā* “unborn” can also mean “goat,” and therefore can suggest *Aja Ekapad*, the “One-Footed Goat,” a symbol of the Sun. According to Thieme (1987: 338), the poet even uses an implied homophone in verse 16. The stars of the constellation called “the *Kṛttikās*” are envisioned as women. The word for “women” in *pāda a* is *strīyaḥ* from the stem *strī*. There is also a closely homophonous masculine stem *stṛ* “star,” which does not occur in the verse but which would have been known to its hearers. The poet is saying that although the *Kṛttikās* are *strī* “women,” people call its constituents *stṛ* “stars,” and therefore they speak of those *Kṛttikās*, even though they are women, as masculine “stars.” As the verse concludes, only a poet who a master of words would understand this, and a poet who does understand it becomes even greater than his father, who would likely have been his teacher.

Thematic continuities and repeated use of similar poetic devices help unify the hymn. The hymn is also unified by its recursive structure created by parallelisms in its beginning and conclusion. For example, the poet speaks of the One (*éka*) in verse 6 and again toward the end of the hymn, in verse 46. In verse 6 that which is the “One” assumes the form of the Sun. At the other end of the poem, in verse 46, the One reappears and, through speech, takes the form not only of the Sun, but also of *Agni*, of *Mātariśvan* (the fire-bringer), and of other deities as well. Verses 7cd and 47 (as well as verse 51) describe the course of the waters upward by means of the rays of the sun and then downward as rain. Verses 2–3 and verse 48 describe the Sun’s chariot and especially its single wheel. The final verses, 49–52, form an independent recursive unit. Verses 49 and 52 concern respectively the feminine *Sarasvatī*, the river goddess, and the masculine *Sarasvant*, who is *Agni* and the Sun according to 52ab. The linkage of fire and water or sun and rain is a constant throughout the hymn. It is reasserted in the verses fitted between those to *Sarasvatī* and *Sarasvant*. Verse 51 describes the cycle of the water to heaven and then back

down to earth and the correspondence between the sacrificial fire that invigorates the gods in heaven and the rain that invigorates the earth. Verse 50, which is quoted from X.90.16, refers to the cycle of the sacrifice, which like the water cycle operates between heaven and earth. The sacrifice has its origins in heaven, but it is now performed on earth and directed back toward heaven. Such formal devices help maintain a sense of coherence in a hymn that covers substantial ritual and thematic territory.

We do not propose to discuss the verses of the hymn in detail, but we do want to provide some additional information and to illustrate especially the movement in this hymn between different levels of meaning. Verse 8 refers to the story of Dawn's incest with her father, who is sometimes the Sun and sometimes Heaven. Depending on which of the two is her father—and either is possible in this verse—Dawn's child might be the Sun or Agni, the ritual fire. Verse 14 describes the movement of the Sun, but here it is its movement at night, when its bright side is turned away from earth and it moves from the west to the east. Verse 15 continues the description of the night (cf. Thieme 1987). The seven who are born at the same time might be the seven stars of the constellation of the Seven Seers. Of these stars six are paired (15b) and one is single (η Ursae Majoris).

In verses 20–22 is the famous riddle of the tree that has continued to remain a puzzle. The two birds have been interpreted as the waxing and waning moon (Thieme 1949: 55–73) the moon and the sun (Kuiper 1970: 127–28), the sun and the gharma pot (Houben 2000: 520–22), and two seekers of knowledge (Geldner). Whatever the birds may be, the verse ultimately concerns the acquisition of knowledge or inspiration, the “sweet fig” (vs. 22) at the top of the tree. Given the enigmatic character of this hymn, it is not surprising that this knowledge remains out of reach. Following the riddle of the two birds are three verses (23–25) that present the development of ritual speech that perhaps embodies the knowledge represented in the “sweet fig.” According to verse 23 *gāyatrī*, *triṣṭubh*, and *jagatī* lines are extracted from hymns composed in the *gāyatrī*, *triṣṭubh*, and *jagatī* meters. That is to say, the shorter constituent, the poetic line, is drawn from the larger, the whole poem. But then verse 24 begins with the *gāyatrī* line, which is the basis for the “chant” (*arkā*), the hymn that is sung, and the chant is the basis of the “melody” (*sāman*) on which many verses may be sung. If so, then this verse begins with the shortest constituent, the line, from which develop the longer songs and chants. Similarly, the *triṣṭubh* line is the basis for longer recitations, *śāstras* in the later tradition. The reason that the verse divides the chant and the recitation between the *gāyatrī* and *triṣṭubh* lines is that the eight-syllable *gāyatrī* line could be used as the basis for chants in the Ṛgvedic tradition, while the eleven-syllable *triṣṭubh* line was used in recitations. Thus in lines ab, reversing verse 23, the shorter (the chanted or recited line) is the basis for the longer (the chant or recitation). This order is continued in c, which moves from individual lines to the complete recitation. In d the shortest constituent of all, the syllable, is the basis for the largest constituent, everything that is chanted or recited by the seven priests. This movement from long (the composed

