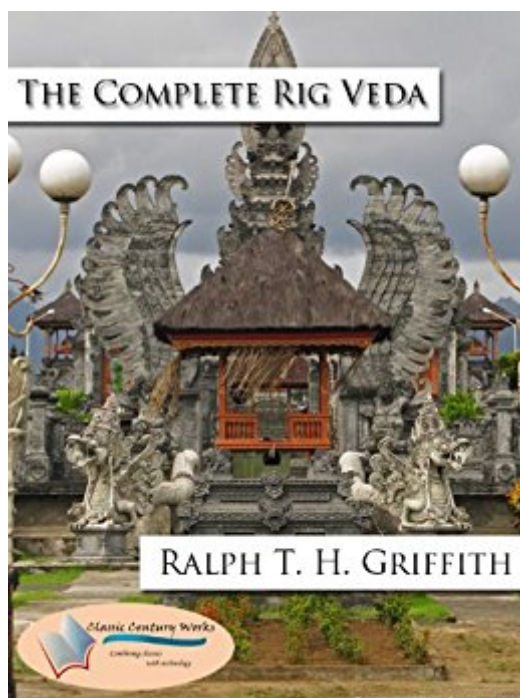


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# The Rig Veda [Unabridged, English Translation] (The Vedas Book 2)



## Synopsis

Within Hinduism, there are four Sacred Texts: Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda, and Atharva Veda. The Rig Veda is the oldest of the four, and consists of 10 books of hymns. It was created approximately 1500 B.C. and codified around 600 B.C. The writer of the book is unknown, but it is postulated that the book was written after 300 B.C. The Vedas are some of the most ancient sacred texts that are still in existence today. The Rig Veda contains hymns that give us an insight of life in India in the past, as well as mythological and poetical accounts of the origin of the world, hymns for praising the gods, ancient prayers for life, prosperity, and more. This eBook, "The Complete Rig Veda", contains all 10 books of the Rig Veda, translated to English. This is the full, unabridged version translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith. This version also contains an easy to use "search" feature to allow you to quickly jump to any hymn within seconds, as opposed to scrolling through thousands of hymns via the Table of Contents. It's been completely formatted to work properly on eReader devices.

## Book Information

File Size: 2554 KB

Print Length: 1147 pages

Publisher: Classic Century Works (March 8, 2012)

Publication Date: March 8, 2012

Sold by: Amazon Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B007IQ32AE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Not Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #64,228 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #2

in Kindle Books > Religion & Spirituality > Hinduism > Sacred Writings > Vedas #17 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Other Religions, Practices & Sacred Texts > Mysticism #55 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Religion & Spirituality > Hinduism

## Customer Reviews

A tremendous work and expansive both in scale and scope. The Rig is of course famous for its Hymn of Creation and this translation does not disappoint. Not for the casual reader, who can turn to various interpretations and works by venerated gurus for more explicit explanations.

thank you!

Whenever I review ancient classics like this, it's never about the content of the material because I've already read several different versions of the same book. Why I liked this copy is because the good translation and ease of digesting the original intent of the veda. A truly good achievement in that regard.

This item was received in great condition and in the time frame that the seller claimed when purchasing this item. I would recommend this item to anyone needing the same along with this seller who packed and shipped it as stated. I would definitely use this sellers products again in the future.

This is an easily readable translation. It is well organized with no issues. The literature itself is a little repetitious with obscure references though. Depending on why one is reading it may lead to whether you enjoy it or not.

Way back in September, 2004, I posted a review of a hardcover reprint edition, from Book of the Month Club, of an antiquated (late Victorian) translation of an ancient sacred text from India, the Rig-Veda (RV), describing the work, and the obsolescence of the translation. In that format it was edited -- that is, selected and introduced -- by the historian of religions, Jaroslav Pelikan, as part of a Book of the Month Club set of "Sacred Writings," of which it was Volume 5, "Hinduism," forming a companion to volumes of sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Buddhism. The edition is occasionally available through sellers, so that review has been kept alive. By "antiquated," I mean not only in the scholarship regarding Sanskrit vocabulary and grammar, which has advanced in the last century on several fronts, but also to Griffith's preference for vaguely King-James-Version English, and his use of obsolescent words, like "kine" as the plural of "cow," and eccentric ones, such as "meath" instead of "honey," a rare (and almost unintelligible) cognate for Sanskrit maddhu, probably substituted for the synonymous "mead" (a drink made from fermented honey, and so likely to be offensive to good Hindus). In October 2005, however, I

