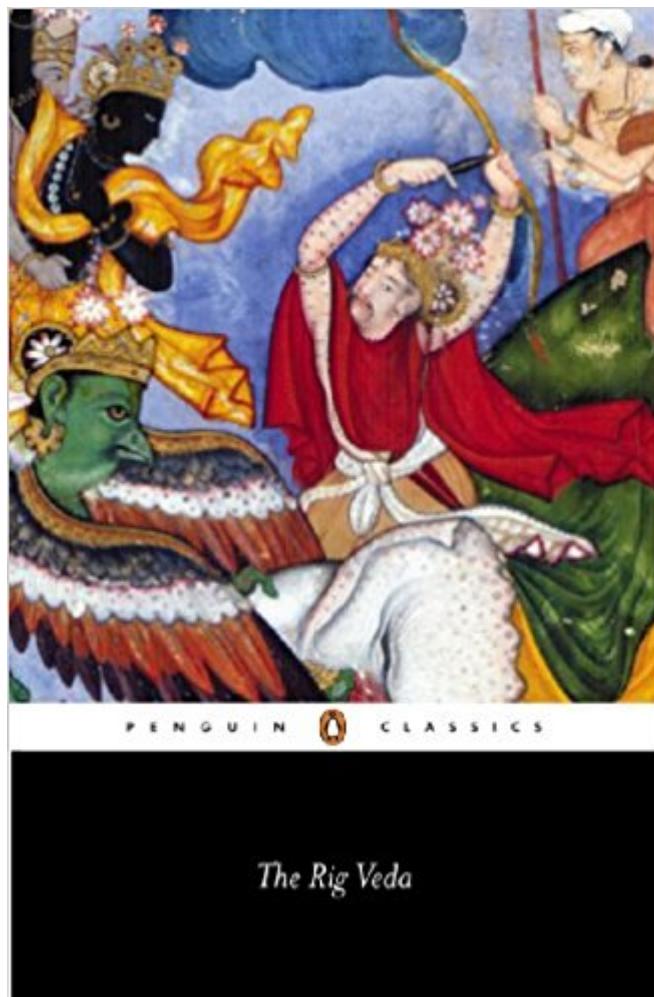


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# The Rig Veda (Penguin Classics)



## Synopsis

The earliest of the four Hindu religious scriptures known as the Vedas, and the first extensive composition to survive in any Indo-European language, the Rig Veda (c. 1200-900 BC) is a collection of over 1,000 individual Sanskrit hymns. A work of intricate beauty, it provides a unique insight into early Indian mythology, religion and culture. This selection of 108 of the hymns, chosen for their eloquence and wisdom, focuses on the enduring themes of creation, sacrifice, death, women, the sacred plant soma and the gods. Inspirational and profound, it provides a fascinating introduction to one of the founding texts of Hindu scripture - an awesome and venerable ancient work of Vedic ritual, prayer, philosophy, legend and faith. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Text: English (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Wendy Doniger is the Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions at

the University of Chicago, and the translator of numerous Sanskrit texts including the Laws of Manu, and Kamasutra.

This text is:(1) An accurate translation of the Vedas as far as we know.(2) A product of Orientalism.(3) Relatively unpolluted by ideology (as far as the translation itself goes).This text is not:(1) A guide to how the Vedas were used in classical India.(2) An accurate commentary on how Hindus view the Vedas.(3) Complete.(4) A representative summary of the Vedas, although it does have the few very famous Vedas which Hindus would memorize even today.It's not a bad edition and I award it 5 stars. Ignore the commentary.

Doniger does a very accessible translation. Her translation choices preserve the meaning while allowing a flow to the language. I have a number of copies of the Rig Veda. I like Doniger's hymn selection in this version. The Rig Veda gives a unique insight into an ancient civilization and its practices.

Great product, good communication.

Excellent book and excellent seller

Great to have a classic work of Hinduism explained by an expert like Wendy Doniger, who wrote *The Hindus*.

Excellent gift for an inquisitive young friend.

Readers should be advised that I come to the topic of Indian culture with almost no background, having read only M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, and what I can find about the Rig Veda on the Internet. Indeed, prior to my inquiry, I had thought "Agni" the name of an Indian guided missile! Readers should also know my prejudices: I hesitate with Oriental religions, for many of them in my country have been popularized by the religion of Californianity, and doubtless have been so distorted. I am also favorably prejudiced toward liturgical religions, and thus I've read about Shinto with some interest. I also hold the opinion that India will play no small role in the coming years; to inform oneself of her cultural roots is not time wasted. For anyone who wishes a contemporary and historical-critical abridgement of the Rig Veda, it seems that Doniger's work will do. Indeed, it will

have to do, for I can find nothing in English equivalent to it, and Doniger should be thanked for her efforts. I should tell devout Hindus that I am aware of the limitations of the historical-critical method with respect to what is held to be Scripture - the limitation, while providing the *Sitz im Leben* of a text in its past, of *leaving* that text in that past. Yet this method also has its virtues. Indeed, if this abridgement has any faults, it is that I would have liked to have read even more about the culture of the Rig Veda's authors. I would also have liked to have learned more about the period's liturgical practice, for the Rig Veda, like the Psalms, is a collection of hymns to be used in the liturgy. In particular, Was the sacrifice *do ut des*? Did the liturgy have implications beyond *do ut des*, such as (like the Catholic-Orthodox *cultus*) a *mysterion*, i.e. an actual participation is the life of the god? And then there's Soma: drug culture or Eucharistic? These reservations aside, and they are minor reservations, and with the proviso that I can in no way evaluate the fidelity of her translation, still no reader can complain about Doniger's annotation. She has chosen 108 hymns; it seems that the majority are from Books I and X. Each hymn has a brief preface, and then is copiously footnoted. At the end of her work, she has provided a glossary and index combined, a list of the hymns both by book and by opening Sanskrit phrase, and comments made on other translations and on bibliography. Doniger did this work in the latter third of the 20th Century, and two of that century's hot topics, women's issues and sex, are slightly accentuated, but never overdone. Nor does she disparage overtly other religions. This work as a whole seems scholarly, and is certainly at the same time user-friendly. Now let's pray that a scholarly historical-critical translation into English of the entire Rig Veda will soon appear - one just as well annotated.

The Rig Veda is one of four major Vedas which comprise the foundation of Vedic or Hindu faith. The Rig Veda is composed of hymns to the gods, mostly Indra and Agni. The Penguin Edition is excellent, with plenty of footnotes that help explain the hymns. I've heard you would need a guru to fully understand the meaning of all of them. Nevertheless, as far as English translations go this is excellent.

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