

# Vedic Ritual Laboratory: Solution with Universal Effect

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## Abstract

. The foundation of priestly duties in Vedic society was to attract god's attention to people and, thus, to assure the formers that people followed the rules of *Rta*. The composers of R̥gveda considered Agni as the most ancient priest, clearing the sacrifice from its initial dark impurity. On behalf of people, that action was assisted by:

- A *hotar* priest, who poured the material sacrifice into the fire,
- A *brahman* priest, who helped to "lift" the sacrifice with his thought and to "direct" it to the desired direction, and also
- An *upavaktar* priest, who sang along to the fire.

There was also a special priest, who "helped" the fire to light up - *agnidhra* or *agnimidhra*.

The material component of the sacrifice was "ordered" by the Soma god. He was assisted by the *potar* priest, who cleared the prepared liquid (soma), and by an *adhvaryu* priest, who made oblation of soma, and some other ritual actions. All the mentioned realities give us full reason to conclude, that Vedic people invented quite complex and developed system of cooperation of different participants of ritual. Regarding the aims of the ritual, we can definitely consider the proposed model as the very early idea of multifunctional cooperation with division of labour and interconnection of particular stages with the final common desirable result. In some extant this decision looks like the work of any modern scientific laboratory, but with larger universality.

## Full Paper

One of the most interesting things, we can borrow from Vedic people, is their approach to achieve the very important and, at the same time, quite difficult aims. Particularly, it is their division of efforts towards such goals. The most evident example of that approach is an interconnection of Vedic people and supreme powers within the cosmic realities known to them.

We are talking here about Vedic rituals, and, first of all, about sacrifice practice and its arrangement. Regarding Vedic people, we are discussing about priests, known in Vedas as *ṛtvija* (Monier-Williams, M. 1960: 224) and their activity.

The priests were responsible for:

- An establishment of communication of people with gods;
- Fruitfulness of cooperation with divine performers of ritual, i.e. with Agni and Soma;
- The successfulness of imposing of Āryans into *ṛta*;
- The obtaining of positive results of that imposing (Perzashkevich, O.V. 2014: 217-221).

Thus, only the priests were able to prove location of Āryans inside *āryāvarta*, i.e. on the gods' side. Assistance to gods in their struggle for *ṛta* gave to Āryan people their hope for desirable requitals. The foundation of priestly duties in Vedic society was to attract god's attention to people and, thus, to assure the formers that people followed the rules of *ṛta*. Rituals, and, first of all, sacrifices of different types, very often connected to a special liquid of Soma, used to be the means of achievement of that result (Perzashkevich, A. 2021b).

It is necessary to notice, that the very act of sacrifice was also considered as a particular part of *ṛta*: the Fire (Agni), lighting up in darkness, creates the space (as well as other shine-bearing gods), the flame connects two worlds - the Earth and the Sky, and this make people and gods connected. Therefore, the composers of R̥gveda considered Agni as the most ancient priest who transformed human sacrifice into "an ordered one", clearing the sacrifice from its initial dark impurity (Parmeshwaranand, S. 2006: v.1., 40-51).

On behalf of people, that action was assisted by: The *hotar* priest, who poured the material sacrifice into the fire, f.e.:

RV III 4, 3+4+7+10

pra dīdhitir viśvavārā jigāti hotāram iḍaḥ prathamam yajadhyai □  
achā namobhir vṛṣabham vandadhyai sa devān yakṣad iṣito yajīyān □  
ūrdhvo vām gātur adhvare akāry ūrdhvā śocīṃṣi prasthitā rajāṃsi □  
divo vā nābhā ny asādi hotā strīmahī devavyacā vi barhiḥ □  
daivyā hotārā prathamā ny rñje sapta pṛkṣāsaḥ svadhayā madanti □  
ṛtam śamsanta ṛtam it ta āhur anu vratam vratapā dīdhyānāḥ □  
vanaspate 'va sṛjopa devān agnir haviḥ śamitā sūdayāti □  
sed u hotā satyataro yajāti yathā devānām janimāni veda □

