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# The Four Vedas

*Sacred Hindu Texts*



EASTERN  TREASURES

*The Sacred Hindu Texts of*

**THE FOUR VEDAS**

(c. 1500-1200 BC)



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A History of Sanskrit Literature (1900) by Arthur Anthony Macdonell

*The Delphi Classics Catalogue*



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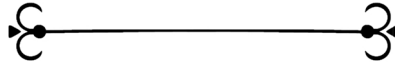
**THE FOUR VEDAS**



*By Delphi Classics, 2025*

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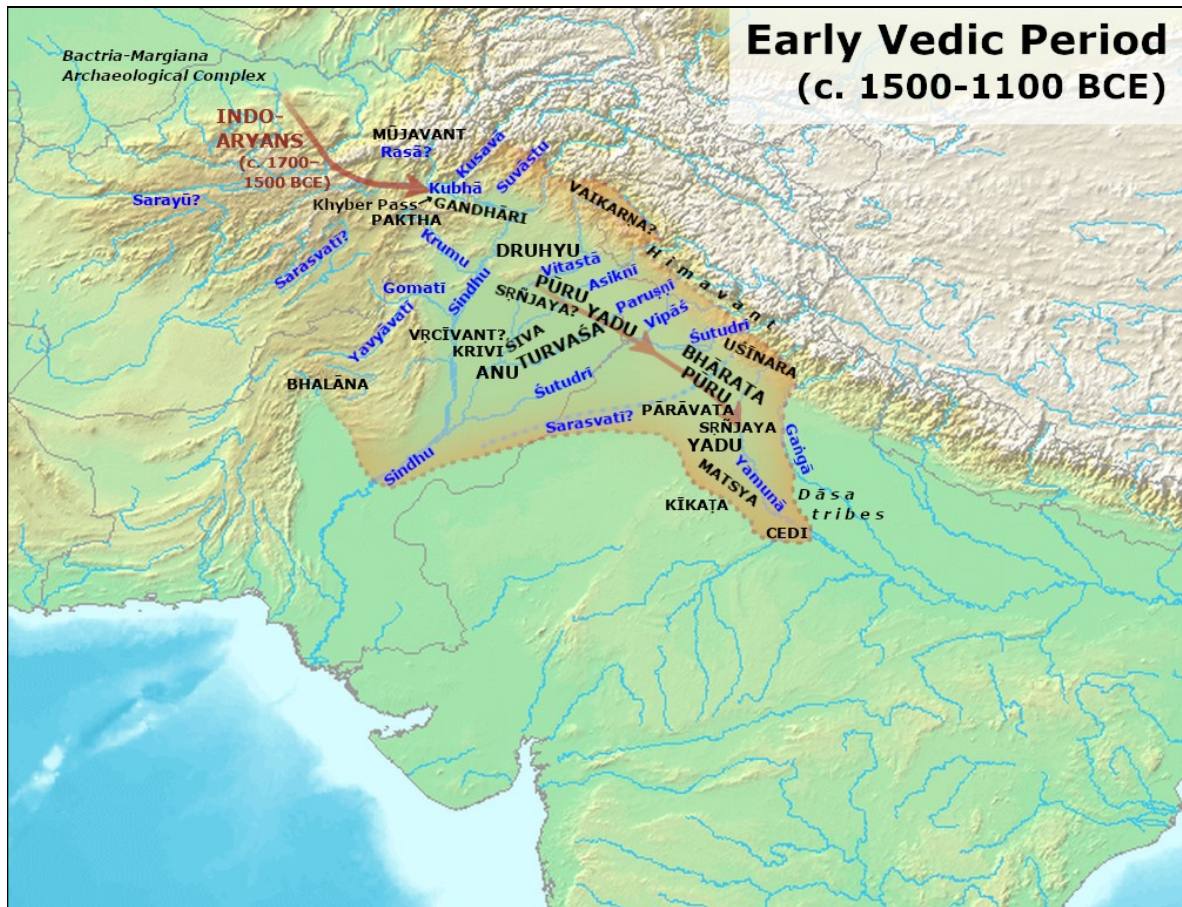
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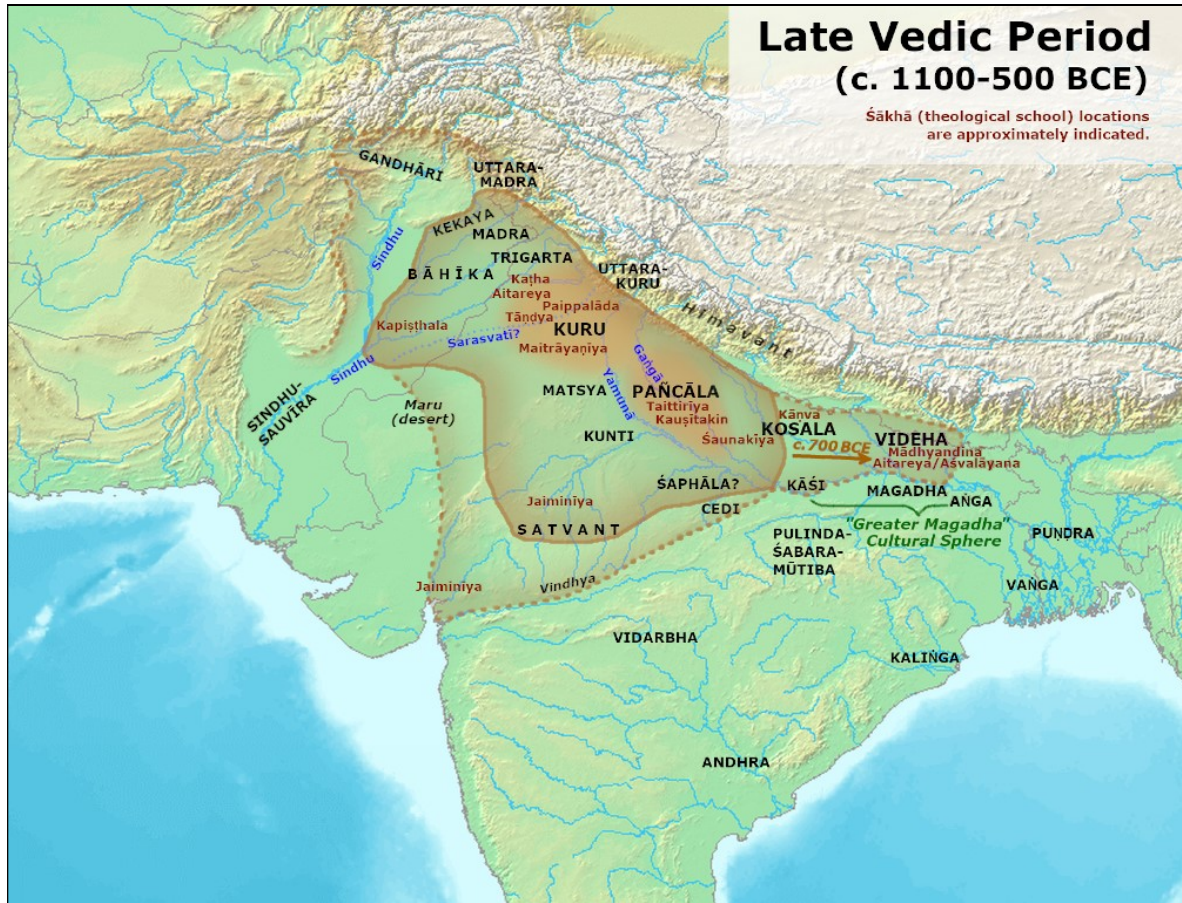
## The Translations



