**The Rig Veda was written by the Aryans who entered the Indus Valey toward the end of the**[**Harappan Civilization.**](http://www.thenagain.info/webchron/india/Harappa.html)**They wrote this Veda between 1300 and 1000 BC, during the period of the**[**Aryan Migrations**](http://www.thenagain.info/webchron/india/AryanMig.html)**.  However, there may be possible Harappan influences on these works.  This is because the Vedas were actually being developed before the Aryans arrived around 2000 B.C.**

**Although there are many Vedas written, the most important is the Rig, which contains over 1,000 hymns directed to the gods.  The content of these hymns includes praises, blessings, sacrifices, and curses.  These hymns are the major way in which the Aryan people praised their gods.  The subject of the hymns is the personification of the powers of nature.**

**I. Hymn to Indra**

I will declare the manly deeds of Indra, the first that he achieved, the thunder wielder.
He slew the dragon [1], then disclosed the waters, and cleft the channels of the mountain torrents.
He slew the dragon lying on the mountain: his heavenly bolt of thunder Twashtar [2] fashioned.
Like lowing cows in rapid flow descending the waters glided downward to the ocean.
Impetuous as a bull, he chose the Soma [3], and quaffed in threefold sacrifice the juices.
Maghavan [4] grasped the thunder for his weapon, and smote to death this firstborn of the dragons.
When, Indra, thou hadst slain the dragons' firstborn, and overcome the charms of the enchanters,
Then, giving life to sun and dawn and heaven, thou foundest not one foe to stand against thee.
Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vritra worst of Vritras.
As trunks of trees, what time the axe hath felled them, low on the earth so lies the prostrate dragon.
He, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra, the great impetuous many-slaying hero.
He, brooking not the clashing of the weapons, crushed Indra's foe, the shattered forts in falling [5],
Footless and handless, still he challenged Indra, who smote him with his bolt between the shoulders.
Emasculate yet claiming manly vigor, thus Vritra lay with scattered limbs dissevered. . .
Nothing availed him lightning, nothing thunder, hailstorm or mist which he had spread around him: [6]
When Indra and the dragon strove in battle, Maghavan gained the victory forever.
Whom sawest thou to avenge the dragon, Indra, that fear possessed thy heart when thou hadst slain him;
That, like a hawk affrighted through the regions, thou crossedst nine-and-ninety flowing rivers?
Indra is king of all that moves and moves not, of creatures tame and horned, the thunder-wielder.
Over all living men he rules as sovereign, containing all as spokes within the felly. [7]

**II. Hymn to Purusha**

**The religion that sprang forth from the Vedas helped shape Indian society.  For example, the Rig Veda and Vedic literature were used in the development of the caste system.  The Rig Veda describes how**[**the god Purusha sacrificed himself**](http://www.thenagain.info/Classes/Sources/RigVeda.html#Purusha)**to himself. Each of the pieces of his body developed into a different portion of society. His mouth became the Brahmin or priests; his arms became the Kshatriyas or warriors; his thighs became the Vaisya or merchants, farmers, herders and artisans; and the feet became the Sudra or slaves and servants. Thus, while each part of society had its own role, it was still and single body.**

A thousand heads had Purusha [8], a thousand eyes, a thousand feet.
He covered earth on every side, and *spread*ten fingers' breadth beyond.
This Purusha is all that yet hath been and all that is to be;
The lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.
So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Purusha. All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.
With three-fourths Purusha went up: one-fourth of him again was here.
Thence he strode out to every side over what eats not and what eats.
From him Viraj [9] was born; again Purusha from Viraj was born.
As soon as he was born, he spread eastward and westward o'er the earth.
When gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusha as their offering,
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.
They balmed as victim on the grass Purusha born in earliest time. [10]
With him the deities and all Sadhyas [11] and Rishis [12] sacrificed.
From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat was gathered up.
He fanned the creatures of the air and animals both wild and tame.
From that great general sacrifice, Richas and Samahymns [13] were born:
Therefrom the metres were produced, the Yajus [14] had its birth from it.
From it were horses born, from it all creatures with two rows of teeth:
From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born.
When they divided Purusha how many portions did they make?
What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?
The Brahmin [15] was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rajanya [16] made.
His thighs became the Vaisya [17], from his feet the Sudra [18] was produced.
The Moon was genered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth;
Indra and Agni [19] from his mouth were born, and Vayu [20] from his breath.
For from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head;
Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.
Seven fencing-logs had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,
When the gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim, Purusha.
Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim: these were the earliest holy ordinances.
The mighty ones attained the height of heaven, there where the Sadhyas, gods of old, are dwelling.

[1] The Dragon is Vritra or clouds. In slaying the clouds, Indra brings rain.
[2] Twashtar is the god's blacksmith.
[3] a hallucinogenic drink which only the gods could have and Brahmin Priests are though to have drunk to experience the gods .
[4] "Maghavan" means "Lord Bountiful" and is another name for Indra.
[5] Perhaps a better word for "forts" would be "prison." The clouds have imprisoned the rain.
[6] Vritra attempts to save himself from Indra through the use of magic.
[7] The rim of a spoked wheel. The world as a wheel is one of the most common images in Hindo thought.
[8] Purusha was the universal spirit, the source of all life.
[9] The female procreative force.
[10] During a Vedic sacrifice, speciall grass would be laid out for the gods to sit upon.
[11] Sadhyas were demigods.
[12] Rishis were sages.
[13] The sacred hymns of the Rig Veda.
[14] The rituals of the Yajur Veda. These a collection of formulas for ritual sacrifices.
[15] The Aryan priests.
[16] The Rajayana or Kshatriyas were the rulling, warrior class.
[17] The farmers, herders, traders and artisans.
[18] The slaves and servants.
[19] The god of fire and sacrifice.
[20] The wind.