RV IV 6, 1+2+4+5+11

ūrdhva ū ṣu ṇo adhvarasya hotar agne tiṣṭha devatātā yajīyān □  
tvam hi viśvam abhy asi manma pra vedhasā cit tirasi manīṣām □  
amūro hotā ny asādi vikṣv agnir mandro vidatheṣu pracetāḥ □  
ūrdhvam bhānum savitevāśren meteva dhūmam stabhāyad upa dyām □  
stīrṇe barhiṣi samidhāne agnā ūrdhvo adhvaryur jujusaṅo asthāt □  
pary agniḥ paśupā na hotā triviṣṭy eti pradiva urāṇaḥ □  
pari tmanā mitadrur eti hotāgnir mandro madhuvacā ṛtāvā □  
dravanty asya vājino na śokā bhayante viśvā bhuvanā yad abhrāt □  
akāri brahma samidhāna tubhyam śamsāty uktham yajate vy ū dhāḥ □  
hotāram agnim manuṣo ni ṣedur namasyanta uśijaḥ śamsam āyoh □

RV V 1, 2+5-7

abodhi hotā yajathāya devān ūrdhvo agniḥ sumanāḥ prātar asthāt □  
samiddhasya ruśad adarśi pājo mahān devas tamaso nir amoci □  
janiṣṭa hi jeyo agre ahnām hito hiteṣv aruṣo vaneṣu □  
dame-dame sapta ratnā dadhāno 'gnir hotā ni śasādā yajīyān □  
agnir hotā ny asīdad yajīyān upasthe mātuḥ surabhā uloke □  
yuvā kavīḥ puruniṣṭha ṛtāvā dhartā kṛṣṭīnām uta madhya iddhaḥ □  
pra ṇu tyaṃ vipram adhvareṣu sādhum agniṃ hotāram īdate namobhiḥ □  
ā yas tatāna rodasī ṛtena nityam mṛjanti vājinaṃ ghr̥tena □

RV VI 11, 1+2+6

yajasva hotar iṣito yajīyān agne bādho marutām na prayukti □  
ā no mitrāvaruṇā nāsatyā dyāvā hotrāya pṛthivī vavṛtyāḥ □  
tvam hotā mandratamo no adhrug antar devo vidathā martyeṣu □  
pāvakayā juhvā vahnir āsāgne yajasva tanvam tava svām □  
daśasyā naḥ purvaṇīka hotar devebhir agne agnibhir idhānaḥ □  
rāyaḥ sūno sahaso vāvasānā ati srasema vṛjanaṃ nāmhaḥ □

RV VII 16, 5+12

tvam agne gr̥hapatis tvam hotā no adhvare □  
tvam potā viśvavāra pracetā yakṣi veṣi ca vāryam □  
tam hotāram adhvarasya pracetasam vahniṃ devā akr̥ṇvata □  
dadhāti ratnam vidhate suvīryam agnir janāya dāśuṣe □

RV IX 97, 1+26

asya preṣā hemanā pūyamāno devo devebhiḥ sam apr̥kta rasam □  
sutaḥ pavitram pary eti rebhan miteva sadma paśumānti hotā □  
devāvyo naḥ pariśicyamānāḥ kṣayam suvīram dhanvantu somāḥ □  
āyayavaḥ sumatiṃ viśvavārā hotāro na diviyajo mandratamāḥ □

The *brahman* priest, who helped to "lift" the sacrifice with his thought and to "direct" it to the desired destination, f.e.:

RV I 164, 35+45

iyam vedih paro antah prthivyā ayam yajño bhuvanasya nābhiḥ □  
ayam somo vṛṣṇo aśvasya reto brahmāyam vācaḥ paramam vyoma □  
catvāri vāk parimitā padāni tāni vidur brāhmaṇā ye manīṣiṇaḥ □  
guhā trīṇi nihitā neṅgayanti turīyam vāco manuṣyā vadanti □

