

HEAT IN THE RIG VEDA AND ATHARVA VEDA

A GENERAL SURVEY
WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO SOME
ASPECTS AND PROBLEMS

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“*Tapas*” in the *RV*.

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“Just to those, O Yama, may he go to those ancient, Ṛta-cherishing, Ṛta-possessing, Ṛta-fostering, *tapas*-possessing Fathers.”

E. *TAPAS* AS A CREATIVE POWER.

In verse 5 of the same hymn and elsewhere *tapas* appears as a Creative Power:

1. RV. X, 154, 5:
(c) *ṛṣin tāpasvato yama*
(d) *tapojān āpi gachatāt*

“To the *tapas*-possessing Ṛṣis, O Yama, who were born of *tapas*, to them also may he go.”

2. RV. X, 183, 1 (to Putrakāma):
(a) *āpaśyaṃ tvā mānasā cēkitānaṃ*
(b) *tāpaso jātāṃ tāpaso vibhūtam*

“I see you (Putrakāma) concentrating your mind, born from *tapas*, developed from *tapas*.”

Putrakāma is “desire for offspring” temporarily personified into a god for the purposes of this hymn.

3. RV. X, 169, 2:
(a) *yāḥ sārūpā virūpā ékarūpā*
(b) *yāsām agnir iṣṭyā nāmāni véda*
(c) *yā āṅgirasas tāpasehá cakrús*
(d) *tābhyaḥ parjanya máhi sárma yacha*

“The like-colored, vari-colored, one-colored (cows) whose names Agni knows by means of the ritual, whom the Angirases fashioned by *tapas* here, from these does Parjanya obtain great protection.”

In his note on (b), Geldner (HOS) says: “the names of the cows played a role in the ritual (see TBr. 3, 2, 3, 7, Hillebrandt, *Neumon-dopfer*, 12).”

In this verse the cows are being honored in somewhat the same way as Putrakāma in Section 2 above.

In the two following verses, *tapas* has become not only a completely abstract entity, but also a great creative, primeval power.

4. RV. X, 129, 3:
(a) *tāma āsit tāmāsā gūḥám ágre*
(b) *’praketāṃ salilāṃ sárvam ā idám*

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(c) *tuchyénābhv āpīhitam yád āsīt*

(d) *tāpasas tām mahinājāyataikam*

“There was darkness hidden by darkness at the beginning. This all was an unilluminated flood. The force which was hidden by a shell was born through the power of its own heat.”⁷

A similar verse is:

5. RV. X, 190, 1:

(a) *ṛtām ca satyām cābhīddhāt*

(b) *tāpasó 'dhy ajāyata*

(c) *tāto rātry ajāyata*

(d) *tātaḥ samudró arṇavāḥ*

“Both Universal Order and Truth were produced from incandescent heat. From that (heat) night was born. And from that (heat) the billowing ocean (was born).”

6. RV. X, 167, 1. This verse is discussed in detail in the Chapter XXVII on Indra and Heat.

⁷The translation is taken from that of Brown, “The Rigvedic Equivalent for Hell, p. 80.