reviewed Kessinger's then-recent digital version of the same translation, pointing out both problems with the version itself, and shortcomings in the electronic realization of it. The review of the Kessinger product was shifted by to one by Digireads, which for some time has not been available, either, so that review is accessible only on the "See All My Reviews" pages. There have been other digital versions, available through the Kindle Store and elsewhere, some giving individual books as separate files, some bundling it with other long-out-of-copyright translations of other texts. This newest version, the Classic Century Works edition (with a March 2012 release date), resolved a major shortcoming in the older digital format, since it uses the Indological alphabet, with its diacritical marks -- and usually gets them in the right places, unlike some other versions! Emphasizing this may seem unnecessarily finicky, but this is an internationally accepted "loss-less" transcription system, essential for distinguishing similar Sanskrit names and technical terms when they are presented in the Roman alphabet. Just to begin with, vowel quantity may distinguish gender, or an unfamiliar consonant may determine the meaning of a word... (I will not attempt to duplicate it here, but use familiar anglicized spellings.) And, if you plan to read a collection estimated to be as long as the Iliad and the Odyssey together, you might as well get the official forms of names fixed in your mind. (Alas, the use is not quite consistent, with some under- and over-dotting of consonants missing, mostly, I think, in close proximity to the marking of long vowels.) Since the translation is fairly readable (unlike some), and contains no preposterous or partisan interpretations, having Griffith's correct text available, and at a low price, is to be welcomed. In addition, the CCW version offers an easy-to-use finding system using the search engine built into the digital reader, so that one can go to any poem whose "book" and sequence number are known, without wading through the thousand-plus entries in the hyper-linked table of contents. (Since I'm reading it on a smart-phone screen, not a Kindle or iPad, I find this rather important.) Like its predecessor, it does not include Griffith's sometimes-useful notes. On the other hand, it does rescue some material which Griffith tucked away in an appendix, inserting it in its proper place (although the use of Latin to avoid shocking delicate Victorian sensibilities is maintained), instead of failing even to list the appendix (which I found in the Kessinger edition only because I was looking for it). In the mean time, I have re-thought how to present my views on the basic text and this translation of it; although, I think, not their substance. The Rig-Veda Samhita (very roughly, "Verse-Knowledge-Collection") is a collection of 1028 compositions, mostly hymns, originally transmitted orally in a still-living tradition based on a whole mnemonic technology, and mostly dating no later than about 1200 to 900 BCE. (Possibly a bit earlier, but attempts to place it in, for example, the Paleolithic, depend on the combination of religious dogma and dubious

astronomical interpretations of obscure passages. The hymns (and riddles, and possible incantations, and mocking songs directed against rival ritualists, etc.) are divided into ten mandalas ("circles"), corresponding to the "books" of Western, text-centered traditions, based primarily on the families of Brahmans who transmitted them as the heritage of the ancestor who revealed them. According to the other three Vedas (Yajur-, Sama-, and Atharva-), and to companion Sanskrit compositions, the Brahmanas (including the early Upanishads), the primary function of the poems in the Rig Veda was as accompaniments -- both audible and purely mental -- to the ancient sacrificial rituals. (Declarations to the contrary implicitly reject unanimous ancient Indian tradition -- this is NOT some Western invention.) The poems are filled with addresses and references to deities like Agni (sacrificial, domestic, and other fire) and Soma (a god, a sacrificial substance, the drink of the gods, and, in late hymns in Book 9, the Moon); to the Warrior-King and Thunder-God, Indra; to the Upholders of Law and Religion, Mitra, and Varuna; and the twin horsemen and friends of mortals, the Nasatyas, or Ashvins, among many others. For the most part they have long been displaced in India's spiritual life by the statistically less prominent Vishnu and Shiva (the latter appearing in the RV under the name of Rudra, and, only once, as "shiva," "the Auspicious One") and others, like Ganesha, who are not mentioned directly as part of the ancient pantheon (although they may be genuinely ancient). The language of the hymns is more correctly called "Vedic" rather than "Sanskrit" (the latter denoting a "purified" and formalized stage, like Classical Latin). However, I've sometimes wondered about the Soma Hymns in Book 9, which is supposed to be the latest part of the whole collection. Griffith's own introductory matter and appendices, explaining many aspects of the text, are available in another digital edition, also packaged with excerpts from studies and commentaries, edited by M.M. Ninan (release date 2010). Unhappily, the diacritical marks are missing from the main text. Still, this may be a better solution than that from Evinity Publishing Inc (release date March 2009), which, alas, garbles the diacritical marks rather badly. (If you don't mind, for example, exclamation points and periods instead of dots over or under letters, or gaps in words to allow space for unattached accents, you may find this unobjectionable.) For those needing such information, however, I can also suggest the digital editions of (excerpts from) A.A. Macdonell's fine "A Vedic Reader" of 1917, describing the major deities, as well as the meters and other aspects. (Unfortunately, they all seem to omit his selection of Sanskrit texts, and the famously solid, if old-fashioned, translations.) It is much denser, and apparently much more accurate, than Griffith's own front matter and appendices, but does not make excessively heavy demands on the "uninitiated." (A chunk of it is included by Ninan, but buying it separately will save you a little money. And archive.org offers complete versions -- see below.) A much fuller, and much more technical,