RV II 1, 2-3

tavāgne hotram tava potram ṛviyam tava neṣtram tvam agnid ṛtāyataḥ □  
tava praśāstram tvam adhvarīyasi brahmā cāsi grhapatīś ca no dame □  
tvam agna indro vṛṣabhaḥ satām asi tvam viṣṇur urugāyo namasyaḥ □  
tvam brahmā rayivid brahmaṇas pate tvam vidhartaḥ sacase puramdhya □

RV IV 9, 4

uta gnā agnir adhvara uto grhapatir dame □ uta brahmā ni ṣḍati □

RV V 40, 8

grāvṇo brahmā yuyujānaḥ saparyan kīriṇā devān namasopaśikṣan □  
atriḥ sūryasya divi cakṣur ādhāt svarbhānor apa māyā aghukṣat □

RV VIII 16, 7

indro brahmendra ṛṣir indraḥ purū puruhūtaḥ □ mahān mahībhiḥ śacībhiḥ □

RV IX 96, 6

brahmā devānām padavīḥ kavīnām ṛṣir viprāṇām mahiṣo mṛgāṇām □  
śyeno grdhrāṇām svadhitir vanānām somaḥ pavitram aty eti rebhan □

For complete analysis of brahmans in Rigveda one may look at my special research (Perzashkevich, O. 2012a). Furthermore, the *upavaktar* priest, who sang along to the fire:

RV IV 9, 5

veṣi hy adhvarīyatām upavaktā janānām □ havyā ca mānuṣāṇām □

RV VI 71, 5

ud ū ayām upavakteva bāhū hiraṇyayā savitā supratīkā □  
divo rohāṃsy aruhat prthivyā arīramat patayat kac cid abhvam □

RV IX 95, 5

iṣyan vācam upavakteva hotuḥ punāna indo vi syā manīṣām □  
indraś ca yat kṣayathaḥ saubhagāya suvīryasya patayaḥ syāma □

There was also a special priest, who "helped" the fire to light up – the *agnidhra* or *agnimidhra*.

RV II 36, 4

ā vakṣi devām iha vipra yakṣi cośan hotar ni ṣadā yoniṣu triṣu □  
prati vīhi prasthitam somyam madhu pibāgnīdhrāt tava bhāgasya tṛpṇuhi □

RV X 41, 3

adhvaryum vā madhupāṇim suhastyam agnidham vā dhṛtadakṣam damūnasam □  
viprasya vā yat savanāni gachatho 'ta ā yātam madhupeyam aśvinā □

RV X 91, 10

tavāgne hotraṃ tava potraṃ ṛtviyaṃ tava neṣtraṃ tvam agnid ṛtāyataḥ □  
tava praśāstraṃ tvam adhvarīyasi brahmā cāsi grhapatis ca no dame □

The material component of the sacrifice was "ordered" by the Soma god (f.e. Hillebrandt, A. 1990: v.1, 200-215). The *potar* priest, who had been clearing the prepared liquid (soma), assisted him:

RV I 94, 6

tvam adhvaryur uta hotāsi pūrvyaḥ praśāstā potā januṣā purohitaḥ □  
viśvā vidvāṃ ārtvijyā dhīra puṣyasy agne sakhye mā riṣāmā vayaṃ tava □

RV II 5, 2

ā yasmin sapta raśmayas tatā yajñasya netari □  
manuṣvad daivyam aṣṭamam potā viśvaṃ tad invati □

RV IV 9, 3

sa sadma pari nīyate hotā mandro diviṣṭiṣu □ uta potā ni ṣīdati □

RV VII 16, 5

tvam agne grhapatis tvam hotā no adhvare □  
tvam potā viśvavāra pracetā yakṣi veṣi ca vāryam □