*The modern-day town of Assandh, Haryana, northern india — the site of Āsandīvat, the first Kuru kingdom capital in Iron Age India*



*The Vedic period (c. 1500 – c. 500 BC) occurred in the late Bronze Age and early Iron Age of India, when the Vedas were composed in the northern Indian subcontinent, between the end of the urban Indus Valley Civilisation and a second urbanisation, which began in the central Indo-Gangetic Plain c. 600 BC.*



Map detailing the Late Vedic period

# Rigveda

*Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith, 1889*

The Vedas are a collection of poems and hymns composed in archaic Sanskrit by Indo-European-speaking peoples, who flourished in northwest India during the second millennium BC. No definite date can be ascribed to their composition, though the period of about 1500-1200 BC is accepted by most scholars. The hymns formed a liturgical body that in part grew up around the *soma* ritual and sacrifice, being recited or chanted. These hymns praised a wide pantheon of gods, some of whom personified natural and cosmic phenomena, such as fire (Agni), the Sun (Surya and Savitri), dawn (Ushas, a goddess), storms (the Rudras) and rain (Indra), while others represented abstract qualities such as friendship (Mitra), moral authority (Varuna), kingship (Indra) and speech (Vach).

The canonical division of the Vedas into four parts is:

- Rigveda (RV)
- Yajurveda (YV, with the main division TS vs. VS)
- Samaveda (SV)
- Atharvaveda (AV)

The oldest known Vedic Sanskrit text, the *Rigveda* “praise or knowledge” is a collection of hymns (sūktas), which has survived by being orally transmitted with precision since the second millennium BC, through methods of memorisation of exceptional complexity. Philological and linguistic evidence indicates that the bulk of the extant text was composed in the northwestern region of the Indian subcontinent, most likely between c. 1500 and 1000 BC. The core text *Rigveda Samhita* comprises ten books (maṇḍalas) with 1,028 hymns (sūktas), containing about 10,600 verses. In the eight books — Books 2-9 — that were composed the earliest, the hymns predominantly discuss cosmology, rites required to earn the favour of the gods, as well as praise of the deities. Books 1 and 10 also deal with philosophical or speculative questions, virtues such as *dāna* (charity) in society, questions about the origin of the universe and the nature of the divine, and other metaphysical issues in their hymns.

