# ऋग्वेद

# The Rigveda

## Made Simple

The oldest book of India, explained in 8 colourful pages.

अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं

"I praise Agni, the priest of the sacrifice." The very first words of the Rigveda (1.1.1)

विज्ञान के LENS से, अध्यात्म की खोज

# What is the Rigveda?

The Rigveda is a collection of hymns (prayers and poems) in Vedic Sanskrit. It is the oldest of the four Vedas and one of the oldest texts in the world still in use.

**10**
Mandalas (books)

**1,028**
Suktas (hymns)

**~10,600**
Mantras (verses)

**~3,000+**
years old (c. 1500–1000 BCE)

## Key words

| | |
|---|---|
| ऋक् · Rig | Praise, a verse of praise |
| वेद · Veda | Knowledge |
| ऋषि · Rishi | A seer who "saw" or heard the hymn |
| सूक्त · Sukta | A hymn, a group of mantras |

So, Rigveda = **"the knowledge of praise"**.

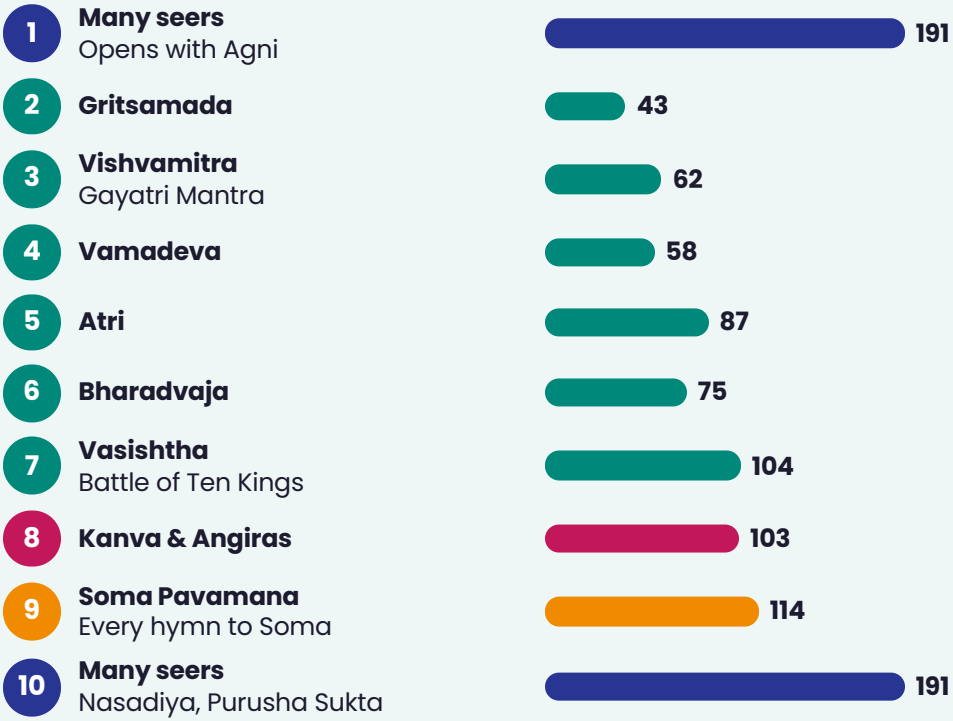
**DID YOU KNOW?**

For centuries the Rigveda was not written down. It was memorised and passed from teacher to student by sound alone. In 2007, Rigveda manuscripts kept in Pune were added to UNESCO's Memory of the World Register.

# The 10 Mandalas

Think of a Mandala as a "book" inside the Rigveda. The bar shows how many hymns each one has.

Family books (one seer family each) · Later, many seers · Only Soma · Kanva family




**Easy trick:** Mandalas 2 to 7 are the oldest "family books". Mandalas 1 and 10 were added later and hold some of the deepest questions.