version of this and other material, is MacDonell's own monograph on "Vedic Mythology," which includes the other Vedas and the relevant portions of the Brahmanas in its purview. I reviewed it some years ago, and it is currently in print. A searchable digital edition in a format giving quick access to his "multitudinous sea" of citations, would be wonderful. Several digital versions also are available through archive.org, but only the unwieldy pdf is free from original errors in English spelling -- let alone the Sanskrit... The same applies to Macdonell's two-volume "Vedic Index," (with A.B. Keith), This Classic Century Works edition is, as indicated above, one of several digital versions of Ralph T.H. Griffith's 1889 (revised 1896) translation, very out of date in some ways, often unreliable in detail, but not quite hopelessly obsolete. So far, in one form or another, it is the only (almost) complete English-language version of the whole of the "Rig Veda" which is at all readily available. "Nearly" complete because Griffith felt compelled to put some "indecent" passages in Latin, or borrow renderings from another Indologist's version, tucking them away in an appendix; from which they appear to have been extracted and inserted in their proper position by the Classic Century editors. That predecessor, also a nearly complete rendering, was by H.H. Wilson. It began appearing in 1850, with the sixth and final volume in 1888. That version deserves the respect due to the work of pioneer, and, like some other works of its generation, has been reprinted in India, in four volumes, with a Sanskrit text, as Rgveda Samhita, translated by H.H. Wilson & Bhasya of Sayanacarya, edited by Ravi Prakash Arya & K.L. Joshi (Edition Indica Books, Varanasi, 2002), which may have filled in the missing material. [With thanks to S. Ferguson, who supplied information on this edition in a comment on another of my reviews.] There does not seem to have been a recent US (or British) edition, nor have I noticed a digital text. Griffith's translation, which was reprinted in New Delhi in 1973, and possibly since, apparently has not been found too objectionable in India. However, it is still the only designedly complete English-language edition based on a good edition of the Sanskrit, and is still the most recent translation in any Western language of long stretches of the collection -- unless one reads German fluently, in which case K.F. Geldner's four-volume "Der Rig-Veda" of 1951-1957 may be your best choice anyway. Unfortunately, it has to be treated with considerable wariness. Personally, I would not want to rely on Griffith's rendering unless I've been able to compare it one by one by P. Lal ("Golden Womb of the Sun: Rigvedic Songs in a New Translation," 1965 and following), A.A. Macdonell ("A Vedic Reader," 1917, and "Hymns from the Rig Veda," 1922), Raimundo Panikkar ("The Vedic Experience," 1977), or Wendy Doniger's "The Rig Veda" (Penguin Classics, 1981), with its extensive, if now dated, bibliographic notes to each of 108 hymns. The last, unfortunately, has been targeted in a campaign against the translator for presuming to interpret Hindu texts with modern critical tools -- there is an interesting account of the controversy

on Wikipedia. (Some of which was carried out using my reviews of variously-titled Penguin editions, although has long since deleted a great many of the comments.) Griffith's translation was based in part on the explanations of the rather late Indian commentary of Sayana (died 1387), connecting the epithets and metaphors for the gods with celestial phenomena, and its "Nature Mythology" adaptation by Max Mueller (Friedrich Maximilian Mueller; also referred to as F. Max Mueller). Mueller, a brilliant philologist (and general editor of the epoch-making Sacred Books of the East series) edited both the Rig Veda and Sayana's commentary. Fortunately, Mueller's Sanskrit text of the Rig Veda (first edition 1849-1874) used by Griffith (there was a second edition, four volumes, 1890-1892), did not offer problematic interpretations, and, unlike his translations, it is still used and respected by Indologists. Mueller is also famous, or notorious, for proclaiming that Vedic metaphors and personifications for natural phenomena were later misunderstood, and that "mythology is a disease of language" -- a view which contemporary and later critics rejected, some quipping that (since the human imagination is primary) "language is a disease of mythology." He also insisted on applying this method as a "key" to all other Indo-European mythologies, and had considerable success in persuading others. However, it usually turned out that \*everyone\* was a sun-god, and he eventually brought down a chorus of ridicule on his head, undermining the whole comparative enterprise for decades. (The American folklorist Richard M. Dorson wrote a summing-up of the whole affair in an essay on "The Eclipse of Solar Mythology." This approach -- the assumption that the Vedas were not just very old, but "primitive" --, together with a charmless style (rather than a supposed desire to undermine Hinduism, which he believed was already doomed) marked Mueller's own 1891 translation of selected hymns. Of course, being out of copyright, they are also available in digital form.

The translation was reasonably good in that the English flowed well and did not sound stilted or archaic. On the other hand, it left a lot to be desired. The presentation frequently seemed choppy and disjointed.

The Rig Veda is very old, and existed before creation (it is said). The book has many hymns, obviously with meaning for Hindus. For example, Agni is the God of Fire. There are many hymns to Agni. For my spiritual practice, it's over my head. I meditate and do mantras, but I am not able to benefit from this book. The Upanishads will serve you better.

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