hymn) to short (the poetic line) to long (chants and recitations), and finally from shortest (the syllable) to longest (everything chanted or recited) knits together the entirety of ritual speech and ultimately concentrates it in the syllable. As such, these two verses anticipate verse 46, in which the “One” is the basis for many names. Verse 25 also presents the smallest constituent as the basis for the larger. According to it the *gāyatrī* stanza is the foundation for the longer *jagatī* stanza and the *rathantara* chant. The *gāyatrī* verse is the basis of the *jagatī*, because the *jagatī* verse has twice the number of syllables as a *gāyatrī* (48 and 24 respectively). It is the basis of the *rathantara* chant because the *rathantara* melody is set to VII.32.22–23, verses in *ḥṛhatī* and *satobḥṛhatī* meters. Verses in these two meters are combinations of *jagatī* and *gāyatrī* lines. The *gāyatrī* is thus the foundation of both the *jagatī* and *rathantara* and as such surpasses both of them.

The theme of inspired Speech (*Vāc*) is taken up again in verses 36–42. It is introduced in verses 36 and 37, in which the poet shifts attention to ancient *ṛṣis* “seers,” whose “insights” and “thought” are brought into the present by poet. However, the poet does not understand his own inspiration (vs. 37), which is finally a gift of the gods or, more specifically, a gift of Agni. According to verses 39–42, this inspired Speech descends to the human realm like water in order to sustain life on earth. While the emphasis in these verses is on Speech as a cosmic principle and human possession, a specific ritual reference is also not far away. As Geldner observes, verse 40 accompanies I.164.26–27 in Atharvaveda Śaunaka 7.73, a hymn to the *gharma* drink of the *Pravargya* rite.

In verses 26–29 the hymn focuses on the *Pravargya* rite. Verse 26 begins with the cow, whose milk will be the offering, and then describes the heating of the *gharma* pot, into which milk will be poured. In 27a the *gharma* pot makes a sound *hin* as it is heated, and because it contains milk, the pot now becomes the cow. Her calf is probably Agni, an identification supported by 28ab, which can describe a pot placed on the fire. In verse 29 the meaning of the cow has shifted again, and she is now the milk “enclosed” within the *gharma* pot. When milk is poured into the heated pot, a pillar of flame erupts in what is the most dramatic visual moment in the entire soma rite as now performed. In 29cd the milk or the cow thus becomes lightning, exploding upward from the pot. Although the reference to the *Pravargya* rite is less obvious in verse 30, the verse may refer to the boiling ghee in the *gharma* pot to which the milk is added (Houben 2000: 510) and therefore to an earlier stage of the ritual than does verse 29. Houben’s interpretation of verse 30 is partly based on the observation that verse 31 is the mantra prescribed by the *śrautasūtras* for the rite of heating and gazing at the *gharma* pot, which also belongs to an earlier stage of the ritual. Houben may be correct in seeing a reference to the *Pravargya* rite, but both verses 30 and 31 are also open to additional interpretations. For example, the “herdsman” in 31a could be the breath (cf. Geldner; also Houben 2000: 508–9) or the Sun (*Sāyaṇa*) or both.