RV IX 67, 22

pavamānaḥ so adya naḥ pavitreṇa vicarṣaṇiḥ □ yaḥ potā sa punātu naḥ □

Soma's another assistant was the *adhvarju* priest, who made oblation of soma, and some other ritual actions, f.e.:

RV I 135, 3 + 6

ā no niyudbhiḥ śatinībhīr adhvaraṃ sahasriṇībhīr upa yāhi vītaye vāyo havyaṇi vītaye □ tavāyam  
bhāga ṛtviyaḥ saraśmiḥ sūrye sacā □ adhvaryubhir bharamāṇā ayamsata vāyo śukrā ayamsata □  
ime vām somā apsv ā sutā ihādhvaryubhir bharamāṇā ayamsata vāyo śukrā ayamsata □ ete vām abhy  
asṛkṣata tiraḥ pavitraṃ āśavaḥ □ yuvāyavo 'ti romāṇy avyayā somāso aty avyayā □

RV II 14, 1+2

adhvaryavo bharatendrāya somam āmatrebhiḥ siñcatā madyam andhaḥ □  
kāmi hi vīraḥ sadam asya pītiṃ juhota vṛṣṇe tad id eṣa vaṣṭi □  
adhvaryavo yo apo vavrivāmsaṃ vṛtraṃ jaghānāśanyeva vṛkṣam □  
tasmā etam bharata tadvaśāyaṃ eṣa indro arhati pītim asya □

RV VIII 4, 11+13

adhvaryo drāvayā tvam somam indraḥ pipāsati □  
upa nūnaṃ yuyuje vṛṣaṇā harī ā ca jagāma vṛtrahā □  
ratheṣṭhāyādhvaryavaḥ somam indrāya sotana □  
adhi bradhnasyādrayo vi cakṣate sunvanto dāśvadhvaram □

RV X 30, 2+3+ 5+15

adhvaryavo haviṣmanto hi bhūtāchāpa itośatīr uśantaḥ □  
ava yās caṣṭe aruṇaḥ suparṇas tam āsyadhvam ūrmim adyā suhastāḥ □  
adhvaryavo 'pa itā samudram apāṃ napātaṃ haviṣā yajadhvam □  
sa vo dadad ūrmim adyā supātaṃ tasmai somam madhumantaṃ sunota □  
yābhiḥ somo modate harṣate ca kalyāṇībhīr yuvatibhir na maryaḥ □  
tā adhvaryo apo achā parehi yad āsiñcā ośadhībhiḥ punītāt □  
āgmān āpa uśatīr barhir edaṃ ny adhvare asadan devayantīḥ □  
adhvaryavaḥ sunutendrāya somam abhūd u vaḥ suśakā devayajyā □

Agni had one more priestly function. It was *purohita* ("put ahead"). That function was the one of "banner-carrier", whose obligation was to show gods the sacrifice brought, and those, who made it according to *ṛta*. It is the function of "ordering" of the very action of sacrifice. The *purohita* priest, thus, has been summoned to participate as a "banner-carrier" to promote "ordering" of any people's collective or cumulative action, f.e.:

RV I 44, 10+12

agne pūrvā anūṣaso vibhāvaso dīdetha viśvadarśataḥ □  
asi grāmeṣv avitā purohito 'si yajñeṣu mānuṣaḥ □  
yad devānām mitramahaḥ purohito 'ntaro yāsi dūtyam □  
sindhora iva prasvanitāsa ūrmayo 'gner bhrājante arcayaḥ □

RV II 24, 9

sa saṁnayaḥ sa vinayaḥ purohitaḥ sa suṣṭutaḥ sa yudhi brahmaṇas patih □  
cākṣmo yad vājam bhārata matī dhanād it sūryas tapati tapyatur vṛthā □

RV III 2, 8

namasyata havya dātīm svadhvaraṁ duvasyata damyaṁ jātavedasam □  
rathīr ṛtasya bṛhato vicarṣaṇir agnir devānām abhavat purohitaḥ □

