

Who is the primary deity addressed in the first several hymns of Book 4, and what are his key roles?

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆

Hint: This deity is described as an 'appointed messenger' and 'Priest of both worlds'.

The primary deity is Agni. His key roles include being a divine messenger between Gods and mortals, a priest (Invoker, Sacrificer) at rituals, a guest in every home, a protector, and a source of wisdom and wealth.



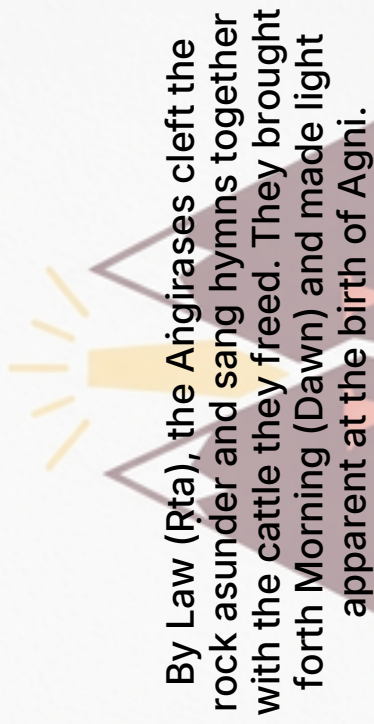

In Hymn 1, what three 'births' of Agni are mentioned?

Difficulty: ★★★★★

Hint: Consider the different realms where this deity might manifest.

Hymn 1, verse 7 describes 'three... births, the true, the most exalted... of the God, of Agni.' While not explicitly detailed in this passage, traditional Vedic interpretation often refers to Agni's birth in heaven (as lightning), among humans (on the altar), and in the waters.



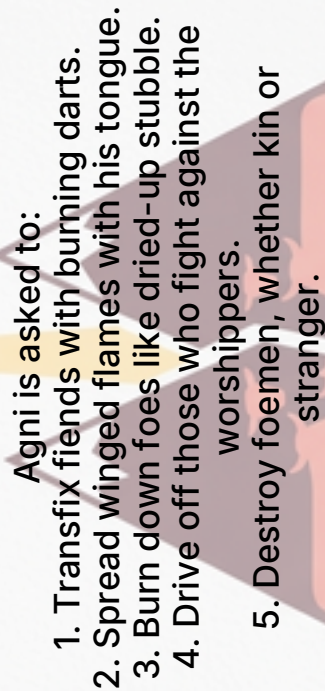
By Law (Rta), the Angirases cleft the rock asunder and sang hymns together with the cattle they freed. They brought forth Morning (Dawn) and made light apparent at the birth of Agni.

According to Hymn III, how did the Angirases (ancient sages) use the power of Law (Rta)?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This relates to a famous myth about releasing cows from a mountain or cave.

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- Agni is asked to:
1. Transfix fiends with burning darts.
 2. Spread winged flames with his tongue.
 3. Burn down foes like dried-up stubble.
 4. Drive off those who fight against the worshippers.
 5. Destroy foemen, whether kin or stranger.

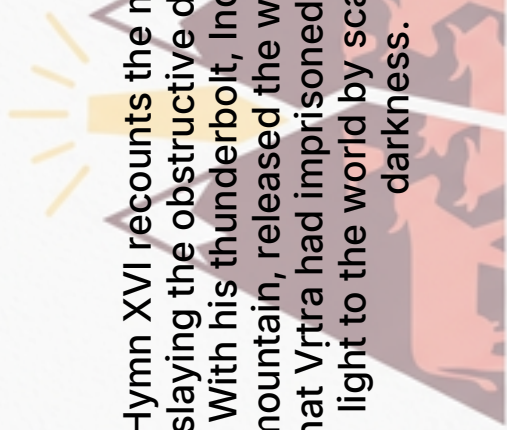
Hymn IV describes Agni in martial terms. What specific aggressive actions is he called upon to perform?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Look for verbs related to combat and destruction in Hymn IV.

Hymn XVI recounts the myth of Indra slaying the obstructive dragon Vṛtra. With his thunderbolt, Indra cleft the mountain, released the waters (rivers) that Vṛtra had imprisoned, and brought light to the world by scattering the darkness.



What is the central myth retold in Hymn XVI concerning Indra?