Similarly, Houben (2000: 523) also explains verse 43 as reflecting the *Pravargya* rite. He understands the “dung-smoke” to be smoke from the fire fueled by horse

dung that is used to fumigate the gharma pot. The “dappled bullock” could then be the mixture of milk and ghee that is heated in the gharma pot. But again, this verse can be more than a description of the Pravargya. The “first foundations” (pāda d) should refer not just to the beginning of a particular ritual performance, but to the institution of the sacrifice (cf. X.90), and therefore point to an additional interpretation that locates the form and origin of the sacrifice in the cosmos. The “midpoint” (*viṣūvánt*) can refer to the Viṣūvant day (as in I.84.10), the summer solstice, which is the ritual midpoint of a year-long *sattra* ceremony. This suggests that the fire beyond the earthly fire is the sun, perhaps wrapped in cloud, the “dung-smoke,” since the solstice should occur around the beginning of the rainy season. The sun can also be the “bullock,” which is “dappled” because of clouds or sunspots. The “heroes” can be priests, but they may also be gods, who are gathered around the sun. All these ritual and macrocosmic interpretations are not exclusive since, according to the Āraṇyakas and Brāhmaṇas, the heated gharma pot can represent the sun (e.g., KauB VIII.3, TĀ V.8–9).

In verse 33 the Sun is the likely speaker, although Geldner’s idea that the speaker is the Wind and Breath would maintain the dual reference to cosmos and person. The imagery of these verses appears again in verse 38, in which the subject of lines ab may be the breath (Geldner) or the Sun. The image of the birth of an embryo in verse 33 leads to verses 34–35, which speak of “the navel of the living world” and the “seed” or semen of the horse. These two verses form a *brahmodya*, a ritual exchange of question and answer, in the Horse Sacrifice (ĀśvŚS X.1–3, ŚāṅkhŚS XVI.6.5–6). The verses are appropriate to the Horse Sacrifice and may have been adopted into this hymn from that sacrifice. Here the verses continue the reference to heaven and earth and to the sacrifice, which becomes the image of the world.

1. This treasured one, the gray Hotar—his middle brother is the ravenous one;
his third brother is the one with ghee-smear'd back. In him I saw the clanlord with his seven sons.
2. The seven harness the chariot with a single wheel [=the Sun]. A single horse with seven names draws it.
Triple-naved [=with three seasons?] is the unaging, unassailable wheel, on which all these living beings rest.
3. As its seven horses, the seven [=the priests] who stand upon this chariot [=the sacrifice] draw the seven-wheeled (chariot).
Seven sisters [=voices of the priests] together cry out (the words) in which the seven names of the cows [=poetic speech] are imprinted.
4. Who has seen the first one [=the Sun/Agni] as he is being born, when his boneless (mother) [=the Waters?] carries the one having bones [=the one who is a living being]?
Where is the life, blood, and breath of the earth? Who will approach the knowing one to ask this?

5. Naïve, not understanding, in my mind I ask about these imprinted tracks of the gods.
Upon the full-grown calf [=the fire] the poets have stretched the seven warp-threads (of the sacrifice) in order to weave.
6. Unperceptive, I ask also the perceptive poets about this in order to know, since I am unknowing:
What also is the One in the form of the Unborn [=the Sun] that has propped apart these six realms (of heaven and earth)?
7. Let him speak here, who knows the imprinted track of this treasured bird [=the Sun].
The cows [=rain clouds] yield milk [=rain] from his head [=the Sun].
Clothing themselves in a cloak, they have drunk water with the foot [=the Sun's rays].
8. The mother [=Dawn] gave her father [=the Sun/Heaven] a share in the truth, for in the beginning, through her insight, she united (with him) by her mind.
Recoiling, she whose essence was her child [=Agni/the Sun] was pierced (by her father). Just those offering their reverence went to the (morning) invocation.
9. The mother was harnessed to the yoke-pole of the sacrificial reward;
her child stood up amid the penned cows.
The calf [=Agni] bellowed and looked toward the cow of every color [=Dawn], three wagon-treks (in the distance).
10. Carrying three mothers [=earths] and three fathers [=heavens] alone, he [=the Sun] stands upright: they do not cause him to weary.
On the back of yonder heaven they [=the gods] recite the speech that knows everything but does not inspire everyone.
11. Twelve-spoked, the wheel of truth [=the Sun] ever rolls around heaven—yet not to old age.
Upon it, o Agni, stand seven hundred twenty sons in pairs [=the nights and days of the year].
12. They speak of the father [=the Moon] with five feet [=the seasons] and twelve forms [=the months], the overflowing one in the upper half of heaven.
But these others speak of the far-gazing one [=the Sun] in the nearer (half) fixed on (the chariot) with seven wheels [=the Sun, Moon, and visible planets] and six spokes [=the seasons, in a different reckoning].
13. In the five-spoked wheel [=the year] that rolls round—on that do all living beings take their stand.
Its axle does not become hot, though its load is heavy. From of old it, along with its nave, does not break apart.