# Meet the Devatas

Most Rigvedic gods are forces of nature: fire, sun, wind, storm and dawn.

### Indra इन्द्र

King of the gods, thunder and rain. About 250 hymns, the most of any god.

### Agni अग्नि

Fire, the messenger who carries offerings to the gods. About 200 hymns.

### Soma सोम

A sacred plant and drink. All of Mandala 9 is about Soma.

### Varuna वरुण

Guardian of Rta, the cosmic order, and of the waters.

### Surya सूर्य

The Sun, the eye of the sky. Savitr is the Sun's power to inspire.

### Ushas उषस्

The Dawn. Her hymns are some of the most beautiful poetry in the Veda.

### Rudra रुद्र

Storms and healing herbs. Later linked with Shiva.

### Vishnu विष्णु

Measured the whole cosmos in three great strides.

**एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्ति**

"Truth is one; the wise call it by many names." Rigveda 1.164.46

# 5 Big Ideas

ऋत

### Rta: cosmic order

The universe follows a rhythm. Sunrise, seasons and rivers all move by Rta. Living rightly means living in tune with it.

यज्ञ

### Yajna: offering

Offerings are made into the fire. It is an exchange: humans give, the gods give back rain, health and strength.

सत्य

### Satya: one truth

Many gods, but one reality behind them. This idea later grows into the Upanishads.

सिन्धु

### Sapta Sindhu: land of rivers

The hymns were composed in the land of seven rivers in north-west India. The Sarasvati is praised as the best of rivers.

ऋषिक

### Women seers

Women also composed hymns. Lopamudra, Ghosha and Apala are among the Rishikas named in the Rigveda.

# 5 Famous Hymns

## Gayatri Mantra

3.62.10

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥

"We meditate on the shining light of Savitr. May it inspire our minds."
Seer: Vishvamitra.

**10.129** — **Nasadiya Sukta**
The Hymn of Creation. Asks what existed before the universe, and ends: perhaps even the highest one does not know.

**10.90** — **Purusha Sukta**
The cosmos is pictured as a giant cosmic being, from whom the world is formed.

**10.121** — **Hiranyagarbha Sukta**
The "golden womb" or cosmic egg from which all creation arose.

**10.75** — **Nadistuti Sukta**
Praise of the rivers, naming them from the Ganga in the east to the Sindhu in the west.

# Old questions, new science

The Rigveda asks **why**. Physics explains **how**. See where their questions meet.

**RIGVEDA 10.129**

नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्

"There was neither being nor non-being." What was there before creation?

**PHYSICS**

**The Big Bang**

The universe began about 13.8 billion years ago. What came "before" is still an open question.

**RIGVEDA 10.121**

हिरण्यगर्भः

A golden cosmic egg from which everything came.

**PHYSICS**

**A hot, dense start**

Lemaître (1931) called it a "primeval atom" that expanded into everything.

**RIGVEDA**

ऋत

Rta, a cosmic order that even the gods follow.

**PHYSICS**

**Laws of nature**

The same laws of physics hold everywhere in the universe.

**Honest note:** these are parallels of thought, not scientific proof. The Rigveda is poetry and philosophy; physics is experiment and maths. Both are richer when read on their own terms.

# Remember these 8

1. Rigveda is the **oldest** of the four Vedas.
2. **10** Mandalas, **1,028** hymns, about **10,600** verses.
3. It begins with a hymn to **Agni**.
4. **Indra** has the most hymns; Mandala 9 is all **Soma**.
5. **Gayatri Mantra**: Mandala 3, by Vishvamitra.
6. **Nasadiya Sukta** (10.129) asks how creation began.
7. **Rta** means the cosmic order of the universe.
8. It was passed down **orally** for centuries.

## Test yourself

1. Which god is the Rigveda's first hymn addressed to?
2. Which Mandala is fully about Soma?
3. What does "Ekam sat" mean?

Answers: 1. Agni · 2. Mandala 9 · 3. Truth is one