The hymns of the *Rigveda* are notably similar to the most archaic poems of the Iranian and Greek language families, the *Gathas* of old Avestan and *The Iliad* of Homer. Its preserved archaic syntax and morphology are of vital importance in the reconstruction of the common ancestor language Proto-Indo-European. Some of the verses continue to be recited during Hindu prayer and celebration of rites of passage, such as weddings and funerals, meaning it is likely the world’s oldest religious text in continual use.

The hymns are arranged in collections, each dealing with a particular deity: Agni comes first, Indra second, and so on. They are attributed and dedicated to a *rishi* (sage) and his family of students. Within each collection, the hymns are arranged in descending order of the number of stanzas per hymn. If two hymns in the same collection have equal numbers of stanzas then they are arranged so that the number of



syllables in the metre are in descending order. The second to seventh mandalas have a uniform format. The *sūktas* in turn consist of individual stanzas called ṛc (“praise”), which are further analysed into units of verse called pada (“foot”). The hymns of the *Rigveda* are composed in varying poetic metres in Vedic Sanskrit. The most common metres are the *gayatri* (3 verses of 8 syllables), *anushtubh* (4 verses of 8 syllables), *trishtubh* (4 verses of 11 syllables) and jagati (4 verses of 12 syllables).

श्रीगणेशायनमः॥ ॐ ३ म् ॥ अग्निं॥ ईळे॥ पुरः॥ रहितं॥  
 ॥ होतारं॥ रत्न॥ धातमं॥ अग्निः॥ पूर्वभिः॥ ऋषिभिः॥ उर्यः॥  
 न॥ आ॥ इह॥ वहति॥ अग्निना॥ रथिं॥ अश्रवत्॥ पोषं॥ ए  
 वीरवत्॥ तमं॥ अग्नेयं॥ युत्तं॥ अध्वरं॥ विश्वतः॥ परिभूः॥ उ  
 छति॥ अग्निः॥ होता॥ क्विञ्कतुः॥ सत्यः॥ चित्रश्रवः॥ रत्न  
 तः॥ १॥ यत्॥ अंगं॥ दाम्बुके॥ त्वं॥ अग्ने॥ भद्रं॥ कुरिष्यसि॥ त  
 रः॥ उर्पा॥ त्वा॥ अग्ने॥ दिवे॥ द्विवे॥ दीपा॥ वृस्तः॥ धिया॥ वयं॥ न  
 राजंतं॥ अध्वराणां॥ गोपां॥ ऋतस्य॥ दीदिविं॥ वर्धमानं॥ स्व  
 सुनवे॥ अग्ने॥ सु॥ उ॥ पा॥ य॥ नः॥ भ॥ व॥ सर्व॥ स्वा॥ नः॥ स्व॥ स्त॥ र्ये॥ २॥

हवीत॥ इमे॥ सोमाः॥ अरुं॥ कृता॥ ता॥ तेषां॥ पाहि॥ श्रुधिः॥ हव॥ व  
 त्वां॥ अर्च॥ ज॥ रितारः॥ सु॥ तः॥ सोमाः॥ अरुः॥ र॥ विदः॥ वायो॥ र  
 मिगानि॥ दाम्बुके॥ त्वं॥ अग्ने॥ भद्रं॥ कुरिष्यसि॥ त

'Rigveda' manuscript in Devanāgarī, early nineteenth century. After a scribal benediction (śrīgaṇeśāyanamaḥ om), the first line has the first pada, RV 1.1.1a (agniṃ ile purah-hitam yajñasya devaṃ ṛtvijam). The pitch-accent is marked by underscores and vertical overscores in red.

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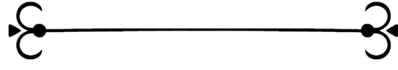
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*Statue of the god Agni the Fire-holder, 100 BC, Mathura Museum. Agni is the Hindu god of fire and the addressee of the first book of hymns.*

# BOOK I.



## HYMN I. Agni.

- 1 I laud Agni, the chosen Priest, God, minister of sacrifice,  
The hotar, lavishest of wealth.
- 2 Worthy is Agni to be praised by living as by ancient seers.  
He shall bring hitherward the Gods.
- 3 Through Agni man obtaineth wealth, yea, plenty waxing day by day,  
Most rich in heroes, glorious.
- 4 Agni, the perfect sacrifice which thou encompassest about  
Verily goeth to the Gods.
- 5 May Agni, sapient-minded Priest, truthful, most gloriously great,  
The God, come hither with the Gods.
- 6 Whatever blessing, Agni, thou wilt grant unto thy worshipper,  
That, Angiras, is indeed thy truth.
- 7 To thee, dispeller of the night, O Agni, day by day with prayer  
Bringing thee reverence, we come
- 8 Ruler of sacrifices, guard of Law eternal, radiant One,  
Increasing in thine own abode.
- 9 Be to us easy of approach, even as a father to his son:  
Agni, be with us for our weal.

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*End of Sample*