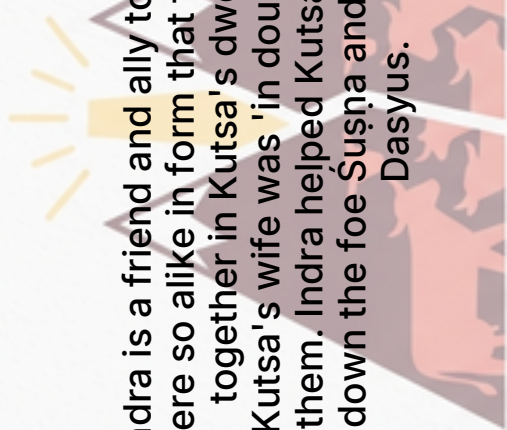
Difficulty:
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Hint:

The hymn mentions a 'floods' obstructer' and a 'Dragon'.



Indra is a friend and ally to Kutsa. They were so alike in form that they once sat together in Kutsa's dwelling, and Kutsa's wife was 'in doubt between' them. Indra helped Kutsa by hurling down the foe Śuṣṇa and destroying Dasyus.



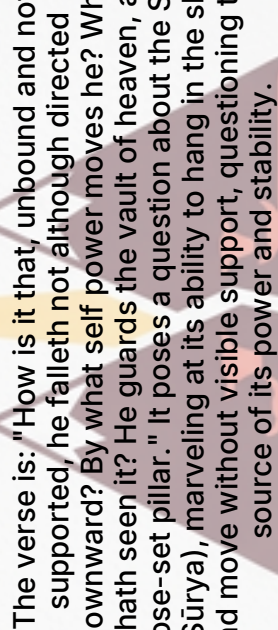
In Hymn XVI, what is the nature of the relationship between Indra and Kutsa?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Think about a story of divine aid and mistaken identity.





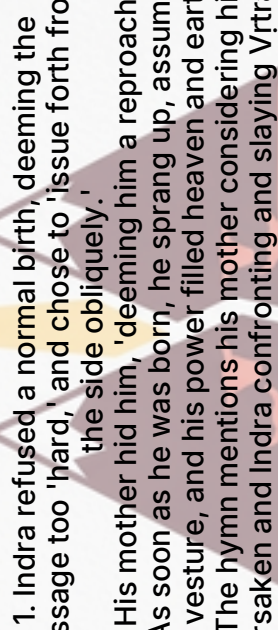
The verse is: "How is it that, unbound and not supported, he falleth not although directed downward? By what self power moves he? Who hath seen it? He guards the vault of heaven, a close-set pillar." It poses a question about the Sun (Sūrya), marveling at its ability to hang in the sky and move without visible support, questioning the source of its power and stability.

Hymn XIII and XIV both end with the same enigmatic verse. What is it, and what philosophical question does it pose?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This verse questions the physics of a celestial body mentioned in the hymns.

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1. Indra refused a normal birth, deeming the passage too 'hard,' and chose to 'issue forth from the side obliquely.'
 2. His mother hid him, 'deeming him a reproach.'
 3. As soon as he was born, he sprang up, assumed his vesture, and his power filled heaven and earth.
 4. The hymn mentions his mother considering him forsaken and Indra confronting and slaying Vṛtra.

Hymn XVIII tells the story of Indra's unusual birth. What were the key events?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This hymn describes a non-traditional birth path and the mother's initial reaction.

The speaker recounts a moment of extreme hardship: "In deep distress I cooked a dog's intestines. Among the Gods I found not one to comfort. My consort I beheld in degradation. The Falcon then brought me the pleasant Soma."

What harrowing experience does the speaker (implied to be Indra) recount in Hymn XVIII, verse 13?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This verse describes a moment of desperation, abandonment by the Gods, and ultimate rescue by a bird.

Agni is asked to act as a mediator to reconcile the worshippers with Varuṇa. He is called upon to 'bring with favour... thy Brother Varuṇa' and to 'put far away from us the God's displeasure.' This positions Agni as an intercessor who can appease Varuṇa's strict adherence to Law.

In several hymns (e.g., I, II, III), what is the relationship between Agni and Varuṇa?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Think about Agni's role as a messenger and Varuṇa's role as a keeper of cosmic order.

Hymn V, verse 5 states that those 'full of sin, untrue, unfaithful' have engendered the 'abysmal station.' They are compared to 'youthful women without brothers, straying' and 'dames who hate their lords, of evil conduct.'

According to Hymn V,
who or what has
'engendered this
abysmal station'?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

The hymn attributes this negative creation to a specific type of person characterized by moral failings.

They ask Agni, "In sight of Aditi make thou us sinless." "Aditi is a mother goddess associated with boundless space and freedom, and being made sinless in her sight implies a complete and fundamental purification.

In Hymn XII, the
worshippers ask Agni
for remission of sins.
Before which deity are
they hoping to be made
sinless?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

The hymn names a specific great goddess in verse 4.