RV V 11, 2

yajñasya ketum prathamam purohitam agniṁ naras triśadhas the sam īdhire □  
indreṇa devaiḥ saratham sa barhiṣi sīdan ni hotā yajathāya sukratuḥ □

RV VI 70, 4

ghṛtena dyāvāpṛthivī abhīvṛte ghṛtaśriyā ghṛtapṛcā ghṛtavṛdhā □  
urvī pṛthivī hotṛvūrye purohite te id viprā īlate sumnam iṣṭaye □

RV VII 60, 12

iyam deva purohitir yuvabhyām yajñeṣu mitrāvaruṇāv akāri □  
viśvāni durgā pipṛtam tiro no yūyam pāta svastibhiḥ sadā naḥ □

It is quite probable, that the composers of Vedas assumed existence of some rituals where gods acted without people. However, the present case is not about something we cannot prove, but only about the evidence of the monument as it is.

Everybody dealt with Indian culture knows that *ṛsis* composed their hymns to refer to gods. In addition, the Vedic rituals dealt with a participation of people. Both of those, who expected to get something from gods, and of those, who managed those actions, i.e. of priests. Besides, the priests possessed also one more function with no any connection to Agni, Soma or any other supernatural participator of rituals. It was to formulate a particular wish of people and to send it to the necessary address (f.e. Oldenberg, H. 1988: 208-209).

That action was an "ordering" of that reference to the desirable addressee. It was considered as achievable, obviously, only by means of the hymns created by *ṛsis*. Proceeding from the texts of Ṛgveda, sometimes one person (*hotar*) was able to perform all those functions, assisting himself to Agni and Soma, and addressing to different gods (f.e. Macdonell, A.A. Keith, A.B. 1958: v.2, 508). Eventually that specialization and "an arsenal" of priests increased considerably, and two (for example, *hotar* "assisted" to Agni, and *adhvaryu* "accompanied" Soma) or more functional priests acted together (f.e. Grassmann, H. 1999: 49-500).

It brought to life the necessity of coordination of simultaneous actions. Proceeding from what we know about the functions of *brahman*, it is possible to understand, why that duty rested with him. It were his mental efforts and means that Vedic people had found quite capable to create uniform "cover" for actions of other performers of the ritual (Perzashkevich, O. 2012a).

Beside purely ritual activity, the Ṛgvedic priests obtained also some other social functions. We are talking, first, about *purohita*, who became:

- The expert on military art (f.e. Ṛgveda ṣaṃhitā. 1933-1946: v.1, 822);
- The representative ("banner-carrier") of association of people (Perzashkevich, A. 2021a), who had authorized him, towards other people's associations, f.e.:

daivyā hotārā prathamā purohita ṛtasya panthām anv emi sādhuṃ □  
kṣetrasya patim prativeśam īmahe viśvān devāṃ amṛtāṃ aprayucchataḥ □ RV X 66,13

- The person who "order" people within the political association, which has recognized him as such, especially for the case of *purohiti* (Macdonell, A. A. 1893: 166). The mentioned special actions of priests, aimed to connect people and gods, assumed not certain knowledge only, but special abilities. Both those components of priestly duties, as we saw, had been developed together with that society and, in due course, together with development of specialization, led to occurrence of an independent social class, which had become subsequently *varṇa* of brahmins (Perzashkevich, O. 2012b).

All the mentioned realities give us full reason to conclude, that Vedic people invented quite complex and developed system of cooperation of different participants of ritual. Regarding the aims of the ritual, also its evident difficult task and quite long time of its practice, we can definitely consider the proposed model as the very early idea of multifunctional cooperation with division of labour and interconnection of particular stages with the final common desirable result. In some extent, that solution looks like the work of any modern scientific laboratory. However, the latter is not so universal with its capacities. Whatever we think about those rituals itself, one should consider the very principle of that arrangement of efforts towards common aim, and its mechanisms as worthy to use within achieving any technological or scientific goals, which one person cannot achieve, and even the group cannot reach with any other approach.

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