

AI Flashcards

According to Hymn I.1, from what four sources is the god Agni brought to life or generated?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

The first stanza of the first hymn lists the origins of Agni's flame. Think about where fire can be found or created in nature.

Agni is brought to life from:

1. The waters
2. The stone
3. Forest trees
4. Herbs that grow on the ground

Hymn I portrays Agni as embodying several other major deities.
Name at least three other gods that Agni is identified with in this hymn.

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Review stanzas 3, 4, and 6 of Hymn I, which explicitly equate Agni with other prominent deities in the pantheon.

In Hymn I, Agni is identified with several other gods, including:

- Indra (Hero of Heroes)
- Visnu (of the MightyStride)
- Brahmanaspati (the Brahmān finding wealth)
- King Varuna (whose laws stand fast)
- Rudra (the Asura of mightiness)
- Mitra (Wonder-Worker)

In the hymns, what are the primary roles or functions of Agni in the context of a sacrifice?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Consider the titles given to Agni, such as 'Herald,' 'Priest,' 'Envoy,' and his function as the 'mouth' of the gods (Hymn I.13).

Hymn XII cites several of Indra's key deeds:

- Fixing the earth and mountains.
- Slaying the Dragon (Vrtra) and freeing the Seven Rivers.
- Driving kine from the cave of Vala.
- Creating fire between two stones.
- Giving being to the Sun and Morning.
- Slaying the demon Sambara.

Hymn XII repeatedly uses the refrain, 'He, O men, is Indra.' What specific deeds are cited in this hymn to define Indra's greatness?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Look for the actions attributed to Indra in each stanza of Hymn XII, which serve as proof of his supreme power.

- Agni's primary roles in a sacrifice are:
- **Herald/Messenger (Envoy):** He passes between mortals and gods, carrying oblations to the heavens.
 - **Priest (Hotr/Ministrant):** He officiates the rite and purifies it.
 - **Kindler:** He is the fire into which offerings are placed.
 - **Cleanser/Purifier:** His fire purifies the offerings and the space.

The Soma juice. The hymn repeatedly uses the refrain, 'These things did Indra in the Soma's rapture,' indicating that drinking Soma gave him the power and ecstasy needed for his heroic acts.

According to Hymn XV,
what substance is
repeatedly credited
with empowering Indra
to perform his mighty
exploits, such as
slaying the Dragon?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

The last line of most stanzas in Hymn XV provides the answer. It's a key element in Indra's mythology.

In several hymns (e.g.,
Hymn XI.18, XIX.6), Indra is
depicted as assisting
specific human individuals
or groups. Name two
individuals he is said to
have helped and the nature
of his assistance.

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Scan the hymns dedicated to Indra for names of mortals who received his aid in battle or against demonic forces.

1. **Dabhitī:** Indra protected him by burning the weapons of his enemies and binding them without cords (Hymn XIII.9, Hymn XV.4).
2. **Kutsa/Divodāsa:** Indra gave up the demon Śuṣṇa to Kutsa and, for Divodāsa, demolished Śambara's ninety-nine castles (Hymn XIX.6).

Hymn III is an Āpri hymn. What is the defining characteristic of this type of hymn, and what is its main purpose?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Notice how each stanza of Hymn III addresses a different entity: Agni, Narāsamsa, the Divine Doors, Night and Morning, etc. This sequential invocation is the key.

An Āpri hymn is characterized by its structure, where each stanza invokes a different deity or deified object associated with the sacrificial fire and process. Its purpose is to consecrate the various elements of the sacrifice in a specific, ordered sequence, inviting them to participate in the ritual.

What is the relationship between Indra, Vṛtra, and the waters/rivers as described in the hymns?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Think of this as a foundational creation myth. Indra's most famous act involves a battle over a cosmic resource.

Vṛtra, often called 'the Dragon,' is depicted as an obstructor who 'barred up' or 'beleaguered' the rivers, preventing them from flowing. Indra, as the heroic 'Vṛtra-slayer,' battles and kills Vṛtra with his thunderbolt, thereby freeing the waters to flow for the benefit of humankind (Hymns XI.5, XII.3, XIX.2).

In what way is Agni described as the 'mouth' or 'tongue' of the gods in Hymn I?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Consider Agni's role as the intermediary who connects the human world of offerings with the divine world of the gods.

Agni is the 'mouth' and 'tongue' of the gods because it is through him that the gods consume the offerings. The hymns state, 'by thee the Gods devour the duly offered food' and 'all the Immortal guileless Gods eat with thy mouth the oblation' (Hymn I.13-14). The physical fire of the sacrifice is the medium for this divine consumption.

The hymns repeatedly mention the 'Dāsa' or 'Dasyu' peoples. How are they characterized, and what is Indra's relationship to them?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This relates to the conflict between the hymn-composers (Ārya) and their adversaries. Look for Indra's role in these battles.

The Dāsa/Dasyu are characterized as enemies who are often 'godless', 'wicked', and possessors of forts or castles that Indra destroys. Indra's relationship to them is one of a conqueror; he 'scattered the Dāsa hosts who dwelt in darkness' (Hymn XX.7), 'slays the Dasyu' (Hymn XII.10), and helps the Ārya overcome them (Hymn XI.19).

X

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X

X

A recurring final stanza appears in many of the hymns in this selection. What is the central plea of this refrain?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

Examine the final stanza of Hymns like XVI, XVII, XVIII, XIX, and XX. The request combines material wealth with social prestige.

The central plea of the recurring refrain is for patronage and success. It asks for the 'wealthy Cow' of the god (usually Indra) to provide a boon to the singer, requests that fortune not fail, and expresses the desire to 'speak aloud, with brave men, in the assembly,' signifying a wish for social standing, prosperity, and glory.

According to Hymn II.10, over how many 'Races' do the singers hope their glory will shine?

Difficulty:
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Hint:

This is a specific numerical detail found in the latter half of Hymn II.

The singers hope their glory will shine over the 'Five Races.' This term is generally understood to refer to the five principal tribes or peoples of the Vedic world.