14. Along with its felly, the unaging wheel [=the night Sun] has turned away. Harnessed to the outstretched (yoke-pole) [=the airy realm?], ten (horses) draw it.
Covered over, the eye of the Sun moves through the airy realm. All living beings are fixed upon it.
15. They speak of the seventh of those who are born at the same time as the one born alone, saying, “the twins, the Seers born of the gods, are only six.”
What (places) are desired by these [=the Seven Seers] are distributed according to their spheres. While (the one) [=the pole star] stands still, the ones varied in appearance [=the stars of the Seven Seers] quiver.
16. Though they [=the Kṛttikās, the Pleiades] are women, yet they speak of them as men to me. He who has eyes sees; the blind man does not differentiate.
One who is a poet, a (poet’s) son, perceives them. One who recognizes these (women), he will be the father of his father.
17. Below the upper (realm), above the lower here [=at the horizon], the cow [=Dawn] carrying her calf [=the Sun] has stood up by her foot. In which direction is she? Toward which side did she go away? Where does she give birth, for it is not within the fold?
18. Below the upper (realm), above the lower here is he [=the Sun] who knows his father.
Showing himself to be a poet, who will proclaim this here: from whence has divine thought been born?
19. What (chariots [=sacrifices?]) come) this way—they say that those (will go) away; what (chariots go) away—they say that those (will come) this way.
O Soma and Indra, (the deeds) that you two have done, these draw (those chariots) like (horses) harnessed to the yoke-pole of the airy realm.
20. Two well-feathered (birds), yokemates and companions, embrace the same tree.
Of those two the one eats the sweet fig; the other, not eating, keeps watch.
21. Where the well-feathered (birds), never blinking, cry out for a share of immortality and for the ritual distributions,
here the forceful herdsman of the whole living world, the insightful one, has entered me, the naïve one.
22. Just that tree on which all the honey-eating, well-feathered ones settle and give birth,
they say, has the sweet fig at its top. He who does not know the father will not reach up to that.

23. How the *gāyatrī* (track) [=gāyatrī line] is based upon a *gāyatrī* (hymn) or how a *triṣṭubh* (track) [=triṣṭubh line] was fashioned out of a *triṣṭubh* (hymn),
or how the *jagat* track [=jagatī line] is based on the *jagat* [=jagatī] (hymn)—only those who know this have reached immortality.
24. By the *gāyatrī* (track) [=line] one measures the chant; by the chant the melody; by the *triṣṭubh* (track) [=line] (one measures) the recitation;
by the two-footed and the four-footed recitation the (full) recitation. By the syllable the seven voices assume their measure.
25. By the *jagat* [=jagatī] (stanza) he buttressed the river in heaven; in the *rathantara* (chant), he watched over the Sun.
They say that there are three kindling sticks [=three lines in a *gāyatrī* stanza] belonging to the *gāyatrī* (stanza). By its greatness it [=the *gāyatrī* stanza] has passed beyond those in greatness.
26. I summon this milk-cow giving good milk, and the deft-handed milker will milk her.
Savitar will impel the most excellent impetus in us. The *gharma* pot has been heated: this shall I proclaim.
27. Making the sound *hiñ*, the goods-mistress of goods, seeking her calf, has come near through (my) thinking.
Let this inviolable cow give milk to the *Aśvins*. Let her increase for our great good fortune.
28. The cow bellowed after her blinking calf. She made the sound *hiñ* against his head (for him) to bellow.
Lowing toward his hot jaw, she bellows her bellow and swells her swell of milk.
29. This hums—that by which the cow is enclosed. She bellows her bellow, resting upon the smoky (fire).
Because she has put down (what is) mortal with the sound “chit-chit,” becoming lightning, she pushed away her covering.
30. Breathing, life rests (though remaining) on its headlong course, stirring (though) steadfast in the midst of the dwelling places.
The living one keeps moving by the will of the dead one; the immortal one shares the same womb with the mortal one.
31. I saw the herdsman who never settles down, roaming here and afar along his paths.
Clothing himself in those that converge and diverge, he moves back and forth among living beings.
32. He who created him does not know him. He is far away from him who has seen him.
He is surrounded within the womb of his mother. Having many offspring, he has entered into destruction.

