

The relationship is transactional and reciprocal. The worshipper provides fuel, oblations (offerings), and praise (hymns). In return, they expect Agni to provide protection from enemies, wealth (especially cattle), heroic sons, long life ('a hundred winters'), and to act as an intermediary, carrying their sacrifices to the other gods.

What is the relationship between the worshipper and Agni as depicted in the hymns?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Think about what the people offer to the god and what they ask for in return.

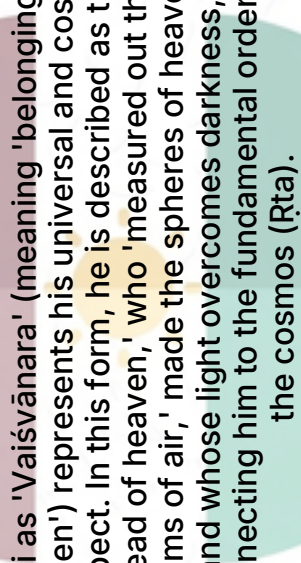
Agni is described with vivid, often fierce, imagery. He has a blackened pathway, 'devastates forests', and 'champs like a horse.' His flames are his 'tongue' or 'horses,' his smoke reaches the heavens, and he shines like the Sun (Sūrya). He is called the 'Child of Wood' and is said to 'smelt' the woods like a smelter.

How is Agni's physical appearance and action described, particularly in relation to nature?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Recall the metaphors used to describe the consuming and spreading nature of fire in Hymns III and VI.




Agni as 'Vaiśvānara' (meaning 'belonging to all men') represents his universal and cosmic aspect. In this form, he is described as the 'head of heaven,' who 'measured out the realms of air,' 'made the spheres of heaven, and whose light overcomes darkness, connecting him to the fundamental order of the cosmos (Rta).

What is the significance of the term 'Vaiśvānara' as an epithet for Agni?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Look at Hymns VII, VIII, and IX for descriptions of this specific form of Agni and his cosmic functions.



The primary deity is Indra, the king of the gods, a warrior god associated with thunder, storms, and battle.

Who is the primary deity praised in Hymns XVII through XXI?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

This god is called 'Mighty One', 'thunder-wielding', Lord of Bay Steeds, and is known for slaying a famous dragon.

Indra's most famous deed is the slaying of the dragon Vr̥tra. By doing so, he 'broke through the cattle-stall,' released the obstructed waters or floods, and made the Sun visible, bringing order and life to the world.

What is Indra's most famous heroic deed mentioned repeatedly in these hymns?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Consider the mythological battle described in Hymn XVII and XVIII involving a 'Dragon' or 'Ahi'.

Soma is a ritual drink that invigorates and delights Indra, augmenting his strength for battle. The hymns frequently implore Indra to drink the Soma so that he will be gladdened and empowered to defeat enemies and bestow wealth.

According to the hymns, what role does Soma play in relation to Indra?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Notice how the call to 'Drink Soma' is often immediately followed by a description of Indra's heroic feats.



The hymns mention Indra defeating several other figures, often referred to as Dasyus or Asuras. These include Śuṣṇa, Cumuri, Dhuni, Pipru, and Namuci. He is also credited with destroying their forts or castles.

Who are some of the enemies Indra is credited with defeating, besides Vritra?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Look through Hymns XVIII and XX for specific names of foes vanquished by Indra.

to as the Dasyus.


Indra is depicted as a champion for the Arya people. Hymn XVIII states, 'singly thou hast subdued the people for the Ārya,' positioning him as a divine force who aids his worshippers in their conflicts against other groups, referred

What is the relationship between Indra and human peoples like the Āryas, as described in Hymn XVIII?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Consider the verse that contrasts two groups of people and Indra's role in their conflict.



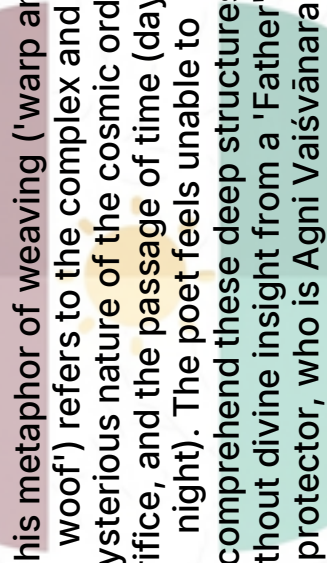
The divine craftsman Tvaṣtar is credited with making Indra's weapon, the thunderbolt (Vajra). It is described as a 'bolt with thousand spikes and hundred edges.'

Who is credited with fashioning Indra's primary weapon, and what is it called?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

Look in Hymn XVII for the mention of a divine artisan who creates the weapon used to crush the dragon.



This metaphor of weaving ('warp and woof') refers to the complex and mysterious nature of the cosmic order, sacrifice, and the passage of time (day and night). The poet feels unable to comprehend these deep structures without divine insight from a 'Father' or protector, who is Agni Vaiśvānara.

In Hymn IX, the poet expresses a sense of confusion, stating 'I know not either warp or woof.' What does this metaphor refer to?

Difficulty:  
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Hint:

This hymn discusses the nature of day and night and the weaving of a 'web' when moving to a 'contest.' The answer relates to cosmic and ritual knowledge.