33. [The Sun:] “My father, my progenitor, is Heaven; here is my navel. My mother, this great Earth, is my relation.
My womb is within the two open cups [=Heaven and Earth]. Here my father placed the child [=the Sun] of his daughter [=Dawn].”
34. I ask you about the farthest end of the earth. I ask where is the navel of the living world.
I ask you about the seed of the bull(-like) horse. I ask about the highest heaven of speech.
35. This altar here is the farthest end of the earth. This sacrifice here is the navel of the living world.
This soma here is the seed of the bull(-like) horse. This formulator here is the highest heaven of speech.
36. The seven children of the (two world-)halves [=the Seven Seers], the seed of the living world, take their place by the direction of Viṣṇu in the spreading expanse.
By their insights and their thought these encompassing perceivers of inspired words encompass (everything) everywhere.
37. I do not understand what sort of thing I am here: though bound,
I roam about in secret by my thinking.
When the first-born of truth [=Agni] has come to me, only then do I attain a share of this speech here.
38. He goes inward and outward, controlled by his own will—he, the immortal one of the same womb as the mortal one.
Those two are ever going apart in different directions. They observe the one; they do not observe the other.
39. The syllable of the verse, upon which all the gods have settled, is in the highest heaven—
he who does not know that (syllable), what will he accomplish by his verse? Only those who know it sit together here.
40. Because you would become blessed, feeding upon good pasturage, so then we would also be blessed.
Feed on grass always, o inviolable cow [=Speech]! Coming here, drink pure water!
41. The buffalo-cow [=Speech] has bellowed, fashioning oceans. One-footed and two-footed, she is four-footed,
having become eight-footed and nine-footed: she has a thousand syllables in the highest heaven.
42. Seas flow everywhere from her: by that the four directions live,
from that the syllable flows, upon that does everything live.
43. At the midpoint, beyond this nearer (fire), I saw dung-smoke from afar.
Heroes cooked the dappled bullock. These were the first foundations (of the rite).

44. Three long-haired ones gaze out in succession: in a year one [=Agni] of them shears away (the land) for himself; another [=the Sun] gazes upon everything with his powers; the rush of another [=Wind] is visible, but not his form.
45. Speech is measured in four feet [/quarters]. Brahmins of inspired thinking know these.
They do not set in motion the three that are imprinted in secret; the sons of Manu speak the fourth (foot/quarter) of speech.
46. They say it is Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, and Agni, and also it is the winged, well-feathered (bird) of heaven [=the Sun].
Though it is One, inspired poets speak of it in many ways. They say it is Agni, Yama, and Mātariśvan.
47. Along the dark course, tawny well-feathered (birds) [=flames], clothing themselves in the waters, fly up toward heaven.
These have returned here (as rain) from the seat of truth [=heaven].
Only then is the earth moistened with ghee.
48. The chariot-wheel (of the Sun) is one, its wheel-segments are twelve, its wheel-naves are three: who understands this?
They [=the days] that wander on and on are fitted together on that, like three hundred pegs, like sixty (more).
49. Your breast, which is ever full, which is joy itself, by which you make all desirable things prosper,
which confers treasure and finds wealth, which brings good gifts—o Sarasvatī, you prepare that to suckle us here.
50. With the sacrifice the gods performed the sacrifice: these were the first foundations.
These, its greatneses, followed to heaven's vault, where the ancient Sādhyas and the gods are.
51. This water remains the same: it goes up and down throughout the days.
Thunderstorms vivify the earth, and fires vivify heaven.
52. The heavenly well-feathered, lofty bird, child of the waters, and beautiful (child) of the plants,
the one bringing satisfaction by the rains from what is bounded by waters: Sarasvant!—him do I call upon again and again for help.

The last collection of hymns in the first maṇḍala, I.165–191, is attributed to Agastya, who according to later tradition was the son of Mitra and Varuṇa and of the Apsaras Urvaśī. Several times in his hymns, however, Agastya refers to himself as Mānya, the son of Māna (e.g., I.165.14–15, 177.5, 184.4). The collection opens with hymns to the Maruts or to Indra and the Maruts (165–173) and hymns to Indra (174–178). Somewhat oddly placed after these is a hymn that takes the form of a dialogue between Agastya and his wife Lopāmudrā (179). Next are hymns to